

# Vermont Technology Alliance Public Policy Overview

## Public Policy Priorities

1. **Expand Vermont's brand and marketing** to highlight the state's tech and innovation economy to attract tech employees and businesses to the state.
2. **Address infrastructure needs**, including high-speed broadband, cell phone coverage, and housing.
3. **Expand the support ecosystem for entrepreneurs**, including business financing and leveraging the strengths of Vermont's academic institutions.
4. **Support the workforce and education needs of Vermont's tech sector**, including aligning educational institutions with the state's tech employers.
5. **Ensure legislation that supports and encourages the growth of Vermont's tech economy**, preventing obstacles to the development of the tech business sector.

## Highlights from 2018 Legislative Session

### Positive/Support

#### Blockchain Business (A.205)

- Enables creation of blockchain-based limited liability and personal information protection businesses.
- Helps Vermont attract businesses and entrepreneurs using blockchain technology.

#### Business Portal (A.196)

- Calls for recommendations to develop a "one-stop" portal for information about starting and operating a business and processing state payments.
- Could address frustrations expressed by small businesses; promote VT for business.

#### Remote Workforce (A.197)

- Creates new remote worker grant program.
- Creates the ThinkVermont Innovation grant Initiative.
- Funds economic development marketing.

## **Negative/Concerns**

### **Data Broker Act (A.171)**

- Requires businesses defined as Data Brokers to register with the Secretary of State, pay a fee and report on information they collect and maintain.
- Concerned that it broadly defined a data broker as any business with publicly available personal information, such as name and address.
- Worked with Attorney General's Office to change language to lessen potential impact on Vermont tech businesses that collect and hold personal information as part of their business services.

### **Right to Repair (A.6)**

- Named Study Committee to consider legislation requiring consumer, computer, electronics and technology manufacturers to make repair information, including firmware, publically available
- Concern with scope and requirements, protection of intellectual property, security and safety of products, workload for Vermont businesses.

### **Automatic Contract Renewal (A.179)**

- Imposes limitations on the auto-renewal of annual contracts. Requires a subscriber to affirmatively approve an annual renewal.
- Adds additional administrative burdens and costs to Vermont tech businesses.
- Impacts subscriptions to third-party software and services; could result in increased prices or loss of service.

### **Standard Contract Bill (S105)**

- Governor vetoed based on input from vtTA, others.
- Intended to protect consumers from unfair terms in standard-form contracts.
- Would have impacted many e-commerce transactions that use standard-form contracts.

# 2019 Initial Outlook

## Data Broker/Privacy/Security

- Attorney General's Office [issued a report](#) in January 2019 with data privacy recommendations, including an audit of how data is handled by the State.
- Report on the implementation of the Data Broker Act in March.
- Watching for new requirements or rules that could impact Vermont Tech businesses.

## Right to Repair

- Vermont Technology Alliance voiced concerns to study committee on Right to Repair.
- The Right to Repair Task Force released its [report](#) January 8, 2019.
- Right to Repair legislation plan to be introduced this session.

## Standard Contracts

- Bill addressing standard form contracts reintroduced as [bill S.18](#).
- Concerns about impact on VT e-commerce businesses with standard contracts.

## Automatic Contract Renewal

- Concerned with impact on VT businesses and consumers
- Impacts VT businesses that offer annual renewals and Vermont businesses that depend on automatic renewal of software services.
- May propose changes to the law before it becomes effective July 2019.

## Marketing Vermont

- Support proposals from Agency of Commerce and Legislature to attract workforce and businesses.

## Telecommunications

- Support proposals to expand broadband and cell service statewide, including provision allowing continued permitting of cell towers without Act 250 approval.

## **Blockchain**

- Support implementation of blockchain bill and opportunities to expand blockchain-based businesses in Vermont
- Working group of state agencies formed to study the opportunities and challenges presented by Blockchain technology.

## **Education**

- The vtTA supports development of the skills for success in tech, including high school computer science courses to fulfill a math or science credit.