

**From:** [William Warren](#)  
**To:** [PUC - Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Comment on the Clean Heat Standard (Affordable heat act)  
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To the Commission:

It is my belief that the deceptively-titled “Affordable Heat Act” will prove to be anything but affordable for many Vermont residents. This well-intentioned act will certainly cause the price of fuel oil, and other fossil fuels, to increase dramatically, imposing a severe financial penalty on those not in a position to change to more environmentally-friendly heating systems. To think this will not happen, that the increased costs will somehow magically be absorbed by fuel suppliers and not passed on to consumers, is naïve.

I will use myself as an example of the effects of this act on many residents, especially old folks. I am seventy-nine years old. I live alone, my wife of fifty-two years having died of cancer at the end of 2020. Neither of us was born in Vermont, but my wife and I have lived and worked here our entire adult lives—over half a century—contributing to the state’s economy and paying taxes.

A substantial percentage of Vermont homes have fossil-fuel heating systems, such as my fuel-oil system. The obvious replacement for a fossil-fuel heating system is an electric heat pump. It would make no sense to install a heat pump without also assuring that the building is up to current weatherization standards, which my house, at over 150 years old—having been built in 1863—is not. The cost of (a) heat pump(s), plus the advisable weatherization, would be very substantial. In addition, in order to support a heat pump (not to mention a charger for an electric car, which we are urged to consider) my current 100-amp electrical service would have to be upgraded to 200 amp—another large expense.

Even if I qualified for subsidies for some of these expenses, I would incur very large out-of-pocket costs. The Act aspires to cut costs over time, requiring initial outlays in the hope of eventually reaching a break-even point, with savings theoretically accruing thereafter. Given my age, I almost certainly would not recover the initial costs in my lifetime, much less realize any future savings. Like many old folks, my income comes almost entirely from social security and drawing down my 401-k retirement account, both of which are limited, and not keeping up with inflation. (As an aside, Vermont is one of only twelve states that tax Social-Security benefits).

So, we old folks on fixed incomes are caught in a bind. If we take the weatherization and conservation measures desired we incur great out-of-pocket costs we will not recover, and if we do not take these measures, we are slowly bled by greatly-increased energy costs. I am not aware that the legislature has taken this situation—the potentially ruinous financial implications for hard-pressed older Vermont individuals—into account in its deliberations on the Affordable Heat Act, or made adequate efforts to mitigate the economic damage. In sum, I believe many of us old folks are left with no attractive options.

~William Warren

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William Warren  
265 South Bingham Street  
Cornwall, Vermont 05753-9359  
(802) 462-3422  
[wwarren@shoreham.net](mailto:wwarren@shoreham.net)