

Lt. Governor Phil Scott speaks out against deceptive internet advertising
that hurts local businesses

Montpelier (Feb. 7, 2011) – Lt. Governor Phil Scott was part of a group that spoke out against deceptive internet advertising at a press conference this morning.

Scott joined the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Vermont Retail Association, local florists, and members of Vermont's legislature to decry deceptive Internet advertising that seriously threatens the state's floral industry. They also announced details of legislation under consideration that would prohibit these abuses.

According to longtime Rutland florist Bonnie Hawley, "What happens is that people purchase flowers from out-of-state order gatherers' websites, believing that they are "buying local", but they aren't." The keyword "Vermont" often shows up in online ads for these out-of-state businesses, and many of their business websites list addresses in Vermont, when in reality, these businesses are not located here.

"The out-of-state businesses then turn around and send the orders back to us, the local florists, but at substantial discounts," Hawley continued. "It's a dishonest practice that could put many Vermont florists out of business if not stopped."

H.160, introduced by Representative Ann Pugh, would make it illegal for an out-of-state floral business from advertising as a local Vermont business. Lt. Governor Scott announced his support for this legislation, and his hopes that similar legislation could eventually protect all Vermont retail businesses.

"One of my top priorities as Lt. Governor is to encourage people to shop locally. When we buy local, we support our neighbors, our communities and our downtowns, and we support the Vermont economy," Scott said. "It's already hard enough for Vermont merchants to compete. This deceptive advertising, where out-of-state companies are actually impersonating local merchants online, takes things one step farther, and we need to stop it."

"Today I have two messages for Vermonters," Scott continued. "One: Buy Local, particularly as you're looking to order flowers for Valentine's Day next week. And two: Buy Carefully. Until we pass H.160, it's up to the consumer to do their due diligence.

"Especially if the name of the business isn't one that's familiar to you, go a little deeper than the address on the bottom of their home page or the keyword "Vermont" in their online ad. If they don't have an 802 phone number listed, they're probably not local. If you're not sure, don't be afraid to call them up and ask."