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Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas and Attorney General Charity Clark Highlight Residential Contractors' Registration Program and Unveil New Consumer Protection Tool

May 4, 2023

For immediate release

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Montpelier, VT- In a press conference held in the Vermont State House today, Vermont Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas and Vermont Attorney General Charity Clark joined forces to highlight their offices' respective consumer protection work regarding residential contractors and unveiled a new consumer tool to help Vermonters protect themselves: an interactive map on the Secretary of State's webpage that will help consumers determine if a home contractor is registered and in good standing with the State.

"We have great home contractors here in Vermont and the new residential contractor registration program was set up to protect consumers and hold bad actors accountable," said Copeland Hanzas. "The Contractor Locator map will make it easier for Vermonters to research and vet contractors before work starts, which will help both parties."

The Vermont General Assembly took action during their 2022 legislative session requiring the registration of residential contractors working in Vermont. This requirement applies to any residential contractor who performs construction where the estimated value is \$10,000 or more, inclusive of labor and materials. Registered home contractors will also be required to maintain insurance and execute a written contract. The registration program is overseen by the Vermont Secretary of State's Office of Professional Regulation (OPR).

The Vermont Attorney General's Office supports both consumers and small businesses, and has long supported a residential contractor registry. The new law created a position of "Residential Contractor Specialist" at the Attorney General's Office's Consumer Assistance Program.

"I encourage all Vermonters to do their homework before hiring a residential contractor," said Attorney General Charity Clark. "Simple steps like reviewing the home improvement fraud registry, requesting references and checking them, verifying that a contractor is registered, and getting your agreement in writing can save you time and money in the long run. If you need help at any step along the way, my office's Consumer Assistance Program (CAP) is here to guide you. CAP can be reached at 800-649-2424, or visit ago.vermont.gov/cap for more information."

Representative Scott Campbell, D-St. Johnsbury, joined the Secretary and Attorney General in praising the new map and the new registration program. As a lead sponsor of the legislation that created the registry, and a contractor himself, Campbell sees the map as a big benefit to contractors, in addition to helping consumers.

“This program, with tools like this map, gets contractors’ names out there, in front of potential customers, showing folks that they are professionals,” said Campbell. “And for the first time we will have a statewide list of contractors. This creates new ways to keep in touch with contractors and help with training and best practices. The industry is only getting more complex, and customers’ expectations are high.”

Guy Payne, the Executive Director of Sustainable Energy Outreach (SEON), also addressed reporters and expanded on Campbell’s comments about training and the development of professional standards. SEON works in the renewable energy/energy efficiency sector and provides training through a network of businesses and educational institutions.

“The registration program creates exciting new opportunities for SEON and others to provide educational resources and training to home contractors,” said Payne. “Certification for builders, that shows they have the knowledge and skills to build to quality standards, including Vermont’s Energy Code, will be an important part of the registration program as it matures. Homeowners want contractors that are engaged in continuous learning and have certifications.”

Secretary Copeland Hanzas encouraged Vermonters to check out the new [map](#) and renewed her call for contractors to register. For more information and to register contractors should visit OPR’s Residential Contractor webpage <https://sos.vermont.gov/residential-contractors/>.

The home improvement fraud registry is available on the Attorney General’s [website](#), along with additional tips for homeowners and residential contractors. The Attorney General’s Consumer Assistance Program is a free resource that is available to Vermont’s consumers and small businesses. Consumers and small business are encouraged to contact the Consumer Assistance Program for help by calling 800-649-2424 or visiting ago.vermont.gov/cap.