

## **Never Seen Worse Distortion**

Fred Oeschger's commentary on April 7, "Never Seen Worse Energy Legislation Than S.5", is, I'm sorry to say, misguided on nearly every point.

Mr. Oeschger hurls wild accusations of lies and lack of transparency, but does not cite a single example. Indeed, he says he has "watched this ill-advised legislation wind its way through our legislature" — presumably thanks to the transparency of the process.

He even goes so far as to say "[t]he petroleum industry has been leading the way in efficiency improvements and carbon reductions for decades." Really? That would be news to the IPCC, the international group of scientists who released their latest assessment on the climate crisis a few weeks ago. Humanity has already raised global temperatures 1.1°C. above pre-industrial levels and set in motion climatic shifts on a scale humanity has never had to cope with — thanks to burning fossil fuels.

Climate change is bringing economic dislocations to Vermont's doorstep. The global, national, regional — and state — economy is transitioning off of near-total reliance on fossil fuels. The longer we ignore the inevitable, the steeper the cost will be, and the greater the disruption especially for those closer to the margins.

No, Mr. Oeschger, the Affordable Heat Act, S.5, will not raise taxes. But it will begin the process of planning how to help Vermonters — particularly those with limited means — to weatherize and reduce their vulnerability to the huge fluctuations in fossil-fuel prices. S.5 tasks the Public Utility Commission with designing a program to pay for the incentives needed to help folks get over the upfront-cost hurdle, so they can enjoy lower, and stable, ongoing heating costs.

That program will only be implemented after the next legislature, starting in January 2025, affirmatively votes to implement it.

These are the facts. The disinformation coming from petroleum suppliers, Governor Scott and members of his administration, and some regular contributors to this paper is, frankly, appalling. But perhaps it should not be surprising. A hundred years, muckraking journalist Upton Sinclair observed, "It is difficult to get a man [or woman] to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it."

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