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STATE OF VERMONT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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ELLIOT BURG  
WILLIAM DODGE  
KEVIN DORN

**Vermont Commission on International Trade & State Sovereignty**

**MINUTES**

**Monday, August 9, 2010**

*Drafted September 10, 2010*

**Members Present:** Roger Allbee, Dave Anger, John Boomhover, Elliot Burg, Larry Bruce, Dan Brush, Representative Kathleen Keenan, Co-chair, Senator Ginny Lyons, Co-chair

**Members Not Present:** William Dodge, Kevin Dorn

**Also Present:** Dana Eidsness, Director, Forum on Democracy and Trade; Michael O'Grady, Legislative Council; Ali Sarafzade, Director of International Trade, Vermont Global Trade Partnership

**Recordings:** CDs 10-17, 18

**Minutes**

The minutes of June 21, 2010 were approved unanimously as written. (Michael, that's different from what your notes said.)

**Review of Purpose of the Retreat**

Michael O'Grady reviewed the purpose of the meeting as a retreat at which the Vermont Commission on International Trade and State Sovereignty (Vermont Commission) would review and reflect on its work while also reviewing the purpose and goals of the commission in order to set the focus and priorities for future work.

**Introduction of New Members**

Co-Chairs Sen. Ginny Lyons and Rep. Kathleen Keenan introduced Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets Roger Allbee as one of the two new members added to the commission by Act No. 78 of 2010. Secretary Allbee discussed his prior experience with international trade and negotiation of trade agreements. Secretary Allbee also discussed international trade issues impacting Vermont, with specific focus on Vermont agriculture.

**Review of Commission Charge and Past Accomplishments**

Michael O'Grady reviewed the legislative charge of the Vermont Committee as set forth in Act No. 212 of 2006 and as amended by Act No. Act No 78 of 2010. He discussed how Section 43 of Act No. 78 requires the Governor of Vermont to consult with the Vermont Commission prior to binding the state of Vermont to an international trade agreement.

Michael O'Grady then reviewed the past actions and accomplishments of the Vermont Commission. A

handout was circulated listing: legislation suggested or supported by the commission, policy statements adopted by the commission, the correspondence of the commission, public hearings and meetings convened by the commission, and other action.

Handouts: Act No.212 of 2002-2006, Section 23, the Commission's original Charge  
 Act No.78 of 2009-2010, Section 43, change to approval of trade agreements  
 Act No.78 of 2009-2010, Section 44, change in membership and duties of the Commission  
 Summary of Commission Actions, August 8, 2010

### **Breakout Groups; Action Planning for Future of the Commission**

The members of the Vermont Commission then split into two groups to discuss: 1) the member's perspectives on the role and impact of the commission; 2) what the commission can do better; 3) what the commission should focus on in the future; and 4) actions that the commission should take in furtherance of its legislative charge.

The Groups reported back with the following input:

Group 1 (consisting of Rep. Keenan, Roger Allbee, David Anger, and Elliot Burg) reported that the work of the commission was informative to them and the public. However, the commission lacks measurable performance indicators. Going into the future, there needs to be a balance between the need for the free movement of goods and the preservation of state sovereignty. There is also the need to educate the public regarding international trade and the trade negotiation process. However, the complexity of the issues and the speculative nature of some concerns can make communication of the issues to the public difficult.

Group 2 (consisting of Sen. Lyons, John Boomhover, Ali Sarafzade, Dan Brush, and Lawrence Bruce) reported that from the members' perspectives, the commission has gained a substantial amount of knowledge regarding international trade agreements and their potential impact on state sovereignty. However, there is no current method for gauging the effectiveness and value of the commission and its work. The commission can improve by providing additional educational opportunities for the commission and for the legislature and public. The commission should receive regular updates on free trade agreement negotiations, and the commission needs to target specific groups and legislative committees to raise issues and foster discussion.

### **Commission Draft Action Plan**

The two breakout groups then united to develop a draft action plan for future work of the Vermont Commission. The Commission proposed the following proposals as a draft action plan for the future work of the commission.

#### **1. Education and Communication**

- The Vermont Commission should increase educational activities regarding international trade and free trade agreements.
- Potential educational activities, include:
  - Developing an educational kiosk for display in the State House and elsewhere regarding international trade, free trade agreements, and their impact on Vermont.
  - Recruiting speakers that are trade experts to anchor a public hearing or other meeting.

- The Vermont Commission should improve communication to the public regarding commission activities and the effects of international trade and free trade agreements.
- Potential methods for improving communication, include:
  - Increased use of press releases. Press releases should include substantive analysis.
  - Leverage media by inviting newspaper, radio, and T.V.

## **2. Focus of Commission**

- The Vermont Commission should focus on 2 to 3 issues in the coming year.
- Potential issues for Vermont Commission focus, include:
  - The Trans-Pacific Partnership going forward, including its impact on dairy, tobacco, and Rx and its potential as a new model for future FTAs.
  - How NAFTA has impacted Vermont, including examples and a public hearing.

## **3. Coordination of International Trade Issues on a State Level**

- Vermont does not coordinate government promotion and response to international trade and free trade agreements under one government office or committee.
- Recommend that the state establish an office or committee for the coordination among state government of potential trade benefits/impacts on Vermont.

The Vermont Commission will review the draft action plan at its next meeting Sept. 30, 2010.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael O'Grady  
Legislative Council

Representative Keenan reported on a conference call she participated in regarding the Korea Free Trade Agreement and distributed a sample letter on the subject drafted by Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. The members agreed that Michael O'Grady should draft a letter with the Commission's comments on the agreement.

Handout: Draft letter to The White House, August 4, 2010, from Sarah Edelman