



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

Lt. Governor Gray Holds First “Seat at the Table” Meeting of the 2022 Series

Montpelier, Vt. — This afternoon, Vermont Lieutenant Governor Molly Gray moderated the first panel discussion of the 2022 “Seat at the Table” virtual meeting series.

The discussion, titled “Meeting Climate Change Mitigation Goals Through Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Workforce Development”, featured Rhoni Basden, Executive Director of Vermont Works for Women; Chad Farrell, Chief Executive Officer of Encore Renewable Energy; Maureen Hebert, Associate Dean of Industry Relations and Workforce Development for Vermont Technical College; and Thomas Longstreth, Executive Director of ReSOURCE. Over 50 attendees joined the meeting and the conversation highlighted the evolving workforce needs within Vermont as the state responds to climate change and works to meet the goals of the Vermont Climate Action Plan. The full Vermont Climate Action Plan can be read here: <https://climatechange.vermont.gov/>

“Vermont needs a robust variety of equitable and affordable workforce training opportunities to continue to reduce our emissions and meet the Climate Council’s goals,” Lt. Governor Gray said “Today’s ‘Seat at the Table’ highlighted the ways renewable energy and energy efficiency job training opportunities for those looking to enter the workforce or make a career change will help Vermonters secure work in the fields necessary to combat climate change.”

“Mitigating the negative effects of climate change and moving towards a fully decarbonized economy offers the single greatest economic development opportunity of the 21st century. It is estimated that over 25 million new jobs will be created nationally as we transition from an economy powered by fossil fuels to clean, more efficient electrical generation for our energy needs,” Chad Farrell said “And given Vermont’s early leadership in the clean energy economy, our state stands to benefit from this transition to a greater degree than many other states. To best capitalize on the energy transition, Vermont will need to rapidly expand our educational, vocational and transitional training capacities to ensure that the state is most well equipped to realize the economic development and job creation benefits associated with the energy transition while also combating the worst effects of climate change for our state.”



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“Renewable energy is a high opportunity career field, but employers in the renewable energy and related sectors struggle to attract and retain female workers. Women comprise only 3% of construction workers and 4% of installation, maintenance, and repair workers,” Rhoni Basden said “VWW is working to close that gap – and help Vermont meet its climate workforce needs – through training programs for women that impart both hard skills and the confidence to succeed in male-dominated workplaces, while also supporting employers who build a culture of respect and support for current and future female employees.”

“The labor force disruption of the COVID pandemic have been enormous. The silver lining is that employers are newly willing to consider non-traditional potential workers, individuals with disabilities, and non-linear job histories. Vermont has an exciting opportunity to provide skills and other support to out-of-work or under-employed workers and successfully get them placed into meaningful jobs with employers eager to welcome and provide additional training,” Tom Longstreth said, “Working closely with employers to meet their skill requirements, we can convert dependents into gainfully employed and productive workers; we can serve these individuals but also meet critical needs across the entire state.”

“Serving over 3,200 Vermonters each year, we work with hundreds of employers across industry sectors. Vermont Tech’s mission is to provide career-focused technical and professional education in a caring community, which prepares students for immediate workplace success and continued learning. We value our role in supporting the Vermont economy and meeting the needs of industry and business by preparing highly qualified individuals in high-growth, high wage occupations that are the key economic drivers of our state,” said Maureen Hebert.

The tri-weekly series hosted every third Monday from 12:00pm – 1:00pm features community, non-profit, and business leaders from across Vermont. Launched by Lt. Gov. Gray in 2021, each “Seat at the Table” will be open to the public, lawmakers and press and will highlight topical issues facing Vermont communities. Recordings of the panel discussions can be viewed [here](#).

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