



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND STATE SOVEREIGNTY

MINUTES

Thursday, August 28, 2008

Draft 9/5/2008

Members Present: Rep. Kathie Keenan, Co-chair; Sen. Ginny Lyons, Co-chair; David Anger; John Boomhover; Elliot Burg; Dana Eidsness

Members Absent: Lawrence Bruce, Daniel Brush

Also Present: Robin Lunge, Forum on Democracy & Trade; Legislative staff

Recording: CDs 2008 – 01, 02, 03

Convene

The Commission convened at 1:30 pm in Room 206 of the S. D. Ireland Center for Global Business and Technology, Champlain College, Burlington.

Charge

Legislative Counsel Michael O'Grady reviewed the Commission's Charge as defined in Section 23 of Act No 212 of the 2005 Adj. Sess. (2006), An Act Relating to Economic Development.

Appointments

Rep. Keenan explained that Commission members Larry Bruce and Dan Brush need to be reappointed. Both are interested in continuing as members of the Commission and the Governor's office has initiated the process to receive nominations from the organizations they represent.

Budget Update

Dana Eidsness reported that the Commission's current budget has \$11,905.03 left.

Office of U.S. Trade Representative

Dana Eidsness reported that as the State Point of Contact for Vermont she has not had any communication from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) since the last meeting. She reported that Colleen Litkenhaus has been appointed as the new Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Liaison. Dana plans to participate in a conference call with USTR, IGPAC, and other SPOCs on Tuesday, September 2nd and offered to raise Commission issues if the format allows. The Commission decided to ask for a conference call with the USTR in the future, perhaps with the Maine and New Hampshire Commissions participating.

Annual Report

Dana Eidsness presented a new draft of the Commission's Annual Report which includes the suggestions she received from Commission members. Senator Lyons asked that members review the new draft and email comments to Dana so that the report can be approved at the next meeting.

China's Challenge to State Law-Making Authority

Senator Lyons discussed her experience being contacted by the People's Republic of China regarding S.256, a bill relating to the Disposal of Electronic Waste, which she introduced in 2008. S. 256 was committed to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, but it was never taken up for consideration. Legislators in other states also reported being contacted by China and being told that the standards in certain bills would negatively affect trade with China.

In response and with the help of the Forum on Democracy and Trade, Senator Lyons developed a resolution that was submitted to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Committee on Labor & Economic Development at the July meeting of NCSL. The resolution was passed unanimously by the committee and needs to be passed by the NCSL Committee on Communications at the next meeting before it is presented at a business meeting of the entire body of delegates, at which point, if enacted, it becomes official NCSL policy. She asked for the Commission's support in continuing to pursue this issue with NCSL.

Dana Eidsness moved that "The Commission work with Senator Lyons to come up with a position statement regarding China's challenge to state law-making authority, to investigate the World Trade Organization rules in this regard, and to come up with a plan of action of what to do about it. The Commission supports Senator Lyons' continuing presentation of the resolution to the National Conference of State Legislatures." Passed unanimously.

Council of State Governments Materials

Representative Keenan presented materials from the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference of August 10, 2008. The materials addressed Border Issues including issues of the bottleneck at the border crossing and passports and alternatives to passports. The materials also included a presentation on "The Case for North America: NAFTA and Beyond" by John Dickson, Director of the Office of Public Diplomacy for the Western Hemisphere at the Department of State.

Position Paper on International Trade Issues and Consultation with States

The Commission discussed possible topics for a "Bill of Rights" position paper as suggested by Elliot Burg. Such a position paper could address the need for increased state participation and input into trade negotiations and the need to ensure that trade agreements ensure the protection of human rights, and environment and the ability of states to regulate in these fields and other fields of traditional state authority. Representative Keenan asked that members look over the list of issues and be prepared to discuss them at the next meeting. Robin Lunge will prepare a comparison of these issues with those of NCSL for the meeting of the New England Trade Commission.

New England Trade Commission Meeting in Manchester, NH, September 19, 2008

Robin Lunge of Forum on Democracy and Trade discussed logistics for the upcoming meeting in Manchester, New Hampshire. She presented 3 possible topics for the meeting: Federal/State Consultation on Trade—both on input & information, Investment & Services Concerns related to Water Resources and Ideas for Joint Events for Public Education. She asked that members email comments about these topics to her.

Next Commission Meeting

The Commission agreed to meet at 1:00 pm on September 30th in the Chittenden County area, hopefully at GBIC.

The Commission adjourned at 4:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Roz Daniels
Legislative Council