

## MINUTES

### **Joint Fiscal Committee Meeting of June 26, 2008**

#### **Call to Order**

Senator Susan Bartlett, Chair of the Joint Fiscal Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. in Room 11, State House. She thanked the committee for agreeing to meet on this highly important topic of rising fuel costs.

Also present: Senators Cummings, Sears, and Snelling  
Representatives Bostic, Obuchowski, Smith, and Westman

Others attending the meeting included Gaye Symington, Speaker of the House; Neale Lunderville, in-coming Secretary of Administration; Jim Reardon, Finance and Management Commissioner; John Tracy and Chuck Ross, Office of U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy; Phil Fiermonte, Office of U.S. Senator Bernard Sanders; Patricia Coates and Susan Elliot, Office of U.S. Representative Peter Welch; Matt Cota, Vermont Fuel Dealers Association; Stephen Dale, Commissioner, Richard Moffi and Jules Junker, Dept. for Children and Families; Jim Grevatt, Efficiency Vermont; Richard Smith, Dept. of Public Service; Avram Patt, E-21 Legislative Committee; Members of the Legislature; Joint Fiscal Office and Legislative Council staff; Administration officials and staff; Representatives of various advocacy groups; and the news media.

#### **Speaker Symington**

Committee Chair Bartlett thanked Speaker Symington for acknowledging the need for a comprehensive discussion of the pressures and possible opportunities for action. Speaker Symington thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak with them about the concerns and frustrations she and others are hearing with regard to the ever increasing cost of fuel. She hoped the Committee would listen to all ideas across all political parties and branches of government and come up with short-term steps to this long-term issue. While acknowledging that some of her ideas may already be on a list of potential items to focus on, Speaker Symington suggested the Committee explore and pursue the following: state participation in pre-buy contracts for LIHEAP households; the difficulty in finding volunteers for non-profits and particularly "Meals on Wheels" due to the \$.14/mile reimbursement rate; communities sharing with other communities at the local level—perhaps the availability of emergency energy banks or other fuel sources; lines of credit for fuel dealers.

#### **Administration Overview of Plan and Initiatives**

In-coming Secretary Lunderville and Commissioner Reardon distributed a two page Vermont Fuel & Food Partnership Task Force Report. Areas of their discussion included the overall focus of this task force which is charged with helping Vermonters address rising fuel, food and gasoline costs. The task force will be a collaboration and partnership with many stakeholders. Some of initiatives discussed included providing education and information services, sponsoring local energy workshops, and