



Business Agenda

2009



The Voice of Vermont Business



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Mission

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce:

- Promotes an economic climate conducive to business growth and preservation of the Vermont quality of life.
- Works with business representatives, regulatory and elected officials to improve the economic well-being of Vermonters by creating desirable jobs to grow existing businesses and attract new investment.
- Supports a healthy business climate by creating and supporting initiatives that encourage strong economic development programs, sound fiscal policies, an increasing tourism base, sensible environmental regulations, and a dependable transportation system.
- Endorses public policy that does not increase taxes or impose mandates.

About the Vermont Chamber of Commerce

In business since 1912, the Vermont Chamber of Commerce is a private, not-for-profit business organization with over 1,500 members representing all sectors of the state's economy.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce is independent of national, regional and local chambers of commerce. The Vermont Chamber's three main project areas include:

- 1) Government Relations;
- 2) Tourism and Marketing; and
- 3) Economic Development and Job Creation.

Among its many activities, the Vermont Chamber of Commerce works to increase the effectiveness of government and to facilitate a positive relationship between government and the business community. The Vermont Chamber promotes policies that are good for the economy and the community of employers we represent.



Purpose of this Business Agenda

The Vermont Chamber recognizes the importance of working with lawmakers and government officials at both the state and federal levels in order to achieve employers' primary economic development initiatives during the immediate legislative session, as well as the ongoing policies outlined in this Business Agenda. This document is intended to provide our legislative leaders and state officials with an overview of Vermont Chamber policies, as approved by our Board of Directors.

Executive Summary

The policies within this document reflect the positions of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, and consistently support:

- Increased economic development and job creation through investment in infrastructure, workforce development, and education;
- Lowering the cost of doing business through permit reform, reduced regulations, and the removal of burdensome government mandates on business;
- Government accountability through voting records, efficiency in government operations, and public involvement;
- Maintaining and promoting international free trade through continued investment in the state's international trade programs, working to resolve issues associated with border crossings, and promoting unified international free trade policy that will enhance the capabilities of the Vermont business community;
- Creating environmental policy that strikes a balance between responsible environmental protection, private property rights and economic opportunity; and
- Developing an energy policy that encourages and promotes a sustainable energy mix that includes micro-hydro, solar, wind, and other renewables, in addition to, large scale hydro and nuclear.



Economic Development and Job Creation

Continuous economic development is essential to Vermont's economy. The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports programs and policies that allow short-term and long-range planning for Vermont businesses. Combined with consistent, reasonable tax policies, improved broadband and cell phone coverage, and predictable government spending, these economic development efforts will result in vigorous business expansions, relocations and start-ups in Vermont.

Economic growth, coupled with a supportive business climate, can provide well-paying jobs. A supportive business climate can be achieved through sound fiscal policies that mitigate many of the high costs of doing business, such as taxes, energy, workers' compensation, health care, and education.

Economic Opportunity

Increasing Vermont's competitiveness in the national and international marketplace will result in more and better jobs for Vermonters and increased revenues to government.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Efforts to reduce the cost of doing business in Vermont by continuing the work on reforming the workers' compensation system, reducing regulations, streamlining the Act 250 and permitting processes, enacting tort reform, lowering taxes, and preventing and eliminating unfavorable mandates on businesses;
- Sufficient funding for effective and efficient economic development programs coupled with benchmarks on effectiveness;
- Improvements in Vermont's infrastructure such as maintaining roads and bridges, selective construction of new highways, upgrading airports, broadband telecommunication(s), and improving the electrical energy transmission and distribution systems;
- Foreign investment in Vermont, expanded travel to the state, and the export of Vermont products and services, as well as, continued state participation in the Global Trade Partnership;
- Large bank-like credit unions should be treated the same as banks, for tax and regulatory purposes;

- Programs to aggressively and cooperatively promote the commercial, industrial, travel, agricultural and educational sectors of the economy;
- Legislation and regulations that encourage investment in telecommunication and broadband infrastructure;
- Market determination of wages and benefits; and
- Reducing the cost of housing to help attract and retain a productive employee pool, increase business profitability, and enhance the state's competitiveness.

Electronic Commerce

The Vermont economy, at the local, regional and state levels, is a major benefactor of the vast and varied opportunities provided by electronic commerce. However, internet-based business opportunities pose many issues, such as transaction taxation, protection of intellectual property, privacy protection and general security.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Strong policies for the protection of intellectual property;
- General security of internet transactions;
- Statewide access to broadband and further deployment of wireless communications for Vermont businesses;
- Efforts to encourage increased and incremental private investment in communications facilities that extend broadband and wireless services in Vermont;
- State policy that is technology neutral, and supports solutions which can be self-sustaining as technology advances;
- Cautions against policies which subsidize retail broadband, telecommunication or video services, or which require taxpayers to bear the risk of wholesale or retail infrastructure;
- Using state or municipal funds solely to subsidize areas not served by wireless or broadband;
- Enacting federal laws regarding censorship, privacy or access to promote consistency throughout the nation and avoid regulations unique to individual states; and
- Improved interaction with state government through electronic media, including on-line permitting, electronic billing and electronic payment systems.

Government Accountability

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports the traditional concept of allowing private sector businesses to operate free of unreasonable government regulations and workplace mandates. New or expanded social programs should be funded through the general fund.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Four year terms for constitutional officers;
- Holding legislators accountable for their voting records by implementing an electronic voting system in the State House;
- An ongoing evaluation of existing regulations and programs, and their administration, to determine their ultimate economic impact, utility, and efficiency in regards to both the consumer and the business community;
- Adopting a procedure, in addition to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules review, whereby regulatory policies are reviewed and evaluated by legislative oversight, prior to adoption of such policies;
- Limiting rules and regulations to legislative intent;
- Preparing risk assessments and cost-benefit analyses for new major laws, mandates or regulations, to demonstrate that the benefits outweigh the costs;
- Holding regulators accountable for the costs, scope, burden and effectiveness of regulations issued by state and federal agencies; and
- Efficiency in government operations.

International Trade

Maintaining and promoting international free trade is a critical issue to members of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce. International border issues, import/export procedures, international trade policy, including free trade agreements and economic sanctions, are all of prominent concern to Vermont Chamber members. The Vermont Chamber believes the success of international trade will benefit the private sector through increased production and sales, and also benefit government through increased revenue. In addition, international trade is the mechanism to promote world-wide economic development, and the knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- A unified international free trade policy that will enhance the capabilities of the Vermont business community to engage in international commerce;

- Continued investment in the international trade programs and infrastructure that assist Vermont companies;
- The promotion of Vermont's close proximity to Quebec and Montreal, the largest port in eastern North America;
- The use of an enhanced Vermont drivers' license to substitute for passports at the Canadian border;
- Working cooperatively with the Vermont business community and governmental entities to increase intellectual property protections around the world;
- Advocating for additional free trade agreements including Free Trade Area of the Americas and renewed authorization of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA);
- Timely and predictable border crossings and customs clearance for commercial and tourism traffic via road, rail, sea and air;
- Continued investment in Vermont's transportation infrastructure including air, rail and highways to promote the flow of goods and services; and
- Promotion of the Quebec-Vermont Trade Corridor to expand partnerships between Vermont and Quebec.

Workers' Compensation System

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports the Workers' Compensation System as a means of compensating employees injured in work-related accidents or by occupational diseases while protecting employers from legal liability.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Continuing the reform of the Workers' Compensation System to align Vermont's benefit levels and compensable injuries with those of other states;
- Post-accident drug testing of employees involved in a workplace accident while ensuring that the employer is not mandated to fund rehabilitation programs, and that the testing does not render employees immune from discipline;
- The implementation of utilization review, case management and the maintenance of a reasonable medical fee schedule;
- The enactment of legislation providing co-workers the same legal immunities, under workers' compensation insurance law, as are extended to employers;
- The development of special training programs to demonstrate the benefits of workplace safety programs;

Workers' Compensation System (Continued)

- The development of medical and safety standards as guidelines for all parties to adopt when applicable;
- The right of employers to select the primary treating physician the first ten days after the injury;
- Greater resources to deal with fraud, coverage compliance, ensuring quality adjustment and restitution where appropriate;
- The development and funding of an office of enforcement and compliance within the Department of Labor to enforce the existing fraud clause in the workers' compensation rules that holds employees accountable for professing non-work-related injuries/ illnesses as work-related or for being untruthful about the nature, severity or duration of an injury or illness;
- The of increase fraud penalties from \$1000 to \$5000, so the penalty is more relevant; the increase of enforcement efficiencies; and make full restitution back to the carrier; and
- Reducing workers' compensation costs through the apportioning of aggravating injuries and pre-existing conditions.



Education and Training

An educated citizenry is the foundation of a successful, healthy and productive society. One major component for business success is the availability of a well-educated and well-trained workforce developed through a statewide system of education and training.

Education

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports an educational policy that assures every child will become a competent, productive, responsible citizen. This can be accomplished in part by supporting and maintaining an educational system that encourages every child and adult to participate in lifelong learning.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- An ongoing analysis of ways to improve educational quality, structure and governance to assure cost-effectiveness of deliver systems, focusing on overall results of the current K-12 public education system;
- Increased funding for post-secondary education so that all Vermonters, both traditional and non-traditional students, are ensured access to affordable post-secondary education, recognizing that higher education is an important economic engine for Vermont;
- Standardized assessment tools for student performance, which are recognized and utilized locally and nationally and incorporate applied performance;
- Offering the citizens of Vermont greater opportunities for school choice and charter schools, which create competition, thus improving quality and reducing costs;
- The requirement of a second vote on school budgets with increases greater than the rate of inflation;
- The consolidation of both supervisory unions and school districts;
- Retaining high standards for teachers;
- Flexibility to address issues of performance-based compensation and alternative certification procedures;
- Initiatives to create safe learning environments;

Education and Training (Continued)

- Recognizing the importance of early childhood learning, and parental involvement in that learning, the Vermont Chamber supports effective efforts to evaluate the potential value and cost of expanded opportunity for early childhood education, and for school choice in early childhood education;
- Initiatives to address the need for improvement with how K through post-secondary students are prepared for work; and
- Reviewing creative ways to keep young adults in Vermont, including working with the universities and the colleges around the state, and the business community, to retain younger Vermonters through the development of attractive jobs.

Workforce Training

A well-educated and trained workforce is the key to economic success for the state's businesses and workers.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- And recognizes the importance of technical and vocational training to the economic future of Vermont;
- Industry skill standards linked to national skill standards system;
- The practice of businesses reviewing high school transcripts to demonstrate a link between education and job skills;
- Aligning all elements of education, the K-12 public school system, and state and federally funded initiatives such as: the Human Resource Investment Council, Workforce Investment Boards, School to Work initiatives and business education partnerships, to better prepare students for the workforce;
- Continuing to create and fund technology centers in Vermont to serve as magnets for high technology business;
- Continuing to fund federal and state programs to train and re-train Vermonters for jobs for the future; and
- Increasing workers' level of education through career pathways to address the critical needs of businesses and employees.



Energy Policy

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce endorses a balanced energy policy, increased development of North American resources, and supply diversity and the efficient use of energy to ensure Vermont's security. The Vermont Chamber recognizes that sufficient, affordable, and reliable energy is necessary to encourage positive economic activity and provide jobs, and supports employers in their environmentally beneficial decisions; to the extent such uses are economically practical.

Energy policy must encourage and promote:

- Energy conservation and use of energy-efficient equipment, appliances, buildings and vehicles consistent with national codes and standards;
- Sustaining prudent energy efficiency, demand side management, and combined heat-and-power initiatives;
- Co-generation as part of Vermont's energy mix, including co-generation with alternative sources such as biomass;
- The re-licensing of Entergy Vermont Yankee should it be deemed safe and reliable by the appropriate authorities;
- The renewal of the State's contract with Hydro-Quebec;
- Recognition of the value of hydro-electric generation as a clean and renewable power source and the timely re-licensing of existing sources at market rates so long as these sources remain economically competitive;
- Recognition of hydro-electric generation over 200 megawatts as a renewable power source as defined by state statute;
- Recognition of cost-effective renewable energy development choices as positive contributions to Vermont's overall energy mix;
- Environmental legislation that creates broad-based economic opportunity within the private sector to meet Vermont's energy needs;
- Market-based environmental regulation that incorporates environmental and energy planning;

Energy Policy (Continued)

- Recognition that incorporating environmental externalities in energy pricing, or taxing energy sources in order to discourage energy use, may have an adverse impact on economic activity in the state and therefore the quality of life;
- Recognition that petroleum-based fuels supply more than 40 percent of the nation's energy and 90 percent of the nation's transportation fuels. A reliable supply of such energy, as well as a long term strategy to increase the use and reliance on alternative sources of energy, are important for heating, transportation, manufacturing, and industrial uses;
- The recognition that the cost of gasoline, propane, natural gas, diesel and heating oil is important to economic development in Vermont;
- Developing environmentally sound and economically viable alternative fuels for vehicles and alternative energy sources for infrastructure energy uses;
- The availability of natural gas service in regions not presently served by this energy source;
- The fair and equitable application of Vermont's permitting process to any structure or development based on industry standards or best practices;
- Local control and decision-making for renewable energy projects for local results and benefits;
- Providing Vermonters with more competitive electric rates by supporting more options for energy services and providers;
- Supporting balanced policies and regulations that are fair and equitable to small, medium, and large businesses and benefit the overall Vermont economy; and
- Energy initiatives that appropriately and transparently allocate costs, avoiding cost shifts.



Environment and Regulation

Predictable, reasonable and cost-effective government policies and regulations are critical for business planning, particularly in the rapidly changing global marketplace in which Vermont businesses must compete. The Vermont Chamber of Commerce recognizes the need to protect and conserve natural resources to maintain Vermont's unique environment. This need should be balanced with a fair, timely and predictable environmental permitting process, which recognizes the necessity for economic growth and development.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Sound scientific research under the definition of environmental problems, identification of proposed solutions and implementation of cost effective regulatory programs, such as site reclamation for contaminated properties;
- The recognition that a prosperous economy creates increased state revenues and disposable income which has beneficial results for the environment;
- Sound land-use planning, locally derived and controlled, with input from directly affected parties, including industries, businesses, and landowners. This planning should further the public interest by creating a balance between responsible environmental protection, private property rights and economic opportunity;
- The use of value appraisal of productive farm and forest lands to conserve natural resources;
- Streamlined voluntary environmental audits to assist facility management and regulatory agencies in achieving environmental improvement and compliance;
- The recognition that existing and potential commercial activities using Vermont waters, such as snowmaking, hydro-electricity, or other private property interests, serve the public interest and are a legitimate use of the state's waters, now a public trust, particularly when considered within the context of proposed restrictions related to the use of waters such as the imposition of fees for water usage;
- Amending Act 200 to remove the veto power in the approval process of Regional Planning Commissions over town plans, and to give greater consideration to the protection of private property rights;

Environment and Regulation (Continued)

- Efforts to oppose establishing a private right-of-action allowing individuals to sue businesses which they believe are violating or may violate environmental standards;
- A reasonable definition of wetlands, based primarily on hydrology that includes swamps, bogs, and marshes, but excludes lands that are essentially dry for the majority of the growing season;
- Providing for endangered species protection balanced with protection for human and economic needs, and recognizes that a species uncommon in Vermont is not truly endangered if it is common in other parts of the region or nation;
- Notifying property owners when any portion of their property is considered for designation in a map, plan, or inventory resulting in limiting the owner's use of that property and requiring the owner to provide a public benefit;
- Landowner compensation when new environmental regulations take private property for public use by mandating that landowners use their property to provide public benefits, significantly reducing the value of that property;
- Efforts to oppose any mandate requiring the sale of zero emission vehicles in Vermont until it is demonstrated that such strategies are needed to maintain air quality in Vermont;
- Efforts to oppose government seizure by eminent domain of private land for recreational purposes; and
- The need for a sound scientific understanding of the global climate debate and the opposition of any policy or mandate which would put Vermont businesses and others in developed nations at an economic disadvantage with businesses located in developing nations.

Permit Process

The Vermont Chamber supports a balanced environmental permitting policy which:

- Streamlines permitting processes so that all regulators will coordinate efforts resulting in greater government efficiency and shorter time frames for permit applicants by eliminating multiple presentations and duplicate hearings;
- Is fair, timely and predictable and recognizes the necessity for economic growth and development;

- Encourages citizen participation at the District Environmental Commission (DEC) level, but limits appeals of DEC decisions to the Environmental Court to statutory parties;
- Allows applicants to choose to have their Act 250 hearings at the DEC to be “on-the-record,” thereby requiring that any appeal to the Environmental Board will be a review of the record and not “de novo” (an entirely new hearing);
- Recognizes that permits issued by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources should meet the appropriate criteria in Act 250 proceedings, thereby eliminating duplicate review;
- Provides for a fair prime agricultural mitigation policy, which balances the need to protect prime agricultural lands with the need for economic development and housing; and
- A rational and predictable state storm water permit process that recognizes the regional and international impact of non-point sources or runoff (including phosphorus) from the State of New York and the Province of Quebec.



Fiscal Policy

A consistent and predictable fiscal policy should be integral to the overall plan and vision for expanded business development and job growth in Vermont. Budgetary decisions, both taxing and spending, should encompass a strategic plan for economic development and the needs of Vermonters. State and federal budgets should reflect the need for investment in areas which will create jobs and reduce Vermont's high tax burden. High taxes discourage business investment in Vermont, while influencing individual taxpayers to leave Vermont, particularly high-income residents, and those who have reached retirement age. Taxation must be equitable and competitive with other states. The state budget should reflect a fiscal policy, which is equitable, predictable, sustainable and understandable to all taxpayers.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce believes sound fiscal policy is necessary to maintain a strong business climate, enhance economic growth, and provide good jobs for Vermonters. The direct correlation of tax policy to the cost of doing business is a major factor in decisions to relocate a business to this state, or to continue operating a business in Vermont. Increasing the competitiveness of Vermont's businesses in the global marketplace results in more and better jobs and increased revenues to government.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Efforts to oppose tax increases or new taxes because of the demonstrated adverse effect on economic development and business growth;
- A balanced budget combined with a stable, predictable and competitive tax climate;
- The development of a state tax policy that retains and encourages business investment such as phasing out the Corporate Income Tax;
- Using the unemployment insurance program to fund unemployment benefits only;
- Limiting, repealing and discouraging the imposition of local option taxes;
- The use of transportation fund revenues strictly for projects directly related to the source of revenues and the immediate end of the diversion of transportation funds to unrelated general purposes;

- Changes in tax policy to promote economic development within the state;
- Keeping government spending increases consistent with the rate of inflation and population growth;
- Reaching a balanced budget by prioritizing government programs with a goal of eliminating waste and duplication while maintaining essential government services and by avoiding the creation of new government programs including the establishment of paid family leave on a government or involuntary employer-funded basis;
- The requirement that the state pay property taxes on government-owned buildings to the municipalities in which they are located;
- The belief that controlling the size and growth of the government will result in higher efficiency and lower taxes;
- Privatization of programs whenever possible;
- Market-based incentives in place of mandates; and
- Allowing those paying social security taxes the option of investing a portion of those taxes in an IRA-like personal retirement account; also allowing government employees the option of shifting a portion of their defined benefit retirement accounts into IRA-like personal retirement accounts.



Health Care

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce believes health care and health care insurance should be affordable to everyone, and thus more accessible, without sacrificing the quality of service and freedom of choice that Vermonters have come to expect. Government should lead the way toward meaningful and long-term accountability that encourages cooperation between the consumer, the provider, the insurance carrier, and the market.

Real and long-lasting reform will take place when our health care system rests in the hands of the consumer and the provider to use insurance products, options, and cost structures that meet the demand and need of the end users.

Vermont has concentrated on maintaining a high quality health care system with a goal of complete access to health care by Vermont citizens. The major factors contributing to high health care costs center around government-imposed mandates and regulation, under-reimbursement of health care providers for treating those covered under Medicare, and consumers who are financially separated from the procedures they utilize.

Vermont's health care policy should recognize that competition of health plans and providers are an important part of reducing health care costs. A new plan should be based on components that focus on patients and give decision-making responsibility to patients and their doctors; begin to reduce costs; and are financially sustainable with public and private dollars.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Health care proposals that do not unfairly target businesses to fund or subsidize these initiatives should be encouraged;
- Eliminating cost shifting caused by inadequate government reimbursement to health care providers for Medicare and Medicaid by focusing on prioritized spending rather than new revenue;
- Increasing access and treatment options, control costs, and improve quality through open and competitive market-based measures that encourage a strategy where demand, supply, and choice find equilibrium, such as increased flexibility in community rating-based underwriting;

- Providing consumers and payers accessible, useful information to compare provider performance in order to take more control and responsibility for their health and the attainment of the proper medical care, and to bring about accountability from providers for quality and cost of care;
- Opposing a single-payer health care system, and instead support policies that enhance the health care market, allowing continued employer participation;
- Encouraging efficiency and performance standards for government purchases of health care services;
- Reducing premiums through initiatives that spread the cost of health care over a larger segment of the population. We support initiatives that decrease the number of uninsured Vermonters, provide premium discounts for low and middle income Vermonters, and reduce the cost for small businesses to start providing insurance for their employees;
- Recognizing the need for tort reform to minimize defensive medical practices and to discourage frivolous lawsuits;
- Encouraging thoughtful and responsible utilization of medical services encouraged through cost-sharing techniques such as co-payments, premium contributions, deductibles and health care savings accounts;
- Providing the self-employed with the same health insurance tax equity as other businesses;
- Reducing the cost impacts of mandates and regulations;
- Encouraging personal responsibility in health care decisions; and
- Reducing administrative burdens on businesses to maintain employee health care coverage records.



Transportation

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce recognizes the essential role of dependable, safe transportation systems. Highway and bridge maintenance delays can result in significantly higher costs, decreased safety, and less reliability, affecting all highway users including tourists, suppliers and employees. The use of transportation funds for purposes other than the construction, maintenance and repair of Vermont's transportation infrastructure jeopardizes economic growth in the state. A well-functioning transportation infrastructure is critical to economic growth, international competitiveness, safety and quality of life.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Improvements in the regulatory process and management practices so that allocated funds can be utilized without incurring significant time delays and inflated costs to construction projects;
- The use of transportation fund revenues strictly for projects directly related to the source of revenues and the immediate end of the diversion of transportation funds to unrelated general purposes;
- Eliminating the Joint Transportation Oversight Committee (JTOC) transfer;
- The recognition that Vermont is dependent on a variety of transportation systems that are user-funded and economically viable including highway, rail and air networks;
- An accelerated highway and bridge construction schedule which utilizes all available transportation funds to complete postponed or delayed transportation projects;
- Improvements and repairs to existing roadways and bridges taking precedence over new transportation projects, unless safety and traffic volume or economic development factors dictate otherwise;
- Effective winter highway maintenance and adequate delivery of police and fire services to ensure the safe movement of goods, services and people within the state, especially during high-risk winter weather conditions;

- Immediate progress on projects that have been deemed necessary for continued economic development like the Circumferential Highway and other significant projects that have been identified and planned; and
- Growth in the aviation industry statewide to enable Vermont companies to better access global markets.



Travel and Tourism

The economic impact of travel and tourism is crucial to a healthy economy in Vermont. The travel and tourism industry provides substantial employment opportunities and generates considerable tax revenue for the state's general fund. According to the Vermont Tourism Data Center, in 2007, visitor spending contributed \$206.9 million in revenues to the state of Vermont, largely through lodging, meals, gas, and property taxes. The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports future investments in tourism marketing programs and promotional efforts with a goal of increasing occupancy rates and thus resulting in increased revenues for Vermont. Tourism marketing is one of the few ways in which the state spends money that in turn generates a significant investment of out-of-state dollars that mostly stay in the state.

Also in the year 2007, Vermont saw 14.3 million tourist visits (including in-state and out-of-state visitors, as well as international visitors). In one year, tourists' direct expenditures for goods and services totaled \$1.615 billion. The Vermont tourism industry directly or indirectly supports 37,490 jobs, approximately 1 in every 10 jobs in the state. In order for Vermont to maintain and increase its market share, this highly competitive industry needs to increase its regional, national and international visibility.

In addition to the significant economic benefit, the travel and tourism industry enhances the quality of life in Vermont. Small businesses are the backbone of Vermont's economic structure and many are in the travel and tourism industry – bed and breakfast establishments, country inns, attractions, restaurants, and gift shops – and the businesses that support this industry. Additionally, many agricultural enterprises are capitalizing on the growing agritourism trend, which is an important contributor in sustaining Vermont's rural character. Vermont's visitors assist in supporting state parks and other outdoor recreational resources as well as cultural heritage resources. Vermont visitors also purchase many locally made products.

The Vermont Chamber recognizes the major contributions of the Vermont travel and tourism industry to the economic well-being of the state and to the quality of life of its citizens.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports:

- A predictable level of funding for the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing so it can consistently market Vermont to potential tourists;
- Increasing and stabilizing the budget of the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing at \$6.8 million for FY 2008, which would bring the allocation back up to the level it was in the year 2000. According to the Travel Industry Association of America, Vermont's spending on tourism marketing is the lowest of any New England state other than Rhode Island and is ranked 40th in the nation overall;
- Additional advertising, promotion, and public relations to market the entire state as a travel destination;
- Increasing promotion in Canada and internationally to market Vermont as a travel destination;
- Continued investment in Vermont's travel and tourism infrastructure so it can make vital economic contributions to Vermont;
- Participation in regional marketing initiatives that promote New England as a destination area for overseas travelers, as well as markets in the United States and Canada;
- Incorporating new and emerging technologies into traditional travel and tourism marketing plans;
- Development of four season domestic and international marketing efforts aimed at all sectors, including motorcoach group tours and foreign independent travel (FIT);
- Continue the public/private initiative to upgrade the operation of the state's rest area facilities to visitor welcome centers with improved information dissemination;
- Improvements in directional signs on primary highways including instituting a specific service sign program or the interstate logo system;
- Enticing travelers to explore Vermont's secondary highways using advanced technology such as GPS systems and low frequency radio broadcasts;
- Cross-border and business-to-business marketing partnerships; and
- On the federal level, expanding the visa waiver program to enhance seasonal employment, and making our borders safe yet encouraging the free flow of travel and commerce.



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Dale Metz, Foodscience Corporation
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