

From: Coriell, Scott [Scott.Coriell@state.vt.us]
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 16, 2015

Gov. Shumlin Signs Two Housing Protection Bills into Law
Declares April Fair Housing Month

MONTPELIER – Gov. Peter Shumlin today marked the anniversary of the federal Fair Housing Act by signing two housing protection bills into law and declaring April Fair Housing Month. The first bill, H.123, ensures mobile home parks are safely maintained and abandoned mobile homes can be dealt with fairly and expeditiously. Also enacted today was H.256, which corrects and confirms protections against retaliation for exercising fair housing rights.

“It is integral that we protect the right of Vermonters to live in safe and healthy communities, and these bills will do just that,” said Gov. Shumlin.

Each April, Governor Shumlin and governors before him set aside time to remember the great step in Civil Rights taken through the signing of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which protects the right to housing choice regardless of color, race or national origin. Since then Vermont has made greater progress, ensuring that housing choice is not limited by someone’s age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or because they receive public assistance.

“Barriers to safe, decent and affordable housing are not always financial. Sadly, discrimination and disrepair sometimes prevent Vermonters from finding a home or being safe in the one they have,” said Jennifer Hollar, Deputy Commissioner of Housing and Community Development. “Today and every day, we must work together to lower these barriers. This legislation gives us more practical tools for ensuring homes are safe and their doors are open to all.”

H.123 recognizes that a safe, healthy community should not be dependent upon the type of housing one chooses. This bill makes certain that residents of a mobile home park have access to emergency response services and will not be needlessly subjected to blighted and abandoned homes in their communities. It also gives the Department of Housing and Community Development the ability to ensure habitability standards are maintained and that leases governing these communities are not discriminatory.

H.256 contains a technical correction to Fair Housing protections that ensures Vermont continues its role in maintaining and surpassing Federal standards regarding the ability of citizens to ensure they are treated fairly in their housing. It also brings additional clarity to property rights in a residential rental agreement to encourage a functional rental market.

The Governor thanked Rep. Bill Botzow (D-Pownal) for his sponsorship and longstanding support of mobile home park residents. He also acknowledged the leadership of House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee Chairwoman Helen Head (D-South Burlington), Senate Judiciary Chairman Dick Sears (D-Bennington), and Senate Economic, Housing and General Affairs Committee Chairman Kevin Mullin (R-Rutland), in guiding the legislation through their committees and chambers.

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