



Town of Richford
Selectboard
PO Box 236, 94 Main St.
Richford, VT 05476

Tel. 802-848-7751 Fax 802-848-7752

ATTN: Vermont Land Use Review Board, NRPC, VLCT
Sen. Randy Brock, Sen. Bob Norris, Rep. Lisa Hango, Rep. Wayne Laroche

Re: Act 181 – Impacts on Rural Communities and Local Control

To whom it may concern:

The Selectboard of the Town of Richford writes to express concern about the implementation of Act 181 and the impacts it will have on small, rural municipalities.

Richford supports the State's goal of increasing housing opportunities and encouraging growth in compact village centers where infrastructure exists. Our town has long embraced these principles through an approved Town Plan (2026–2034) and locally adopted zoning bylaws, which concentrate growth in our village center while protecting rural lands, working landscapes, and flood-prone areas. These plans were developed through extensive public process and reflect the realities of our community.

However, as written and currently being implemented, Act 181 raises serious concerns for towns like Richford.

Like our neighboring communities in Berkshire, Enosburg, Highgate and Franklin, we are particularly concerned that Act 181 will be felt most severely in rural towns, where development patterns differ substantially from those in urban and suburban areas, and where municipal capacity is limited. Provisions such as location-based Act 250 jurisdiction, the proposed Road Rule, and potential Tier 3 designations risk placing new regulatory burdens on ordinary rural landowners who are not engaged in large-scale development.

Richford is a largely rural town, with the majority of its land area remaining undeveloped forestland, farmland, and open space. Outside of the village center, development is sparse and shaped by geography, environmental constraints, and historic settlement patterns. These conditions are fundamental to both the character of our community and the way land use planning has been carried out locally. Policies designed for more densely developed or rapidly growing areas do not always translate well to towns like Richford, where the predominant challenge is not unmanaged growth but maintaining a careful balance between modest development, environmental stewardship, and landowner equity.

We also remain concerned about the pace and scope of Tier 3 planning. While protection of natural resources is important, these decisions must be made thoughtfully, with meaningful

municipal input, and in alignment with existing town and regional plans. Premature or overly broad designations risk undermining local planning and public trust.

Equally important is the issue of municipal capacity. Small towns like Richford do not have full-time planning staff or the financial resources to absorb new mapping, reporting, and coordination requirements without significant assistance. Without additional flexibility, technical support, and time, Act 181 may unintentionally disadvantage rural communities.

The Town of Richford respectfully requests that the State:

- Pause or delay implementation of the Road Rule and Tier 3 provisions
- Ensure that local zoning bylaws and town plans remain central to land-use decisions
- Avoid penalizing rural towns that choose not to opt into Tier designations
- Provide meaningful technical and financial assistance tailored to small municipalities
- Continue direct engagement with towns as rules and guidance are finalized

Richford remains committed to being a constructive partner in addressing Vermont's housing needs. We believe these goals can and must be achieved without eroding local control or placing disproportionate burdens on rural communities.

Respectfully,
Town of Richford Selectboard, Vermont



Chair, Richford Selectboard



Vice Chair, Richford Selectboard



Selectboard Member



Selectboard Member

Selectboard Member