

2026 Election Guide



Get to know the candidates' views with Q+As from all the local races
and more on statewide races.

October 15, 2026

Brought to you by the
ADDISON COUNTY
INDEPENDENT

Read and learn before voting

ADDISON COUNTY — When you go to the polls next month or fill out the ballot that arrived in the mail from the Secretary of State's Office, most of you will have to decide between competing candidates. Some will be saying things you like, some will be saying things you don't. For many, parts of their pitch will be appealing, but others not so much.

Take your time, read what the candidates have to say here and give them your due consideration. It's not easy to put yourself out there as a candidate for public office. So do *your* part and cast a vote.

Five of the nine state representatives from Addison County are running for re-election, and both incumbent state senators are also on the ballot. All but one of them face competition from a member of another party.

As part of our election coverage, the *Addison Independent* has published stories on most of the challengers and we give space in the regular paper for updates from incumbents during the Legislative session, as well as for regular Legislative stories.

To give local voters more information on where candidates stand on issues, we asked each candidate the same five

questions. See the list of questions in this Election Preview and then read the responses for the candidates in your district.

In addition to the county races, there are contested races for five Vermont's Constitutional offices — governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, treasurer and auditor. Read this guide to learn more about those candidates. Plus, Vermont's lone Congressional representative will be on the ballot.

All Vermont residents who are registered to vote were sent a ballot this month. If you have not received one in the mail contact your town clerk. Vermonters may mail in their ballots, return them in a secure ballot box outside town offices, return them in person to your town clerk during regular office hours, or bring them with you to the polls to vote on Election Day, Nov. 3, before 7 p.m.

Vermont election officials say: Make a voting plan to ensure that you don't experience any issues when casting your ballot.

To check on the status of your ballot, use Vermont's online ballot tracking service at mvp.vermont.gov or contact your town clerk.

2026 Candidate Questions

To give local voters a baseline for comparing candidates for the Legislature we asked each of them the same five questions. Our space and your time is finite, so we asked that they limit the number of words in each answers.

When you read the Q&As with the candidates, use these Qs to match up with their As.

We asked the candidates to write these answers themselves without the aid of ghostwriters or artificial intelligence, because we think that voters deserve to hear how each candidate thinks for themselves.

We did include Addison-1 candidates even though the two candidates running for those seats are unopposed. We wanted to get them on the record.

We do not have answers for the questions from Del Thompson, a Bridport Republican running in the Addison-5 House district. We emailed him and called, but did not hear back.

Here is what we asked:

Candidate questions 2026

1. EDUCATION Do you believe Act 170 was the best compromise on public education reform? If not, how would you recommend bending the curve on school costs amid declining

student enrollment? (300 words)

2. HEALTH CARE UVM Health Network just trimmed its workforce by 199 positions — including 19 at Porter Medical Center. The Green Mountain Care Board set fiscal year 2027 budget parameters for the state's 14 hospitals calling for a 1.2% decrease in net patient revenue and a 2.9% decrease in commercial rates. Is the state on the right track with health care reform, or is a more seismic change — like universal health care — warranted? (300 words)

3. HOUSING What policies would you champion to promote more affordable and workforce housing development in Vermont? Please offer specifics. (300 words)

4. BUSINESS Is the state doing enough to promote business growth? If not, how would you catalyze more economic development in Vermont? (200 words)

5. ENVIRONMENT Is there a way to balance protecting personal property rights while also ensuring the public's right to a clean, beautiful and healthy environment; how do you decide when one or the other take precedence? (200 words)

Governor candidates test voter appetite for new taxes

By **SHAUN ROBINSON**
VTDigger.org

The leading candidates for governor of Vermont this year agree that the state is unaffordable for too many people. But Amanda Janoo and Phil Scott have different ideas for how to solve that problem — and say each other's plans won't cut it.

Janoo, the Democratic nominee and an economist from Burlington, says a key part of her agenda is raising new revenue for state services by increasing income taxes on Vermont's wealthiest residents, as well as boosting taxes on some second homes and large technology companies.

Scott, a Republican who is running for a sixth term, says he'd do nearly the opposite if he gets reelected: propose a package of tax cuts or credits. He has already directed the heads of state agencies to prepare spending plans for the upcoming fiscal year that account for less state revenue, anticipating the possible impacts of levying lower taxes.

Two years ago, frustration over rising property tax rates to pay for schools was the animating issue in Vermont's elections for statewide offices and seats in the Legislature. This year's election raises a different — but related — question,



PHIL SCOTT
VTDigger photo / Glenn Russell

said Alex Garlick, an associate professor of political science at the University of Vermont: Will voters elect a governor who's pitching more taxes to pay for a broader array of public services?

Janoo has proposed, for example, using new tax revenue to make sure everyone in the state can see a primary care doctor, free of charge. She hopes this sets Vermont up to implement a system where all healthcare services are free, as it tried to do more than a decade ago, only to abandon the effort after determining it wasn't financially feasible.

"I think there is consensus that affordability is a problem. And healthcare is a major part of that. But the approach of



AMANDA JANOO
VTDigger photo / Glenn Russell

how to get out of that is unclear," Garlick said.

In Janoo's primary win over the childcare advocate Aly Richards, he added, one of the key differences was Janoo didn't shy away from saying that she supports new taxes.

"And I see this election as kind of a litmus test on that," Garlick said.

The governor argues that his so-far unspecified tax reduction plan will put more money in Vermonters' pockets and encourage more people to move to the state. Only with a larger tax base can Vermont solve its biggest challenges, he said, which include the high cost of healthcare as well as a lack of workers and housing they can

afford.

In contrast, "why is their answer to every problem always another tax, fee and more spending?" his campaign said in a social media post last month, referring to Janoo and Democratic leaders in the Legislature. "That's what got us into the affordability crisis and no amount of new spending or higher taxes is going to get us out."

But Janoo — who says some details of her tax proposals will need to be worked out in the future — thinks Scott's decade-long refrain as governor against new taxes and fees hasn't helped the state make progress. She says the state already has access to the resources it needs to solve its biggest challenges, if only it would better use them.

"Phil Scott's definition of affordability is tax cuts. My definition of affordability is: How affordable is your life? And, you know, basic needs?" she said in an interview. "Taxes are one of the levers, or tools, that we can utilize as a way to achieve that."

TAXING THE RICH

Janoo has sustained support for an idea that's made inroads with left-leaning members of the Legislature in recent years:

(See Governor, Page 22D)

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Andy Klein, Republican, State Senate

1) **EDUCATION** “Best” compromise? No. Primarily because the savings were never fully modeled. There was never an audited merger-vs-no-merger analysis covering one-time costs, ongoing costs and the impact on taxpayers. Act 170 incentivizes towns to merge before anyone has shown that merging will save money. That’s leaning toward the answer before doing the math.

Consolidation will likely address part of the cost curve, but it’s bad policy to pass a law without a better understanding of the financial impact. That’s part of the reason the state finds itself where it is.

The spending numbers have to change. Education Fund spending has grown from about \$1.6 billion to a projected \$2.5 billion in roughly a decade. Vermont has more school staff per student than any other state. Health benefits for school employees are approaching \$400 million a year, and Act 170 does nothing to address them. Reducing administrative costs and rightsizing our schools to match today’s student population are likely the direction the state must go.

But that’s only one side of the ledger. K-12 enrollment is down more than 20 percent since 2003, and the buildings, staff and costs didn’t shrink with it. The same bill is split among fewer students and fewer families. The other side of the ledger is growth: more housing, more jobs and more young families. Every student we add spreads those fixed costs further and lowers the cost per pupil for every taxpayer.

Before I vote, I’d want to see, and the public should see, a district-by-district table of dollars gained or lost, transition aid and estimated tax effects.

2) **HEALTH CARE** Neither. To understand what’s happening with health care and insurance costs, you have to step back and look at the drivers.

Vermont is getting older. From 2020 to 2024, the number of children fell 4.8% while Vermonters 65 and older grew 13.8%. We now have about 31% more seniors than children, and you cannot cost-cut your way out of a demographic trend. What you can do is fix what drives it: lack of housing, limited economic opportunity and a high cost of living. Fix those, and we change the trend.

Insurance works the same way. It spreads risk across many people, and Vermont’s pools are small and older. Community rating means a 25-year-old and a 64-year-old in the same plan generally pay the same premium. That keeps coverage affordable for older and sicker people, but it raises the price for the young and healthy, and some skip coverage, leaving the pool older and more expensive.

Single payer isn’t the answer. Federal



ANDY KLEIN OF
NEW HAVEN

law blocks Vermont from putting large self-insured employers into a state plan, and Medicare and Medicaid dollars can only be redirected with federal permission that a future administration could revoke. Vermont tried this and dropped it in 2014.

Capping prices doesn’t work either. It doesn’t make care cheaper; it moves the loss somewhere else, into layoffs like Porter’s or a weaker insurer. California held homeowners insurance rates down, and major

insurers stopped writing new policies. Vermont has only two marketplace insurers.

Instead: go after what care actually costs, starting with posted prices. Explore pooling risk with neighboring states. And grow the working-age population, which makes the pool larger, younger and cheaper for everyone. Don’t fight market economics or treat Vermont as an island. We aren’t.

3) **HOUSING** Vermont doesn’t just need workforce housing. It needs housing for every stage of life: a first apartment, a starter home, a bigger home for a growing family, and a smaller one close to town when the kids are grown.

First, predictability in statute: published permit timelines with real reporting, agencies reviewing at the same time instead of one after another, and one point of contact who tells an applicant what’s needed and in what order.

Second, there are well-established best practices for adding housing without fundamentally changing the character of a town. Make accessory dwelling units easy to build. Eliminate minimum parking requirements. Use contextual setbacks, so a new building lines up with its neighbors instead of following one townwide rule. And adopt form-based codes. You still protect the character of the neighborhood, but the decisions about what you can build are made up front, they’re clear, and the rules come from the residents themselves. Form-based code isn’t about changing what a town looks like; it’s about making the rules clear before anyone builds.

Vermont already has the toolkit. The state’s Enabling Better Places zoning guide includes model bylaws for ADUs, parking, village centers and downtowns, and towns that adopt them qualify for bylaw modernization grants. I would support studying a state-approved form-based code library that towns can adopt by local vote, with an Act 250 exemption for qualifying projects in towns that adopt one, planning grants for small towns without staff, and a public housing-production target with a dashboard to track it.

Critically, it’s voluntary, with no state
(See Klein, Page 7D)

Hannah Sessions, Democrat, State Senate

1) **EDUCATION** I believe that Act 170 does some things right. I value the fact that it puts merger decisions back into the hands of communities, who know themselves best, to think creatively and pragmatically. We have seen communities do great things with that already.

In Rochester, for instance, they are converting their old high school building into the “Valley Hub”, a multi-functional community center. At Otter Valley, where I served on the Act 46 merger committee, we maintained a

“small school” model and offered school choice within our district so that kids could migrate to a school that suited them.

A private daycare also now operates on location with a state-funded preschool program, so that working families have day care options. Act 170 will allow communities to come up with these kinds of solutions that work for them, rather than force a change from Montpelier that is counter-productive for rural and small school communities.

I also appreciate that Act 170 “weights” students — in other words, it gives school districts more funding to offset the (significantly higher) costs of educating students with higher needs. This is not only fair, but it also means that more affluent districts will be willing to partner with neighboring districts.

However, I also have some reservations about Act 170. What it doesn’t do — and in fact, what many proposals targeting the cost of education in this state don’t do — is address the elephant in the room: health care costs! I will get into that in the next question.

2) **HEALTH CARE** Health care costs are the real driver behind so many of the budgetary and quality of life problems in our state. I hated to see the job cuts in our local hospitals, especially now that health care professionals doing essential work are already stretched thin. We all know how long it takes to get an appointment or see a doctor as it is! Meanwhile, people are dropping their insurance because they can’t afford it, further stressing our emergency rooms.

We are not the only state struggling with this and we need to work together to find and fund solutions. And solutions are out there. A University of Oregon (www.oregon.gov) study found that every dollar invested in Primary Care saves thirteen dollars in emergency care. We led the nation with Dr Dynasaur and we can do the same with Universal Primary Care.

There are interim solutions, too, as we can see in some towns, which are not waiting for the state but coming up with their own innovative solutions. For example, Tunbridge has hired a town nurse. We already have excellent programs here in Addison County like the Open Door Clinic, Mountain Health



HANNAH SESSIONS
OF LEICESTER

FQHC, and Addison County Home Health and Hospice, which can also benefit from additional government support.

I look forward to investigating how to provide that support should I be elected. I will also learn more from the Green Mountain Care Board and from our communities about their cost saving measures. Finally, I am committed to pursuing various paths towards comprehensive primary care as part of a healthy and

affordable Vermont.

3) **HOUSING** One of the best parts of door-to-door campaigning has been seeing how folks in our district are making it work with housing. Whether it’s siblings or friends buying a home together, multi-generational living, a farmhouse turned into four apartments, an ADU in the yard or an apartment above the garage, people in our district are creative. Still, the squeeze on people is real, and it’s having a huge effect on our way of life and our economy. Securing more affordable housing is one of the most pressing issues facing Vermont. The good news is that it is definitely one we can do something about.

If elected, I would encourage affordable housing by supporting successful, nimble, citizen-led solutions like home sharing and organizations like Addison Housing Works. Legislators also need to be open to regulatory reform, to foster creativity and reduce the time and cost of housing solutions. We should consider financial subsidies and other incentives to get more housing stock online.

We also need to be sure that when houses are purchased, they are used as homes and not investments. Vermont is second in the nation only to Maine for home vacancies. A full 20% of our homes are vacant for a majority of the year. That’s one in five of the homes that could be sheltering employees, families, and recent graduates, just standing idle. What’s more, in many towns, non-residents actually pay fewer taxes than residents. A higher tax on second homes could put some downward pressure on residents’ tax burden. It would also encourage more folks to live here full-time, thus expanding our tax base.

Addressing our housing crisis will take input from many sectors (developers, wastewater experts, those experienced in transportation, utilities and more). I look forward to getting those perspectives to the table to get practical results for our communities.

4) **BUSINESS** As a small business owner, I know it’s crucial for Vermont to promote business growth and economic development. We need to constantly reevaluate, seeking opportunities and
(See Sessions, Page 7D)

ANDREW KLEIN

VERMONT STATE SENATE • ADDISON DISTRICT

**Common sense. Real results.
Practical, not partisan.**



"Vermont doesn't need to change. Our policies do — so our kids can stay."

IT'S TIME TO HOLD OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES ACCOUNTABLE

We've known Vermont's problems for years. Montpelier chose not to fix them.

■ Heating fuel

Overrode the Governor's veto on the Clean Heat mandate. The Senate blocked repeal in 2025.

■ School taxes

Spent \$100.9 million in one-time money to hold down property taxes. The bill comes due later.

■ Housing

Overrode a veto on Act 181's land-use overhaul. Two years later, repealed parts of it.

■ Health care

Still not tackling what drives our premiums: the cost of care and shrinking insurance pools.

| Each was a choice. It's time to bring balance to Montpelier.

GOVERNOR

JIM DOUGLAS

ENDORSES ANDY

"My years serving Vermont and Addison County have shown me the importance of leaders who listen, work with others, and deliver practical results. Andy's commitment to public service, economic opportunity, and affordability makes him a strong candidate for the State Senate. I am pleased to endorse Andy and support his campaign."

— Former Governor Jim Douglas



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Sen. Ruth Hardy, Democrat, State Senate

1) **EDUCATION** I played a large role in negotiating the Act 170 compromise after two years of debate, study, and legislation regarding “education transformation.” Like with any major legislation supported by all parties, both houses in the Legislature, and the Governor, it includes many compromises and concessions. My goal was to protect rural public schools and local democratic decision-making, and make policy that leads toward a better education system at a cost Vermonters could afford.

SEN. RUTH HARDY
OF MIDDLEBURY

We know that property taxes are too high. However, Vermonters told us they don’t want the state closing their schools or telling them how to reorganize their school districts, as proposed by the Governor. Act 170 creates a facilitated process for local communities to decide if and how to merge school districts, with a local vote in March 2028. Act 170 also requires school districts to form cooperative educational service agencies (CESAs) to lower costs and share some services such as IT, transportation, and some special education. The legislation also advances important tax changes, including creating a second home tax classification so Vermont residents could pay a lower property tax rate, and a new funding formula to equalize the amount each community spends per student. It also identifies funding to upgrade our dilapidated school buildings.

Act 170 does not solve all of the education problems, and if I had been in charge, I would have approached education reform differently from the start of the biennium. But given where the conversation was this past session, the compromise in Act 170 moves forward with important reforms, and includes safeguards to make sure there are opportunities to adjust along the way. I have written several pieces about the education reform process over the past biennium, found on my website at ruthforvermont.com/updates.

2) **HEALTH CARE** Reining in health care costs is critical, but not by jeopardizing the quality of care. Vermont has some of the nation’s highest insurance rates and hospital costs, and health care is a cost-driver for most other budgets. Hospital rates and prescription drug prices drive health care costs in Vermont, so GMB’s effort to reduce hospital revenue targets these high costs, but it’s important to calibrate reductions to protect patient care and access.

The Legislature required GMBC to design a reference-based pricing system for hospitals to lower healthcare costs in Vermont. We also passed legislation capping the amount hospitals can charge for outpatient prescription medications used to treat cancer and chronic illnesses. In addition, we expanded the scope of practice for certain health care professionals, including pharmacists, optometrists, and psychologists, to lower costs and increase access to certain services.

Porter Hospital is a stand-out for providing good care and reducing costs, with strong community ties and leadership over the past several years. Health care providers like Mountain Health FQHC, CSAC, Home Health & Hospice, and many local health care practices are doing incredible work to serve our community without driving up costs, and need more support.

There is more work to be done to truly reform our health care system. I would support universal primary care and

more, if we could find an affordable, viable path forward. Unfortunately, because so much of the health care system is funded and overseen at the federal level, tiny Vermont is limited in what we can do. Federal Republicans are making health care more expensive and less accessible and Governor Scott is proposing measures to further de-stabilize our fragile health insurance market. Without a Governor and federal government on board, positive systemic reforms are unlikely to move forward. We need willing partners to make it work.

3) **HOUSING** There is no single solution to improving the affordability and availability of housing in Vermont, and Vermont is not alone in facing this issue. However, we have some of the oldest housing stock in the nation, and Vermont’s large single-family homes often do not meet the needs of smaller 21st century households. Thus, we need to upgrade and restructure our current housing stock, and also build new smaller units, ideally close to public transportation, workplaces, schools, and services.

Over the past several years, the legislature has focused a lot of attention on housing policy, including easing regulations and better planning for building duplexes, auxiliary dwelling units, and housing in downtowns (HOME Act & Act 181); investing in programs to improve rental housing (VHIP); funding housing infrastructure (CHIP); and building affordable housing (VHCB & VHFA). I have been supportive of these efforts to expand and improve affordable housing options, but unfortunately, Governor Scott’s punitive approach to homelessness has made the housing crisis worse.

To ensure new housing is affordable, we need to invest more public funding for low-cost solutions like manufactured homes, multi-family dwellings, right-sized homes for seniors, and supportive housing for Vermonters with special needs. These types of projects the private market alone will not support, so public funding is necessary, ideally through well-respected local organizations like Addison Housing Works. In addition, continued funding for municipal infrastructure improvements including water, sewer & septic, and stormwater projects is crucial to be able to support additional housing. Finally, low-

(See Hardy, Page 6D)

Steven Heffernan, Republican, State Senate

1) **EDUCATION** Candidly, no, I don’t believe Act 170 was the best compromise. After studying this issue as a member of the Senate Education Committee for two years, I don’t believe the move to Cooperative Educational Service Areas (CESAs) is going to be a silver bullet that meaningfully improves educational outcomes for our kids or reduces property taxes. I think this could wind up creating more bureaucracy and potentially even increase costs. There is good reason

SEN. STEVEN
HEFFERNAN OF
BRISTOL

why this bill had opposition from both sides of the aisle in the Legislature, despite the best intentions of the bill sponsors.

Here’s the fundamental problem: Vermonters are paying more, but our kids and grandkids are getting less. In Addison County, roughly 60% of third graders aren’t proficient in math, yet our property tax burden keeps climbing to among the highest in the nation. In fact, we’ve lost nearly 30,000 students from our K-12 education system since the 1990s, and yet we’re spending more now than ever. That’s not fair to our students, and it’s not affordable for taxpayers. Until we address the root causes of these issues, we’ll be stuck in the same hole.

One idea I’m open to is moving the Education Property Tax Credit to the General Fund, which would save Vermonters about \$1,400 in property taxes on a \$400,000 home. At the bare minimum, we need to hold the line against egregious property tax increases. It is patently unfair for, say, a retired couple in New Haven living on a fixed income to have to keep dipping into their dwindling nest egg to pay their ever-rising property taxes.

I also think that, through meaningful health care reform, we can get at some of the largest cost-drivers behind our education system (e.g. teachers’ and staff health care costs).

2) **HEALTH CARE** The problem is that the state hasn’t done enough on health care reform for years now. Consider this: a single mom in Middlebury with a young child will pay nearly \$20,000 in annual health insurance premiums to afford the *cheapest* unsubsidized plan available—and that’s before a nearly \$10,000 deductible. Does anyone on this planet think that’s affordable or even remotely acceptable?

The bottom line is that what Vermonters are getting when it comes to health care is simply not working. Our cheapest premiums have roughly doubled compared to before the pandemic, all while insurers and doctors alike flee the state, and Vermonters are forced into narrower networks with fewer choices.

We don’t need to reinvent the wheel here. We can look to what has worked in other states. In New Hampshire, for

example, that same single mom can buy a better plan with more robust coverage for about 60% less.

Governor Scott has recently offered a menu of options to introduce premium flexibilities that 48 other states use, allow for low-cost alternative coverage options, make it easier for small businesses to offer health care, and more. We need to act on the proven approaches that other states have deployed in order to make Vermont’s health care

system more affordable.

At the same time, we need to 1) support robust health care price transparency, 2) invest in our rural health care workforce, and 3) champion reforms that promote predictability and stability for our health care providers.

3) **HOUSING** This past legislative session, we made great strides in expanding access to workforce housing. These include: repealing the most onerous aspects of Act 181, creating the CHIP program (which is the largest municipal investment vehicle in state history, including for housing investments), growing the VHIP program (which is used to redevelop blighted properties), codifying the Rental Housing Revolving Loan Fund Program, creating the Service-Supported Housing Advisory Council (to help individuals with disabilities have access to housing), preempting some of the most onerous zoning restrictions on housing, extending certain Act 250 flexibilities, and more.

I was proud to support each of these legislative actions that passed in a bipartisan fashion.

These are meaningful steps, but our work is far from over. Every Vermonter deserves to be able to afford to live in the community in which they work.

In future legislative sessions, I’d be supportive of finding additional ways to provide Act 250 relief for housing investments. This should include identifying areas of duplication and redundancy between Act 250 permits and other state and local permitting requirements.

Additionally, in January of 2027, the Legislature will be receiving a report from the Department of Housing and Community Development on ways to streamline the appeal process for municipal permits related to housing. The Department’s recommendations might shine further light on legislative actions we can take.

Lastly, taking steps to address the massive property tax burden is equally important. Property taxes not only represent a significant cost for homeowners, but they are also passed

(See Heffernan, Page 6D)

cost housing programs like HomeShare Vermont and support for multi-generational and communal living are beneficial options to provide affordable housing for younger and older Vermonters.

4) **BUSINESS** Two factors limiting business growth in Vermont have been the lack of housing and childcare for employees. Vermont's Childcare Law, which I helped design, greatly expanded access and affordability for childcare, enabling more parents to work. As addressed above, we still have work to create affordable housing options.

We have passed beneficial tax changes for businesses, including reforms to the corporate tax code to benefit Vermont-based businesses. We have expanded tax credits to support businesses and build housing, including the down-payment assistance and downtown investment tax credits, and the business research & development tax credit.

Many of Vermont's major employers are not private businesses, but rather education, health care, and non-profit organizations which drive economic activity in our communities. Middlebury College, Porter Hospital, and our public school systems are our largest local employers, and local arts organizations create a thriving creative economy.

Vermont businesses have been hit hard by federal Republican policies, including trade tariffs, high fuel costs, and ICE raids that

reduce the workforce. These Republican policies are creating an economy that thwarts economic development and cannot be easily offset with state policies. Finally, responsible business growth includes protections for workers and the ability to unionize if workers desire.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Vermonters truly value our state's natural resources and healthy environment, and we all share responsibility for their care and protection. For example, many Vermonters have stepped up to protect Lake Champlain after it became clear that its waters were polluted with phosphorus. State policies required farmers to change their agricultural practices, towns to upgrade their wastewater systems, and businesses to improve their stormwater systems. This work hasn't been easy or cheap, but it's been crucial to protecting one of Vermont's most critical natural resources.

Balancing private personal property rights with the protection of shared public natural resources is challenging, and requires constant adjustment as needs change, science advances, and priorities shift. As climate change deepens and natural disasters increase, we need to create resilient infrastructure and protect natural resources, such as wetlands, forests, and river corridors, that mitigate climate-caused damage. At the same time, we have to make sure that certain populations, including lower-income people, rural folks, and Vermonters of color, don't bear the brunt of costly or disruptive mitigation efforts. We have to listen, analyze, adjust, and sometimes compensate landowners when programs or practices need to change.

Heffernan

along to renters in the form of increased rent. Tackling high property taxes is extremely important to promoting housing affordability.

4) **BUSINESS** No, the state has not done enough to promote business growth—particularly for the rural communities that once made up the backbone of our state’s economy. From Bristol to Bridport, our farms, foresters, and other working lands operators have felt left behind by legislation like Act 181 that threatens their Hefernan, Steven_4455 July 2024 very way of life. I was proud to help lead the effort to repeal the most egregious components of Act 181

I was especially disappointed that my seatmate, Senator Ruth Hardy, not only voted for Act 181, but voted to override Governor Scott's veto to make absolutely sure it took effect. Then, when I offered an amendment to roll-back its worst provisions, she voted "no." Only after Legislative Leadership gave the "OK" sign did Senator Hardy finally change her tune and vote the right way. But it shouldn't take four votes to get it right.

Regardless, there is more we can do to support our local businesses, including reducing our property tax burden, streamlining permitting processes, further supporting exemptions for on-

farm accessory businesses from Act 250 mandates, lowering health care costs for employers and employees alike, and more.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** As local Middlebury resident and former Governor Jim Douglas once said, “The choice we face today is not a choice between jobs or the environment. It is a choice between both or neither. I believe in a third way – The Vermont Way – that recognizes the codependence of our economy and our environment.”

I think that quote is especially relevant today: the choice we face isn't between a strong environment and property rights. It's a choice between both, or neither.

Our working lands operators are stewards of the land. Our farmers know their property better than a bureaucrat in Montpelier does. It's one of the reasons that we should strongly consider counting our Current Use program towards our conserved land requirements. But it's also why top-down mandates like Act 181 simply don't work: they don't consider the reality on the ground faced by rural Vermonters.

There are steps we can continue to take to be good stewards of our environment. For example, this past session, we passed bipartisan legislation to allow small-scale solar to use expedited registration, but imposed a setback requirement. This bill passed overwhelmingly, and represents the type of balance we need to take on this issue.

BRISTOL • LINCOLN • MONKTON • STARKSBORO

Karen Lueders for Vermont House

I am guided by Martin Luther King, Jr.:
"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Letter from Birmingham Jail, 4/16/1963



Jeanne Albert

for Vermont House

Defending and strengthening our democratic system of self-governance requires vigilance and vision.



Karen and Jeanne are a strong, complimentary team, passionate about:

- Data driven, deeply researched, problem solving
- Protecting and strengthening civil rights, due process, and rule of law
- Helping Vermonters!

We are ready and energized to address Vermont's interconnected challenges and opportunities, for the benefit of all:

- Affordable Homes
- Affordable & Accessible Health Care
- Quality Education, Reasonably Funded
- Property Tax Relief
- Environmental Protection & Stewardship
- Small Business Growth and Vitality
- Keeping our Democratic Voices Strong & Effective

Vote for BOTH Karen and Jeanne! Early voting has started!

Paid by: Jeanne Albert for Vermont House • PO Box 138, Bristol, VT 05443 | Campaign to elect Karen Lueders • PO Box 228, Bristol, VT 05443

Klein

(Continued from Page 3D)

override of local zoning. Towns that participate benefit, and no town loses local control.

4) **BUSINESS** No. The biggest barrier isn't the rules. It's not knowing. I've run a business. You can plan around a rule you don't like; you cannot plan around not knowing. Act 250 issued 384 decisions last year and denied none, but the 40-day hearing deadline for major projects averaged 102 days. The system rarely says no. It says wait.

I would:
Put predictability in statute: published permit timelines, agencies reviewing at the same time, and one point of contact for every applicant.

Create a Vermont Growth Office reporting to the Governor, with one job: growing our population, businesses and tax base, and a yearly scorecard against Maine and New Hampshire.

Fix the small-business tax bracket. Our top 8.5% corporate rate starts at \$25,001, so a shop clearing \$30,000 pays the same rate as a large corporation.

Make our incentives competitive when the decision is made. Other states cut costs on day one; ours pays later. We can match them without giving up accountability.

Build the workforce: expand career and technical education and recognize

professional licenses from other states.

Build housing, because employers can't hire workers who have nowhere to live.

Growth is how we afford everything else.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Yes. These aren't opposites most of the time. Vermonters who own land are often its best stewards; they have the most at stake in keeping it healthy.

Where they do conflict, I lean toward giving landowners the benefit of the doubt. Regulation should solve a demonstrated problem, not guard against a hypothetical one. The public's interest comes first when the harm reaches beyond the property line, into a river, a neighbor's well or a shared resource.

That's the test I'd apply. What you do on your own land is largely your business. Runoff that ends up in Otter Creek and Lake Champlain, contamination that reaches a neighbor's drinking water, or filling a wetland that protects the town downstream from flooding is everyone's business.

When the state does step in, it should be clear about the rule before someone buys the land and aim at the actual harm rather than a whole category of property. Farmers and landowners who protect water quality are providing a public service. We should treat them that way.

Sessions

(Continued from Page 3D)

encouraging innovation within existing industries as well as emerging ones.

As a cheesemaker I know the Vermont brand has tremendous value — according to a VT Digger 2015 article, "made in Vermont" on a product means a 10% markup! As a legislator and a small business owner I will always have the value of the Vermont brand in mind.

That said, we don't exist in a bubble. I will look to neighboring states to see what their incentives are for industries. Bringing experts to the table and encouraging growth is key to a successful and thriving industry across Vermont.

At the same time, I know the real pressure on local businesses from private equity investors, and I will support ways to keep Vermont businesses independent, because it means a stronger economy and businesses that are committed to our communities.

We have led the way in innovative and fair housing, healthcare and childcare policy, and need to continue to compete by making Vermont a place businesses and workers want to settle.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Protecting personal property rights while balancing the public's right to a clean, healthy and beautiful environment is something I believe all Vermonters value. After all, our motto is "Freedom and Unity"! We

care for one another and this state, and we want to preserve our individual autonomy and traditions.

I have been farming for the past 26 years and can attest to the fact that farmers care deeply about protecting Vermont's scenic vistas, soils, waterways and lakes while feeding people. As a goat dairy farmer, I feel I would bring an important and pragmatic perspective to Montpelier: that of someone who works the land and makes food. I am also proud to serve on the board of the Vermont Land Trust, which works with landowners to conserve their properties. 27% of the state of Vermont is already conserved and we need to continue this voluntary initiative as environmental pressures mount.

Looking ahead as we meet the challenge of feeding ourselves in a changing climate it's important to include many voices and remember that Vermont can have it all: a working landscape that provides for us and all beings, plus housing, and infrastructure done right.



ADDISON COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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Jonathan Hescock, Democrat, Addison-Rutland House

1) **EDUCATION** I think Act 170 was a good compromise. No one got what they initially wanted, yet progress was made towards reducing costs and improving student outcomes. Act 170 demonstrated that democracy still works in Vermont. The Governor and legislators all had to make concessions and create new solutions based on house members hearing from their constituents.

As I talk with folks in my district, clearly, property taxes and education reforms are some of the most important issues. Yet, folks are also concerned about how the closing of their elementary schools will impact their communities and the continued loss of local control.

Only one of the five towns in my district has an elementary school. For me, a positive observation has been witnessing community members working together to build new ways for people to come together. There are a lot of parts in Act 170 and Act 73 that have yet to be implemented. We are just beginning to organize the seven Cooperative Educational Service Areas (CESAs). I worry some that the CESA's are yet another layer of bureaucracy, yet many states already have them and they have shown to be effective at sharing services and reducing costs.

Eliminating mandatory school mergers was a key concession, yet requiring schools to study possible mergers can help to plan for the future. Adapting the foundation formula for statewide school funding and creating new regional assessment districts are two areas that require further legislative action and community input.

2) **HEALTH CARE** Longterm, universal health care is the answer but requires implementation at the federal or regional level. Without universal health care, Vermonters will continue to have segments of our population with either no insurance or under-insured, medical debt will continue to destroy families and their children's futures, and rob hard working Vermonters of their life savings and homes.

Vermont's efforts on health care reform are admirable given the hand they are dealt. A large portion of Vermont's health care funding and regulations are federal. Although it's a fine line between lowering costs and keeping our hospitals economically viable, the Green Mountain Care Board has shown that it is willing to work at lowering health care costs for Vermonters. Of course the elephant in the room is a federal government with no health care plan and intent on transferring health care responsibilities to the states. Recently, Vermonters lost 72 million in ACA subsidies. Much of the current hospital reductions are a result of



JONATHAN HESCOCK OF SHOREHAM

planned cuts in Medicare and Medicaid.

While visiting folks in my district I have witnessed firsthand the real costs of our dysfunctional health care system, nurses who have devoted their lives to the care of others are continually stretched beyond reasonable work expectations. Health care in Vermont is at a crisis and Vermont's most pressing problem. Vermont doesn't have the means to fully solve our current health care crisis, but we need to prioritize and redirect what we can to helping Vermonters

with their health care. I would like to see Dr. Dynasaur expanded and remove income-based cliffs which kick people out of programs for a more gradual approach. Let's reconsider reference-based pricing, explore international health care professionals, and certainly consider the efforts towards a Vermont universal primary care program.

3) **HOUSING** As a business owner, a past renter, a current landlord and contractor I have experienced firsthand the many sides of our housing crisis. The solution to our housing crisis can only be met through a variety of initiatives some of which are already in place and require time before we see their impact on housing. Legislative initiatives during the past four years have yielded a variety of laws. Legislators have recognized, which I support, a multiprong approach to our housing crisis which includes, developing more financial tools for new homes, land use policies, infrastructure, modernizing laws around manufactured homes and accessory dwelling units, homelessness initiatives, and rehabilitations of existing homes.

We still need to devote more resources and continue to reform our permitting and zoning laws to better meet the needs of Vermonters. Additionally, we need policies that not only address tenants, but also create safeguards and support for landlords. Too many homeowners would rather have their property sit vacant than risk renting their place out.

I support further modernization of Act 250, fast tracking of complying minor subdivisions, and continuing our investments in the Vermont Housing Improvement Program and the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program.

4) **BUSINESS** Vermont needs to do more to promote business growth. If we want to have the resources to fund the many programs, services and endeavors important to Vermonters we will need to continue to grow our tax base. If we want to make Vermont more affordable while protecting our environment and way of life, we as legislators, will need to promote business growth. Act 250 has

Rep. Jim Casey, Republican, Addison-Rutland House

1) **EDUCATION** Act 170 is a positive step in the right direction; it's a compromise that lawmakers and the governor could agree on. Instead of forcing a one-size-fits all solution, the law creates a practical, multi-year framework for regional cooperation and data gathering. While it doesn't solve every financial challenge immediately, it provides a foundation that can be adjusted in the future as towns begin to implement.

2) **HEALTH CARE** We cannot allow top-down regulatory caps to strip medical care from rural Vermonters. My focus is making healthcare affordable while ensuring that when a family in our town faces an emergency, a high-quality local hospital is staffed and ready to treat them.

3) **HOUSING** A common-sense approach to affordable housing in Vermont focuses on cutting red tape, lowering building costs, and empowering local property owners without raising your taxes. This would involve reforming Act 250 to stop the bureaucratic delays and fast-track housing projects in town centers. Zoning red tape needs to be cut — property owners should have the right to build duplexes and accessory units to create rental income for their families and additional housing for young workers. Additionally, we should partner with our regional technical centers to train the newest generation of carpenters, plumbers, and electricians in order to solve the labor shortages that drive up construction costs. By removing government barriers and trusting the free market, we can make Vermont affordable for the people who



REP. JIM CASEY OF HUBBARDTON

live and work here.

4) **BUSINESS** I think the state could do more to promote business growth by getting out of the way and cutting red tape that prevents businesses from starting and succeeding. We need to streamline land-use and environmental laws so local businesses, family farms, and outdoor recreation businesses can expand without lengthy bureaucratic delays. I oppose new payroll and corporate tax hikes that prevent Vermont from competing with our

neighboring states.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Montpelier is forgetting that our communities are places where people need to live and work — including making money from their land through farming and other rural businesses. Look no further than Act 181 which is a top-down land-use overhaul pushed by the legislative supermajority without input from farmers and those who actually live in rural towns. Act 181 was pitched as "smart growth," but its true impact on rural Addison County was an aggressive overreach on personal property rights. Thanks to hundreds of local farmers and working Vermonters who stood up and protested, the legislature was forced to roll back the worst of Act 181 — the road rule and Tier 3 designation overreaches.

Rural Vermont families shouldn't have to beg the state for permission to use their own land. I am running to stop the remnants of Act 181 and replace them with common-sense rules that respect our towns, lower building costs, and trust Vermonters to protect the landscape we love. Let's bring balance back to Vermont.

helped to shape the Vermont we know today, unfortunately it may have been too stringent. We need to overhaul Act 250 so that it better serves our current needs and allows for the type of growth consistent with Vermont's values. Vermont has become overly bureaucratic, while some legislative initiatives have addressed areas, much work still needs to be done. Permitting of subdivisions and building permits lack consistency from town to town.

There should be a fast track for complying, minor subdivisions and Act 250 reviews. Vermont is home for artisanal farmers, micro-producers, agro-tourism, and micro breweries, yet compared to adjoining states often we require 2 or 3 times as many permits and licenses in order to operate. Our state government needs to consider how to consolidate, simplify, and occasionally eliminate regulations.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Protecting personal property rights while also ensuring the public's right for a healthy

environment does not have to be a zero sum game. Most often the issue is not environmentalism/conservation versus working lands/ development, but a question of degree. I am a farmer at heart with seven generations of Vermont hill farmers behind me. I view Vermont as a rural state supporting sound agricultural practices and sustainable management of our working landscape. The most important questions when creating land use laws should be how they actually affect our communities, impact our neighbors, land, air, water, and promote the kind of Vermont we want to live in and pass on to future generations. Consultation with all groups involved at the initial stages of drafting legislation can help to avoid top-down unrealistic demands such as some of those originally proposed in Act 181.



ADDISON-5 • ADDISON-5 • ADDISON-5 • ADDISON-5 • ADDISON-5

Rep. Jubilee McGill, Democrat, Addison-5 House

1) **EDUCATION** Act 170 contains important pieces that I supported, especially the creation of Cooperative Educational Service Areas and a stronger framework for regional collaboration, but I don't believe consolidation should be treated as the primary tool for bending the education cost curve.

The School District Redistricting Task Force worked tirelessly and reached a really important conclusion, many of Vermont's biggest education cost drivers are NOT caused by district boundaries. Health insurance is one of the largest and fastest-growing components of education spending, while special education, mental-health supports, aging buildings, transportation, and increasingly complex student needs are also significant budget pressures. Declining enrollment makes those costs harder to absorb, but just drawing bigger districts will not make them disappear.

I believe we should be aggressively pursuing shared services through CESAs and cooperative agreements, sharing specialized staff, transportation, purchasing, technology, professional development, and administrative functions across districts. That can reduce duplication without automatically sacrificing local schools or community voice.

We also need to stop asking the Education Fund to carry costs created by failures elsewhere in our systems. Schools increasingly provide mental-health care, social services, and other supports. I want to build community schools where those services are coordinated in one trusted place, while bringing healthcare, human-services, workforce, and other funding streams to the table rather than putting the entire burden on property taxpayers.

Declining enrollment does require adaptation, and voluntary mergers make sense in some communities. Shared staffing, regional programs, or repurposing underused space may make more sense in others. The goal should be measurable savings and stronger educational opportunities for Vermont's students, and not consolidation for its own sake.

2) **HEALTH CARE** I believe Vermont needs a fundamental change. We must control health care costs, but cutting hospital budgets year after year is not the same thing as fixing the health care system.



REP. JUBILEE MCGILL

The recent UVM Health workforce reductions are another reminder of how strained the system has become. Vermonters continue to face high premiums, deductibles and out-of-pocket costs, while many struggle to find a primary care provider. We shouldn't have to choose between making health care affordable and protecting the local providers and hospitals our communities depend on.

For me, there is also a clear mandate from the people I represent. This year, voters in three of the four towns in my district; Middlebury, Weybridge and New Haven, passed resolutions supporting action toward universal health care, beginning with publicly financed universal primary care. I take that direction from my constituents seriously.

I support moving Vermont toward universal health care, with primary and preventive care as the first step. Every Vermonter should be able to see a primary care provider without worrying about a copay, deductible or whether they can afford the visit. We should strengthen community health centers, rural practices, community nurses, mental-health care, independent pharmacies and school-based care so people get help before a manageable problem becomes an expensive emergency.

I also support efforts like reference-based pricing to address the disparities in what hospitals are paid for the same services. Vermont is beginning that work under Act 68. But regulating prices alone will not solve the administrative waste and fragmentation built into our current system. We spend an enormous amount on health care already. The question is whether those dollars are buying Vermonters better health. I believe we can build a system that costs less, protects our local providers, and guarantees care based on need rather than ability to pay.

3) **HOUSING** My focus is on both building more homes and making sure the homes we build remain affordable and accessible to the people who live here.

I want Vermont's tax system to distinguish between homes that strengthen our communities and homes primarily used as investments. We started that work by creating a third property category in Act 73 and Act 170. I would build on it by asking luxury second homes, commercial vacation rentals, vacant investment properties and large corporate owners to contribute more, while protecting

primary residences, long-term rentals, permanently affordable housing, and small local landlords.

I would invest much more heavily in community land trusts, housing cooperatives and shared-equity homeownership, which create homes that remain affordable for future buyers. We also need affordable financing and technical assistance for first-time homebuyers, owner-builders, accessory dwelling units, multigenerational housing and small local builders, while converting vacant schools, churches, motels and other underused buildings into homes.

But our housing strategy must include people who cannot be served by the private housing market alone. I support expanding permanent supportive housing, with access to voluntary mental-health, substance-use, employment, and other services. We also need more service-supported, accessible housing for Vermonters with disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities so people can live safely and with dignity in their own communities.

Finally, we need more carpenters, electricians, plumbers and other skilled tradespeople through CTE, apprenticeships and partnerships with local builders. The goal should not just be more "units." It should be more homes that Vermonters can afford to remain in long term, including people who need services and support to make that possible.

4) **BUSINESS** I don't think Vermont is doing enough to help the businesses already here, rooted in our communities, grow and succeed. The state has useful programs, and efforts like the new VTbuys procurement system are intended to make it easier for businesses to compete for state contracts, but I would like to see a much stronger focus on building our economy from the ground up.

That means making it easier for Vermont businesses to access affordable long-term capital, reducing unnecessary paperwork, and creating one-stop support where entrepreneurs can get help with financing, permitting, accounting, legal needs, and marketing. I also want the state to break large contracts into sizes that local businesses can realistically compete for and use public purchasing to buy more

from Vermont farms, manufacturers, and businesses.

We should help successful local businesses stay local when owners retire by supporting sales to employees, cooperatives, family members, and other Vermont buyers rather than losing those businesses to distant corporations and private equity.

Like tackling the housing crisis, economic development must include workforce development: stronger CTE programs, apprenticeships, and partnerships among employers, schools, colleges and unions. My goal is an economy where more wealth is created here, stays here, and circulates through our communities, supporting good jobs, strong downtowns, and locally owned businesses.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** I believe we can protect both private property rights and the public's interest in clean water, fresh air, healthy land, and the Vermont landscape we all value. The key is making regulations evidence-based and proportionate to the harm they are intended to prevent.

I start from the principle that people should have meaningful freedom to use and care for their own property. That is especially important for farmers and foresters, whose working lands are not just private property but an important part of Vermont's economy, environment, and our treasured rural character.

At the same time, what happens on one property can affect an entire community. Pollution does not stop at a property line, and development can affect drinking water, flooding, wildlife habitat, as well as neighboring land.

When those interests conflict, I would ask: How serious and lasting is the potential public harm? Is it supported by good evidence? Is the proposed restriction narrowly tailored? And is there a less burdensome way to accomplish the same goal?

Landowners and communities should also be involved early in those conversations, rather than being handed regulations after the fact. Good environmental policy should protect what we share while respecting the people who live on and steward the land.

Write-in

Candidate for Addison County
VT Senate 2★26

Lesley J. Bienvenue, MBA, MED, EMG

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I am from out of state and I go to college in Vermont. Can I vote in Vermont?

Yes, any U.S. citizen who is 18 years old and who lives in Vermont can vote in Vermont if the voter considers Vermont to be his or her primary residence.

Sen. Steve Heffernan **IS WORKING TO MAKE VERMONT MORE AFFORDABLE**



Voted for Bipartisan Tax Relief¹

- ✓ **Extended the child tax credit** to more Vermont families.
- ✓ **Grew the Social Security tax break** to benefit retirees on fixed incomes.
- ✓ **Expanded the tax exemption for military retirement income**, along with a new tax credit for low-income veterans.
- ✓ **Increased the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** for Vermonters in poverty.

Voted to Protect Rural Vermont²

- ✓ **Repealed the most burdensome mandates of Act 181 on rural Vermont**, like Tier 3 zoning and the "Road Rule."
- ✓ **Secured the "Right to Farm"** by protecting farmers from frivolous lawsuits.
- ✓ **Established the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund** to support rural communities that are hit hard by weather disasters.
- ✓ **Exempted on-farm accessory businesses** from arduous permitting processes.

Voted to Secure Critical Investments in Our Communities³

- ✓ **Expanded transportation funding** for our roads, bridges, and other infrastructure needs.
- ✓ **Passed the Vermont Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP)**—the single-largest municipal infrastructure investment in state history—without raising taxes.
- ✓ **Dedicated resources to rehabilitating blighted workforce housing** to grow our housing supply.

1) Act 71 of the 2025 – 2026 biennium.

2) Acts 61, 78, and 152 of the 2025 – 2026 biennium.

3) Acts 43, 69, and 168 of the 2025 – 2026 biennium.

ADDISON-4 • ADDISON-4 • ADDISON-4 • ADDISON-4 • ADDISON-4

Karen Lueders, Democrat, Addison-4 House

1) **EDUCATION** Education Reform in Vermont is a complex work in progress.

We need larger regional secondary schools that increase offerings of all kinds and seamlessly incorporate access to CTEs (Career, Technical Education). Secondary students in our region deserve rich opportunities, far better than having several secondary schools with diminishing student populations and underutilized and mis-utilized teachers.

A community elementary school offers the very best start for the young child learner. In the 4 towns of Bristol, Lincoln, Monkton and Starksboro we have 4 well-sized and community-supported elementary schools. These schools are not the cost drivers, and to close such schools with the enduring negative impact on the communities and the students, is short-sighted and destructive. The focus for consolidation needs to be at the secondary level.

Unfortunately, right now a second home can be taxed at a lower rate than a primary residence. This must change. The Tax Department is working to accurately create the categories of second homes and short-term rentals to allow this change. I support this and believe it should be decoupled from any other pieces of education legislation and implemented immediately.

Cooperative Education Service Areas (CESAs) are a positive part of the most recent education legislation. They provides for flexible, voluntary, meaningful arrangements among a bundle of school districts regionally. CESAs have been proven to be a win-win in other states, in that they save money AND deliver better services and results, such as Special Education, professional development, mental health services, transportation, Human Resources, IT and technical support.

The new “mandatory-voluntary merger” requirement under the present legislation is premature. While the legislation does not mandate forced mergers, it is duplicative with the CESA effort. The timing of the merger discussion process does not allow time to see the effectiveness of CESA arrangements. The CESA effort will lead to well-informed, community-approved, restructuring.

The Education bill in its present form is not the best we can do, and yet, it contains positive elements and the ability to continue this essential work.

2) **HEALTH CARE** The time has come to provide universal access to primary health care in Vermont. Here is why.

As a member of the Health Care Committee of the House I spent many hours on this issue. It was the quiet and detailed testimony of our primary care providers that was the most compelling



REP. KAREN LUEDERS OF LINCOLN

for what we need to do as a state. Primary health care takes into account the whole person. Having a doctor-patient relationship over a period of years is invaluable. Every dollar spent on primary health care saves the health system an estimated \$13, and the qualitative results are better. Allocating more resources to primary health care will save lives, provide vastly better health outcomes, and will reduce costs.

In this effort our Health Care System desperately needs all of our highly qualified nurses, staff and doctors, in fact, we need more, most especially in the primary care specialty, and we should be willing to support their costly education (they need to pay their loans) and create incentives for them to stay and practice in Vermont, (where salaries might be less), and to be compensated according to the value they bring in both quality of care and cost savings to the system.

We are fortunate to have the UVM Hospital and the Medical School in Vermont, as well as the other hospitals that are geographically well-situated throughout the state. We need emergency rooms in these places and thoughtful locations for critical services such as maternity care and hospital-specific specialties distributed throughout the state. Transformation means moving toward a system that delivers medical care in the right way and in the right place and not everywhere in every place. It took many years to build the problem, and it will be a process to make the thoughtful and data-driven correction.

3) **HOUSING** We are fortunate in Addison County to have Addison Housing Works, the nonprofit that develops and manages permanently more than 850 affordable homes in the county. At present time there are 9 manufactured home communities consisting of 340 homes in the AHW portfolio. The manufactured home of today is well made, long-lasting, aesthetically designed, and under legislation passed last year has the full benefit of being real estate with conventional mortgage financing available. These are nice homes and these are affordable homes.

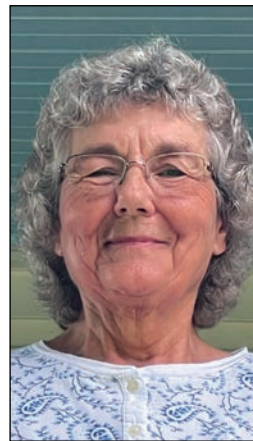
I am interested in identifying those sites in our rural towns that could support some congregate infrastructure, and if certain criteria are satisfied, have the benefit of regulatory relief and meaningful infrastructure support with which to create truly affordable housing for workforce, families and seniors. Small towns need the flexibility and support to build in places where infrastructure can be supported.

I encourage the utilization of existing

(See Lueders, Page 19D)

Lynn Dike, Republican, Addison-4 House

1) **EDUCATION** No, I believe it might be a good starting point but there are more details to be worked out. I would recommend finding out why enrollment is decreasing: is it only because there are fewer children or might it also be that more parents are opting to home school their children? I would want to look into consolidating services, cutting many of the current administrative positions and finding less expensive teacher insurance as a way to cut costs. I have not taken part in any of this discussion so I do not know what has happened already.



LYNN DIKE OF BRISTOL

already in place. Relaxing Act 250 regulations would help with the time and cost of building.

Low interest loans might also be an option. High property taxes are making the cost of owning a home or renting one unaffordable. When property taxes go up on rental property, the landlord has no choice but to raise the rent. It seems like renters and squatters have more rights in this state than the landlords so many people are choosing not to rent out their properties. What would

help this? Take a good look at and get rid of some regulations.

2) **HEALTH CARE** I do not think the state is on the right track with health care reform and I do not think universal health care is the answer. The Green Mountain Care Board consists of 5 people who control the medical system — the price of care and the revenue. They have too much power. Health insurance has become unaffordable. Something must be done to lower premiums such as more options and choices of medical insurance to create more competition.

3) **HOUSING** I would support ‘802 homes’ and CHIP which are programs

4) **BUSINESS** Absolutely not! We have too many roadblocks in Act 250.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Public land is public, personal property is personal property. I believe that a property owner rights supersede the public’s right on his/her land. Of course, there are exceptions when something is illegal or unsafe. Public spaces should be kept clean, beautiful, healthy and safe so they can be used and enjoyed by all. This would be a good start.

JOHN STROUP

VT House of Representatives
Addison-3 District

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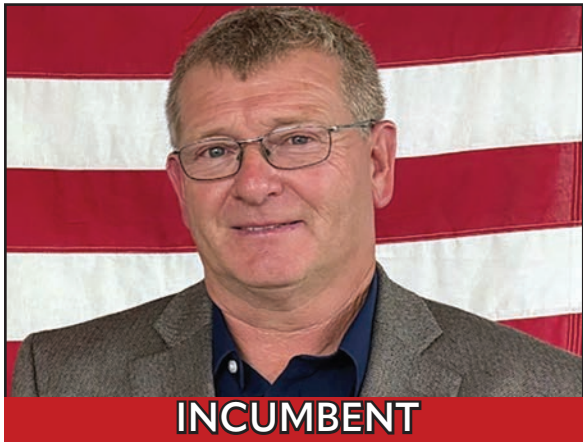
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STATE SENATE (R) ★ ADDISON DISTRICT

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A MORE AFFORDABLE VERMONT.



LOWER
TAXES



AFFORDABLE
HOUSING



SAFER
COMMUNITIES



MORE
OPPORTUNITY



LYNN DIKE (R)
ADDISON - 4

Serving

Bristol ★ Lincoln
Monkton ★ Starksboro



CHANIN HILL (R)
ADDISON - 4

Serving

Bristol ★ Lincoln
Monkton ★ Starksboro



INCUMBENT

ROB NORTH (R)
ADDISON - 3

Serving

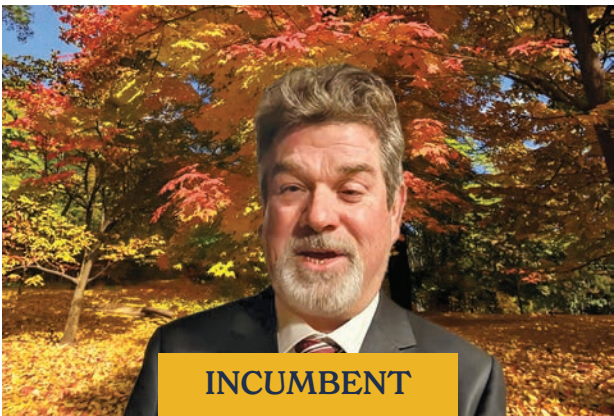
Addison ★ Ferrisburgh
New Haven ★ Panton
Vergennes ★ Waltham



JOE BAKER (R)
ADDISON - 3

Serving

Addison ★ Ferrisburgh
New Haven ★ Panton
Vergennes ★ Waltham



INCUMBENT

JIM CASEY (R)
ADDISON - RUTLAND

Serving

Orwell ★ Shoreham
Whiting ★ Hubbardton
Sudbury



DEL THOMPSON (R)
ADDISON - 5

Serving

Bridport ★ Middlebury
New Haven ★ Weybridge



ANNIE WILSON (R)
ADDISON - 2

Serving

Cornwall ★ Goshen
Leicester ★ Ripton
Salisbury

ADDISON-4 • ADDISON-4 • ADDISON-4 • ADDISON-4 • ADDISON-4

Chanin Hill, Republican, Addison-4 House

1) **EDUCATION** No, Act 170 was a band-aid. It increased education spending by creating seven Cooperative Educational Service Areas and kicked the can down the road with yet another study. The real cost driver is at the top of the system — multiple supervisory unions and districts serving a shrinking student population. We tried voluntary mergers before; they were all but denied. It will take the legislature to design and implement mergers of supervisory unions and districts. CESAs were meant to be the first step in this process, but without mergers, there will not be cost savings.

The state should also make the foundation formula automatic: a fixed base per student. When enrollment drops, funding should drop with it, rather than letting per-pupil spending creep up and taxes follow. My grandkids attend or will attend school in Addison County, and I hope Vermont focuses its education spending on a strong core education, not a bloated bureaucracy.

2) **HEALTH CARE** First and foremost, Vermont has great health care. However, the price tag is increasingly a barrier for people seeking care or insurance. I think the Green Mountain Care Board did the right thing for the coming fiscal year by cutting net patient revenue and commercial rates.

After eight years, OneCare Vermont's all-payer project ended in 2025. It cost nearly \$100 million to launch and operate and failed to meet its primary objectives. Instead of abandoning the idea, the Legislature reimaged it through S.197, shifting primary care from a fee-for-service model to monthly payments to doctors. Only time will tell whether that works any better.

Universal health care sounds appealing, but Vermont tried it in 2014 and walked away when the cost reached \$2 billion in payroll and income taxes. The state cannot afford it without imposing even more crushing taxes on an already overtaxed population.

What Vermont needs is more competition, not another government plan. Let insurers compete on price and coverage and let tradesmen and small businesses form groups or co-ops to buy insurance at rates closer to those large employers receive.



CHANIN HILL OF BRISTOL

3) **HOUSING** When it comes to housing policy in Vermont, there are many barriers to affordable housing. Act 250 was put in place in the 1970s to slow growth, and it has since become a bloated bureaucratic process that drives out developers and businesses alike. Although Act 181 eased rules for cities and village centers, it created more barriers for rural areas. Thankfully, those rules were rolled back in the last legislative sessions due to Rural Vermont Rising and others who spoke out.

The biggest barrier in rural Vermont and a large portion of Addison County is septic and water. There needs to be a more streamlined permitting process for both single-family and multi-unit housing. This should include applying through your local zoning board/development review board for all necessary permits, without then having to go to the state agencies for additional permits.

4) **BUSINESS** No, Vermont is not doing enough to promote business growth, and I contend that Vermont's permitting, fees, and lack of local resources actually impede growth. If we don't address the affordability issue in housing, our plummeting student outcomes that are coming at an exorbitant cost, our deteriorating road infrastructure, high utility costs, and a lack of workforce (see housing above), we will not be able to attract new businesses or sustain the economic growth of existing businesses.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** I believe Vermont already has a clean, beautiful, and healthy environment. For the most part, those of us in rural Vermont have been good stewards of our environment and will continue to do so without government interference. The 5th Amendment of the United States says in part "... nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." I don't believe government should take over private property through legislation that limits land use by creating regulations that amount to unfair confiscation. Act 181 Tier 3 and the Road Rule were examples of this.

Jeanne Albert, Democrat, Addison-4 House

1) **EDUCATION** Enactment of Act 170 followed legislative discussion that focused primarily on forced consolidation — without approval by voters — into a small number of mega school districts. While not perfect, Act 170 contains positive provisions and notably does not include forced district mergers.

In 2025, Act 73 established the Redistricting Task Force. After examining our current system and reviewing comments from thousands of Vermonters, the Task Force recommended establishing Cooperative Regional Education Services (CESAs) and prioritizing voluntary district mergers.

Act 170 includes both of these recommendations. It created regional CESAs, which have been shown to reduce costs and improve service quality in other states. As the Task Force determined, forced consolidation of school districts frequently achieves neither of these benefits, especially in rural areas. Act 170 directs school districts instead to consider merging on a voluntary basis.

While I support Act 170's focus on CESAs and voluntary vs. forced consolidation, I remain concerned. There is too much attention on the false premise that large, merged districts will save money and insufficient focus on actual cost drivers, such as health care.

Further, before new mergers are contemplated, towns that are part of currently merged districts should have protections regarding hard-fought articles of agreement that require local votes of approval before a school can be closed. More generally, we should consider requiring a community impact statement whenever significant changes to district governance or operation are proposed.

The foundation of democratic society is a high-quality public education system available to all. Within this system, community elementary schools provide the best learning environment for young children; sustain vibrant and financially secure communities; and attract young families to our state. Working together, we can prioritize thriving community schools within a sustainable financial funding model that is affordable for taxpayers and preserves local decision making.

2) **HEALTH CARE** Health care and access to healthy food are fundamental human rights, central to dignity, autonomy, and well-being, and essential to independence and participation in society. The federal government must enact a national universal health care system, but we can and should take steps to ensure universal access to quality primary care in Vermont, and commit to ensuring that all Vermonters have sufficient, nutritious food. This is especially important given that the federal government slashed funding that assists



JEANNE ALBERT OF LINCOLN

thousands of Vermonters purchase the health care and healthy food they need.

In the past several years, the legislature has reduced health care costs for Vermonters in important ways. For example, a joint effort with Treasurer Mike Piecak will eliminate medical debt for thousands of Vermonters, using reallocated funds from the Treasurer's office; thus, at no additional cost to taxpayers.

In 2025 the legislature also passed legislation that will limit the price hospitals

can charge for services, through a system called referenced-based pricing. This will mean direct and meaningful savings for Vermonters: a similar approach in other states has reduced costs by tens of millions of dollars. Also, in a 2026 partnership with the Treasurer's office, legislation was enacted that enables Vermont to join the multi-state ArrayRx collaborative, which provides significant prescription drugs discounts.

Along with implementing reference-based pricing, I support establishing a universal primary care system in Vermont, perhaps as part of a regional collaborative with other New England states. Ensuring access to quality primary care for all Vermonters will improve health and well-being in the short term as well as lower costs in the long term. I also support efforts to expand our health care workforce, especially in rural areas, including through partnerships with our health professions education programs that incentivize graduates to stay and work in Vermont.

3) **HOUSING** All Vermonters should have a safe and affordable place to live. A dire shortage of affordable housing causes instability and hardship for families, and can have long-standing detrimental impacts on children. Lack of housing also exacerbates labor challenges for Vermont businesses and limits the ability for young families to move to, or stay in, Vermont. Support for building more housing can take different forms, but must be grounded in the needs of local communities.

I'm encouraged by local programs offered through Addison Housing Works that establish perpetually affordable homes and assist Vermonters in buying them. Supporting structures such as shared-equity are particularly promising to ensure that, when the home is sold, supplemental resources that were used to make the home affordable in the first place continue to benefit the next buyer. The state should play a larger role in ensuring the sustainability of these and similar programs.

Vermont's Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP) is another beneficial program. By providing support

(See Albert, Page 16D)

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ADDISON-3 • ADDISON-3 • ADDISON-3 • ADDISON-3 • ADDISON-3

John Stroup, Democrat, Addison-3 House

1) **EDUCATION** For the last decade, I've been a part of every major education decision in our District. We focused on providing the best possible public education for our children at a sustainable cost. That will remain my goal. Neighbors keep asking me, "What are we going to do next?" Yes, we can reduce taxes by decreasing healthcare costs. Yes, we can move some property taxes to income taxes, but we are still going to have to transform our school system that's two-thirds of the size it was in 2004, and if we don't



JOHN STROUP OF VERGENNES

we are going to run into two significant problems: we jeopardize great educational programs accessible to all children and we ignore long-term school construction costs at our peril. We've been delinquent in funding school building maintenance for two decades, and it is now time to pay the piper. Our district has done a great job of maintaining our facilities.

Look, I think that the Republican plan for five mega-districts totally missed the mark. Act 170 gives us a window to get the details right on special education funding, on small and sparse school grants, on pre-K financing, and on class size minimums. I support further sharing of services and the CESAs, the Cooperative Educational Service Areas, are a good start. I do support further regionalization of our administrative structure, but the people of Vermont want a say in that, and I believe they should have it. But to deal with the massive future construction costs, school transformation will continue, and we need clear metrics for class sizes and future building costs so that we can create pathways that allow for new opportunities in school spaces that benefit the community like the creation of the Growing Tree Preschool in Addison.

2) **HEALTH CARE** Healthcare costs are crushing Vermont families. In my conversations with constituents, it's the issue that most often brings people to tears. The Legislature passed a bill (S.190) that would have saved millions for Vermont families and lowered property taxes. The Governor vetoed it then issued an executive order promoting skimpy insurance plans and letting insurance companies charge older Vermonters more. We can do better!

We need to make reference-based pricing happen. It will further squeeze hospitals, but they must find administrative efficiencies. We need to recruit primary care providers. We have a shortage. Money spent on primary care saves costs down the road. Second, we need to scrutinize the powerful interests in our system: Demand that the Agency of Human Services completes its hospital transformation plan. Monitor the influx of private equity that could raise our costs for their profits. Make sure the Health Network isn't raising Vermonter's rates to

subsidize New Yorkers. We can build price transparency with a public dashboard like New Hampshire's so Vermonters can see what care costs before they need it.

Finally, let's live our values by protecting reproductive healthcare and moving Vermont toward universal primary care for children. Setting us up for when Washington is finally ready to act. Healthcare is just too important and it represents an all-hands on board moment for Vermont.

3) **HOUSING** We don't have enough homes that working families can actually afford. We're only building about a quarter of the homes we need. Our rental vacancy rate is too low and the number of Vermonters experiencing homelessness has increased. Employers throughout our district tell me the same thing: they have jobs but they can't find and struggle to keep employees, because those folks can't find a place to live.

We should fund the infrastructure that makes housing possible. In Vergennes, voters approved a \$25.5 million bond to overhaul a sewer system with 100-year-old pipes. That investment is essential. We need more of that. Look at the opportunity lost in Highgate for more homes as a concrete example of why we need infrastructure investment. We need further permitting and zoning reform to get out of the way of projects we've already said we want. The 802 Homes catalog of pre-approved designs is great. However, the permitting process is still too slow and too expensive.

We need to support good plans like the Ferrisburgh-Vergennes Transit-Oriented Development plan which promotes homes connected to transit and built where infrastructure already exists. At the Addison Housing Works annual meeting this year, I heard this phrase — "what we all hope for in a good life starts with a home." I believe in that which is why I will champion more affordable and workforce housing development with urgency.

4) **BUSINESS** I recently went to a presentation by Kevin Chu of the Vermont Futures Project. It was held at the Northlands Job Corp last week. Based on multiple metrics like our population, job growth, and new business starts, we clearly need to create greater economic momentum in Vermont. Some of that momentum can come from investments and incentives to support small businesses in Vermont business sectors like processing stations in the "Farm to Table" market and a reinvigoration of our energy efficiency industry, but it's going to require a combination of steps to catalyze

(See Stroup, Page 19D)

Rob North, Republican, Addison-3 House

1) **EDUCATION** Vermont's Education system is in crisis. Vermont has the 2nd highest cost per student and is near the bottom of performance metrics with literacy and math proficiency in the 40-44% range. Acts 73 and 170 contain the key ingredients to rectify this by both reducing costs and improving performance, but fall short in the implementation details.

The primary key is the foundation formula that ties school budgets to the number of students with a growth-capped dollar value per student. This eliminates the exponential school budget growth currently driving double-digit property tax increases. Sadly, the formula lacks clarity on including our extremely valuable Career Technical Education centers and full effectiveness is delayed until 2034 costing taxpayers hundreds of millions. These shortcomings must be remedied next legislative session.

Secondly, cost reduction is driven by efficiency of scale, requiring collaboration and merging of administration across existing schools. This retains our valued teachers and small-by-necessity school protections while trimming administrative positions to align with other state's ratios. Currently, Vermont schools have nearly 3 times the administrative support staff per pupil than other top performing states. There are considerable administrative savings available by sharing services such as IT, HR, finance, maintenance, and transportation. Unfortunately, implementation of this mandates two redundant processes, CESAs and merger committees, rather than defining clear savings targets, staffing ratios, and incentives for achieving them.

Thirdly, it continues the heightened literacy, math, and graduation requirements, including training for teachers to achieve them. Director Ballard shared "the AOE remains laser focused on strengthening math and literacy instruction and improving student outcomes" employing proven methods such as those used in top performing states. Under Gov. Scott's leadership, she says "the AOE is building momentum and already seeing statewide progress using VTCAP with recent 4th and 5th grade ELA proficiency showing gains of 5-7%."

2) **HEALTH CARE** Healthcare is one of our major affordability issues and we're feeling it right here at Porter. The 169% increase in Vermont's marketplace silver plan premiums between 2018 and 2025, while other states saw modest increases or even decreases, is unacceptable and can't continue. The GMCB was right to intervene for us and order the decreases.

The UVMHN cuts at Porter are what any rational business would do in response. But losing service is not



REP. ROB NORTH OF FERRISBURGH

acceptable either. What we need is a system people can afford. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the "benchmark" silver insurance plan premium in Vermont is a staggering \$15,600, more than three times the \$4,800 for the same plan in New Hampshire. Why the disparity between neighbors?

During the 1990s, ME, NH, and VT all adopted similar restrictions on health insurance pricing to pursue government-run "single-payer" healthcare systems. Shumlin ended that effort in 2014 deeming it "not

financially viable", yet many of those policies remain in VT statute today! Both ME and NH modernized their policies after prices skyrocketed. Costs came down, people came back to the insurance market, and premiums fell by thousands for young adults and people in their 60s. We can do that too!

While universal healthcare may sound like a simple answer, we've tried the "seismic change" method and it doesn't work, nor would it bring back staff to Porter. What does work, as our neighbors found, is exactly what Governor Scott initiated in Executive Order 05-26: age rating so younger people rejoin the pool reducing everyone's rates; non-tobacco incentives; federal innovation waiver dollars; association health plans and stop-loss rules; and protecting the vulnerable with guaranteed-issue for pre-existing conditions. I will support follow-through on these significant common-sense statutory policies laid out by the Governor, not another seismic system redesign.

3) **HOUSING** Business owners across Vermont say they can't find staff because workers can't find affordable housing. This is the root cause of many of our problems. "Affordable housing" does not just mean government subsidized housing. It is a livable house that a working Vermonter can afford to mortgage and own.

Two things drive housing cost: availability (supply and demand) and property taxes. Property taxes are addressed in the Education discussion. Availability increases when building and refurbishing become cost effective to produce an affordable home. The building costs we can control are driven by permitting. The process is slow, unpredictable, and expensive. At the 2026 Solutions Summit a Democrat Legislator said what many already know: Act 250 and its associated siloed permitting processes are the problem. Repealing these statutes is not the near-term job. Making it stop blocking housing in places where we want housing is.

Having repealed Act 181's Tier 3 and Road Rule, we need to continue what

(See North, Page 19D)

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Ariel Bolles, Democrat, Addison-3 House

1) **EDUCATION** I'm a proud graduate of Vermont public schools, and my kids attend our local public school. Strong public schools attract families to our community and they prepare the next generation of Vermonters to be educated and engaged citizens. Increasingly, they are also the conduits to many critical services for families and kids in the form of food assistance, behavioral and mental health support, dental care and more — help that will be even more critical in upcoming months as more federal cuts take effect and harm local families.



ARIEL BOLLES OF FERRISBURGH

Act 170 is a starting point, not a finish line. Democrats did a great job this last session holding the line against forced school district mergers and fighting for a more strategic approach that centers local voices in the conversation. I'm optimistic that savings and efficiencies can be found between districts — merged or not, that remains to be decided — in areas such as administrative costs, transportation and food service contracts, student support services and more. And, we must prevent public school dollars from being funneled via vouchers into private schools.

We also must be focused on improving outcomes for students, and supporting our teachers and staff. Right now, outcomes are lagging. We're in a special education crisis: the number of students with IEPs is rising fast, while overall enrollment is declining. We need to continue prioritizing education quality while finding ways to decrease the tax burden on working families.

And importantly, we must tackle the real cost driver in our education budgets and property taxes: health care. More below.

There's a lot of work left to do. I was endorsed by the VT-NEA, because they know I'll represent the best interests of teachers and students when I get to Montpelier. As a parent of public school kids, this is a priority for me.

2) **HEALTH CARE** At a time when Vermonters pay the highest healthcare premiums in the nation and the federal government is only making things harder for Medicaid recipients — with more crushing changes to come — we must do everything we can to reduce patient costs while maintaining services and avoiding austerity measures such as laying off nurses and closing birthing centers. The U.S. healthcare system needs to get out from under the thumb of insurance companies and I believe Vermont can lead by enacting Universal Primary Care. Advocates agree that this would lower costs by reducing administrative burden, encouraging more primary care physicians to work in rural areas and removing cost as a blocker to seeking out preventative care and reducing expensive emergency room visits, keeping our communities healthier.

Additionally, we must reintroduce

S190, a bill that Governor Scott vetoed that would have accelerated savings via reference-based pricing.

Lastly, another cost saver that could specifically affect education budgets and property taxes would be to create a single, statewide public employee health plan that would cover school teachers and staff, and municipal employees too, such as Vergennes police officers. There are bills that have proposed something like this in the past that haven't progressed, but I'm

optimistic that the potential cost savings could encourage bipartisan support now.

3) **HOUSING** Housing and property taxes are the two issues I hear about the most when I'm knocking on doors and talking to voters. No one should struggle to find an adequate, affordable home in the community where they work or grew up. But in Vermont — and especially in rural areas — housing availability isn't keeping up with demand. We have an aging population with limited options for housing to downsize into, and a lack of available apartments and single family homes for working families to start out in. This is something we need to tackle from multiple angles, including:

Increasing housing density in cities and town centers, and investing in programs to modernize water and wastewater infrastructure in areas that need it

Supporting organizations such as Addison Housing Works who are doing critical work in our community to address our housing shortage by building, managing and maintaining permanently affordable housing

Continuing common-sense reform of Act 250 to streamline processes and reduce delays and expenses for sensible development, and ensuring that all stakeholders — especially rural landowners — are included in the conversation

Training up the next generation of builders to meet housing demand by expanding access to Career Technical Education (CTE) programs

The best long-term solution for lowering property taxes and fighting declining school enrollment is to grow our tax base. Let's start the process by investing in more affordable housing for families now.

4) **BUSINESS** Vermont is home to many "household name" businesses and brands, and in Addison County I can think of many businesses — small and large, across industries — that anchor our communities. As we explore how the future of Vermont might look, we must consider the kinds of businesses and investments we want to attract, how to help our existing businesses survive and

(See Bolles, Page 19D)

Joe Baker, Republican, Addison-3 House

1) **EDUCATION** I would like to reduce school districts down to 16, centered around the tech centers. This would allow schools to use the current bus systems all ready established and in doing so would reduce administrative overhead.

2) **HEALTH CARE** The state needs to open insurance rules and allow cross state border purchases of cheaper (more complete priced) insurances. The state needs to get out of the insurance business.

3) **HOUSING** Easing permits for intown and previously developed areas and



JOE BAKER OF FERRISBURGH

allow for easier permitting of multi unit housing.

4) **BUSINESS** I think the state needs to get back to a more practical type of governing, where they look at all businesses that apply for permits or licenses, and act as an advocate for that business, instead of seeing it as a way to over regulate and control free enterprise.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** A private property owner pays a premium in property taxes if they choose not enroll in any of the states land

protection plans. If they do they then give there passive permission for the public to have a say over there land use.

Albert

(Continued from Page 14D)

for the critical infrastructure needed beyond housing itself (e.g., water, sewer) additional housing can be built at lower cost overall. However, financing for infrastructure such as town water and sewer that CHIP supports is unlikely to be available in Vermont's more rural towns, including here in the Addison-4 House district. I would like to see a version of this program that would acknowledge and support housing infrastructure in more rural communities.

Another promising example is the Treasurer's office "Invest in Vermont" program. As in the health care realm, this program leverages both in-state and out-of-state funding to advance an important state policy— in this case, supporting the construction of "...nearly 1,700 units of high-quality housing for a broad range of Vermonters, including working families, seniors, and those exiting homelessness," according to the Treasurer's website.

4) **BUSINESS** There are many factors that support thriving businesses in Vermont, some of which are unique to the particular type of business or economic sector, such as an available workforce with specialized skills, and others which would be beneficial to businesses of many types.

An economic sector where additional state support will be critical is renewable energy and climate resilience— in particular, businesses that will help ensure that Vermont meets the greenhouse gas reduction targets in the 2020 Global Warming Solutions Act. The accelerating effects of global climate change are clear: from devastating winds and flooding, to exceptionally warm winters and severe drought in summer, these "extreme" events devastate families, farms, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

We have already failed to achieve the

Act's first statutory milestone; to get back on track, workforce development will be one of many critical priorities.

Businesses involved in weatherization, solar installation, renewable heating systems, and vehicle electrification will be increasingly important as part of this effort, as will targeted education programs at Vermont's career centers and technical college.

For business of any type, sufficient workforce housing and affordable health care will also be critically important. As with so many issues, an integrated systems approach will be necessary.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Vermont has been a leader in protecting the health, beauty, and productivity of its natural landscapes and ecosystems. While often difficult, it is critical that we find the right balance between and among several important priorities, including:

- responsible resource and infrastructure development that supports a vibrant economy, where people can live and work;

- respect for private property and ties to land and livelihood that can be many-generational; and

- essential environmental stewardship that ensures and preserves the health of Vermont's lakes and rivers, wetlands and groundwater, woods and forests, hills and mountains, and native animals and plants.

There is no one "right way" but I believe there are essential elements to achieving such a balance: ensuring that the people and communities who are most directly affected have the opportunity to be heard and that these voices are taken into account in decision-making.

This same principle is at the heart of the work I've done the past two years helping to establish the Rural School Community Alliance: communities want and deserve a democratic voice in decision-making about their future.

ADDISON-2 • ADDISON-2 • ADDISON-2 • ADDISON-2 • ADDISON-2

Annie Wilson, Republican, Addison-2 House

1) **EDUCATION** No, Act 170 was not the best compromise on public education reform. How much will it cost to establish and run the Cooperative Educational Service Areas (CESAs) outlined in Act 170? Will there be any savings by adding them? It will be interesting to see what the mandated surveys reveal on all of this. I do support consolidations of Supervisory Unions/Districts, with focus on the main offices being consolidated.



ANNIE WILSON OF CORNWALL

To “bend the curve on school costs”, I would consider

school choice as an option, where funding follows the student and families make the choice which schools their children attend. For context, Vermont’s per-pupil spending is among the highest in the nation, at over \$24,000 per student in 2023, according to recent reports. Yet, enrollment has declined by nearly 20 percent over the past two decades. At the same time, statewide average test scores have dropped, with Vermont’s 2022 NAEP reading and math scores falling below the national average.

I would like to know what other reasons are causing the decline in student enrollment, besides that families are leaving Vermont. Are families, for example, seeking other educational outlets, like home schooling or private schools? What has changed over the past 20 years, resulting in Vermont test scores having dropped to the lowest in the country? Knowing the answers to these questions could help improve the quality of education.

2) **HEALTH CARE** “Seismic change” is definitely warranted. The state is not on the right track with health care reform. We have a one 5-member board (appointed, not elected) controlling the cost of what hospitals charge and what insurances pay. Having this board holding our healthcare in its hands at both ends is not good practice. Why are there not more choices for healthcare? Instead of concentrating decision-making on a single board, the state could consider models that give hospitals and providers more autonomy while introducing more competition into the system. For instance, some states have used approaches that encourage private and non-profit insurers to compete for patients or have implemented regional health care cooperatives. Others have expanded choices through public option plans or supported direct primary care models. Exploring these alternative structures could bring more flexibility and better outcomes for Vermonters. Healthcare reform will be a priority for me.

3) **HOUSING** In my travels throughout the region, I have noticed more than a few properties or houses not being lived in or used. I would champion policies to repurpose abandoned residential,

commercial or industrial sites into neighborhoods. At the same time, I would support apprenticeship programs to help create on-the-job training and opportunities for advancement in the field of construction. On-the-job training would help contractors procure a working crew that fits into that particular company. Along with making housing affordable, relaxing the Act 250 regulations would be vital to promote housing.

4) **BUSINESS** We are seeing businesses leaving Vermont because of regulations and heightened taxes being placed upon them. To promote businesses, we need to loosen the regulations and reduce taxes. It’s common sense.

There is opportunity for businesses in Vermont. We see it in logging, farming and small entrepreneurs using the land and woods to produce “made in Vermont” products. We do a great job in promoting “buy locally” and that should continue. We should not put more regulations/mandates on these types of businesses, instead we should encourage them and allow them to thrive. For example, some small manufacturing companies and local breweries have publicly cited Act 250 and recent environmental permitting processes as major challenges to expanding or maintaining in-state operations. A well-known maple producer recently decided to relocate part of their production to New Hampshire, where they reported a more business-friendly climate and fewer administrative obstacles. To promote businesses, we need to loosen regulations and taxes, following the example of states like New Hampshire, which has attracted businesses with lower tax rates and a streamlined permitting process.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Private property rights are protected under Articles 1 and 2 of the Vermont Constitution. Act 181, the tiered, restrictive land use law, violated rural Vermont’s property rights, impacting every county. And the supermajority overrode Governor Scott’s veto of Act 181 in 2024.

Balancing the protection of personal property rights with the public’s right to a clean and beautiful environment should be a matter of common sense. Private property owners, including generational farmers, are the best stewards of their land and have been for decades. They keep Vermont beautiful and clean in the working landscapes. The government may not restrict the use of private property without proper compensation. We should fiercely protect the rights of private property owners and generational farmers who are not only stewarding the land but also contributing to Vermont’s production of quality farm products, timber, and other goods and services.

Tanya Byker, Democrat, Addison-2

1) **EDUCATION** Act 170 is not perfect; but that is the nature of compromise in the face of difficult challenges. Vermont’s K-12 enrollment has fallen around 20% in the past 20 years and we haven’t adjusted to those changes. I believe we need to adapt, and that will require hard choices.

Elements of Act 170 that I support include changes in the way education is funded including a higher property tax on second homes; establishing Cooperative Educational Service Areas (CESAs) to share services like special education that could

lower costs without having to close schools; and when it comes to possible consolidation taking time to bring communities to the table.

In the face of hard choices, I believe we must prioritize student learning. The children we educate today will shape the health and future of Vermont.

2) **HEALTH CARE** The current trajectory of health care in Vermont is not sustainable. Our health care premiums and hospital costs are amongst the highest in the country and wait times to see specialists and even primary care providers are long. We are facing headwinds from cuts in Federal funding. I do not have all the answers, but I remain hopeful that if we bring people together



TANYA BYKER OF CORNWALL

around the table we can find a path forward.

Yes, I aspire to universal health care, but that is not an immediate possibility. I have been energized by the grassroots push from voters to put universal primary care on the legislative agenda. Universal primary care is the kind of incremental step we need on the table now.

I also support plans to transform our rural hospitals into a network of centers of excellence, where every hospital does not provide every specialty. This could

free up resources to preserve local access to essential services like primary care and birthing centers.

3) **HOUSING** I would love for Vermont to lead the way in finding new approaches to one of the biggest barriers to affordable housing in rural communities: septic and wastewater. Finding innovative, environmentally sound ways to reduce the cost of wastewater infrastructure would open up opportunities for housing in places where traditional municipal sewer systems aren’t feasible.

Vermont’s lack of affordable and workforce housing has many causes and

(See Byker, Page 20D)



Jonathan Hescok for Vermont State Representative

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Rep. Robin Scheu, Democrat, Addison-1 House

1) **EDUCATION** Public Education in Vermont is a complex and nuanced issue. The 1997 Brigham decision changed the way we funded education. The Supreme Court stated that: "To fulfill its constitutional obligation the state must ensure substantial equality of educational opportunity through Vermont." Simplistic solutions, such as just consolidating into one statewide school district or creating five districts based on schools that got together to talk about issues, are not helpful.

The recent Vermont Public poll highlights some of the issues we are dealing with. Taxpayers want local control, AND they want lower property taxes. These issues are often at odds with each other. On top of this, 50% of Vermonters polled rated the quality of our schools fair or poor. How do we create a system that lowers property taxes, provides some measure of local control, and improves quality for students, while ensuring substantial equality of educational opportunity for all students?

Act 170 was about the best compromise we could get given the starting points of everyone involved. The governor and many Republicans were insisting on forced mergers. Vermonters were strongly opposed. Many legislators were focused only on their own schools rather than statewide impacts. Act 170 offers a combination of required and voluntary steps. The CESAs (Cooperative Educational Service Areas) have been proven to save money and are required, but mergers will be voluntary. Act 170 is an iterative process that allows us to review and make adjustments as necessary. Hard choices must be made, but I believe we must keep student learning at the center.

2) **HEALTH CARE** I think we can all agree that our health care system nationwide is broken. We see this in the high cost of our health care premiums, our inability to see a doctor in a reasonable amount of time, and in the unfortunate layoffs that are happening at our hospitals. Healthcare is one of the key drivers in our education system and many other budgets, including the state and businesses. The issue really should be addressed at the federal level, but as that's not likely to happen anytime soon, we must do what we can here in Vermont.

Over the past two years, the legislature has prioritized reducing healthcare costs where it can. In 2025 we passed prescription drug legislation that contributed to approximately \$230 million in health care savings and helped hold down premium increases for both private insurance and school employee health plans, reducing pressure on local property taxes. In 2026, we passed additional legislation to establish a prescription drug discount program available to anyone with a Vermont address. This free program gives Vermonters access to significant savings on both generic and brand-name medications, helping lower out-of-pocket prescription



REP. ROBIN SCHEU OF MIDDLEBURY

costs.

We also passed S190 — a bill that would have significantly reduced costs for two plans: 1) the Qualified Health Plans which are for individuals and small groups who are the most financially impacted by prohibitively expensive premiums, and 2) School-employee Insurance, which is a substantial cost driver for the cost of education and therefore property taxes. Governor Scott vetoed this bill and Republicans agreed with him so we could not override his veto.

I believe it is imperative that we pursue Universal Primary Care as a way to bring costs down while giving Vermonters the access they need to healthcare. This will be a priority for House Democrats in 2027.

3) **HOUSING** The current housing crisis we are experiencing was literally decades in the making. Fifty-plus years of exclusionary zoning and NIMBYism won't be fixed over a few legislative biennia. This is not a just a Vermont problem. Nationwide, it is estimated that we have a housing shortage of about 4 million units. In Vermont, 20-30,000 units needed are regularly quoted.

The fact is, we need all kinds of housing, which will help workforce housing as well. In the last 6 years, we have invested over \$1 billion in housing, thanks in large part to federal money received during the pandemic. In the last several years we have modernized local zoning to increase density, streamlined Act 250 and permitting in designated growth areas, reduced unnecessary appeals that delayed housing projects, created the Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) which helps rehabilitate existing apartments and houses, invested over \$100 million in affordable housing, emergency shelter, supportive housing, manufactured housing repairs, long-term care capacity, created CHIP — the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program — to provide municipalities with the tools needed to support housing development, invested in manufactured housing improvements, and expanded the Vermont Housing Rental Improvement Program (VHIP) to help landlords bring vacant apartments back online and prioritize housing for Vermonters exiting homelessness, individuals with disabilities, and those recovering from disasters. I have supported all of these programs.

One of the issues we continue to deal with is NIMBYism. Two examples: a few years ago, the Town of Westford had the opportunity to expand its sewer and wastewater with no taxpayer money. They voted it down so there will be no new housing. In Greensboro, residents have twice voted down a plan to convert the town's underused and historic town hall into badly needed apartments. We

(See Scheu, Page 20D)

Mike Roy, Democrat, Addison-1 House

1) **EDUCATION** I don't think Act 170 was the best we can do to ensure all Vermont children get a great education. I'm glad the top-down reform proposed by Governor Scott has been slowed down and handed back to local communities for their input.

I also believe the unsustainable cost of education is tied to the challenges around housing, jobs and health care. Declining enrollment isn't the problem. It's a symptom. Young Vermonters can't afford to live here, and the cost of health insurance for our teachers and school workers keeps climbing. If we treat those root causes, the school budget numbers get easier to manage.

There are efficiencies to be gained by consolidating back-office functions, and I'd support that. But local schools do more than educate. They anchor our communities and provide us with essential services. Cost-cutting that ignores this will cost us more in the long run.

2) **HEALTH CARE** Our nation's and Vermont's health care system is broken. Tinkering around the edges is not going to fix it. I believe bold moves toward universal health care are the responsible direction, and state-run universal primary care is a good first step. I'd also explore collaborating with our neighbors in Maine and New Hampshire.

Cutting essential services, trimming the workforce, and raising insurance rates is not an answer. It pushes more Vermonters to drop their coverage, which drives up costs for everyone who stays, and leaves those who leave even more vulnerable.

3) **HOUSING** We need to prioritize our existing housing stock for full-time Vermonters. That means finding ways to encourage homes to be lived in year round rather than used as second homes and short-term rentals.

We also need to build more housing. Specifically:

Denser in-fill development in and around our village centers

Zoning changes that make accessory dwelling units easier to build

Creative public financing aimed not at the high-end market but at low- and moderate-income families

Streamlined permitting, through Act 181 and beyond, so good projects aren't stuck in review for years

There is a great deal of creative energy on this issue from every sector. One of government's jobs is to identify and support the good ideas and to clear the way



MIKE ROY OF MIDDLEBURY

for them, without abandoning our commitments to the environment and equity.

4) **BUSINESS** The two biggest obstacles to attracting new business to Vermont are the cost of living and the lack of housing. Both make it hard to attract and retain employees. We need solid solutions to the housing crisis, health care that's available and affordable to all, and strong, vibrant communities. With those pillars in place, we'll be positioned to attract

new employment.

We should also recognize the economic opportunity in the transition to clean energy. Vermont has a decade of hard work ahead to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, weatherize buildings, electrify heating and transportation, and expand renewable energy. That work can support local businesses and create good jobs while keeping more of our energy dollars in Vermont instead of sending them to fossil-fuel companies elsewhere.

Rather than treating climate action as a cost to be managed, we should treat it as an opportunity to build a stronger, more resilient local economy.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** We all share in the stewardship of this beautiful state, and we all have a stake in how our land is used. I believe most landowners, though certainly not all, take that responsibility seriously. Vermont has a long history of preserving our shared lands while meeting the needs of people who use their land for their own purposes.

Climate change is forcing us to rethink how we use land. We need to plan for more flooding, drought and fire, and for the stress on wildlife. I'm not a fan of a "let her rip" abundance agenda that relaxes all regulation in the name of speeding up development. Act 181 is a thoughtful effort to adjust our approach, encouraging the right sort of growth while speeding up decisions and opening up our lands for thoughtful development to help us meet our goals of increasing housing.

When faced with a hard choice, my approach would be to focus on the harms. Is the harm to the public good sufficient to override the rights of landowners to use their land as they see fit? Is a private individual gaining by off-loading the harm to the public? Pollution of all kinds (visual, aural, water, air and land) needs to be first reduced or eliminated, and when that might be impossible, it must be paid for by the polluter.

What if I lose my ballot?



If you lose your absentee ballot after you receive it, or you never receive an absentee ballot that was mailed to you, you can sign an affidavit for lost or undelivered absentee ballot and the town clerk will provide you a replacement ballot.

Lueders

(Continued from Page 11D)

programs and opportunities that are smaller scale, such as creating Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and taking advantage of the Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP), which provides a forgivable loan of up to \$50,000 and 0% interest repair, convert, or create affordable long term rental housing.

I will be a champion for more affordable housing in our rural towns and will advocate for our towns to have the benefits of funding and regulatory relief afforded to the larger municipalities.

4) **BUSINESS** This past session a new tri-partisan caucus, which I joined, was started that was devoted to how to grow small businesses and business opportunities in Vermont.

What are the challenges facing our local businesses?

- Employers have trouble finding housing for their well-hired employees. This is an urgent concern. Among other approaches it is important to create incentives that could make it possible for employers to create workforce housing.

- Employers talk about the steep cost of health care and how painful it is to be a good employer and to not have any way to provide the health care to your valued employees. Under the present system it is the small business community (and the individual), left out of other arrangements for health care, that are left with the most expensive option, the exchange. Standing up universal access to primary health care, regardless of employment, is going to help our business community. It is my

Bolles

(Continued from Page 16D)

grow, how we measure economic success and how we can get there.

One method for supporting and attracting businesses is through incentives. Incentives, however, can't be giveaways for large out-of-state companies to come here. My criteria for economic development incentives would be that we have a clear understanding of the benefit to our communities: jobs created and sustained, fair wages paid, keeping our investment in our community, contributing to economic independence and sustainability for Vermont.

More important, in my opinion, is that we make Vermont more affordable and livable for working families — and the businesses and economic growth will follow. We have a great start with expanded access to early childcare that's helped parents go back to work. We must implement other policies such as Universal Paid Family and Medical Leave, which has been proven to boost productivity, revenue and profitability in states where it's available.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** The premise of this question implies a conflict that I don't believe always exists. Vermonters love

number one priority.

- Businesses and employers are not against regulations, but they seek cohesion. Creating a clearing house — a kind of one stop shopping to be sure about applicable regulatory

5) **ENVIRONMENT** I am dedicated to preserving the one and only blue orb that supports all life on earth and especially that portion upon which our spectacular green mountain state rests.

I served as a member of the Rural Caucus at the State House. a tri-partisan caucus. We met once a week, heard from guests and speakers, submitted letters supporting changes to Act 181, and hosted a public forum. I support, as do many landowners throughout the state, the importance of retaining wildlife corridors that allow ecosystems and diversity of habitat to flourish. Many landowners know that the land they own cannot be developed because of its characteristics, with the result that the lands are de facto conserved through enrollment in current use.

These are not binary, "either-or" positions, these are "yes-and" positions. They can and do co-exist, if thoughtfully implemented with scientific data and land use data and a process that includes the voices and on-the-ground information of folks who know their own their land.

I deeply admire the work of the leadership of the House Environment Committee in revising Act 181 as part of a process of listening to affected Vermonters AND working toward a clean, beautiful and healthy environment.

our land and our environment, and we value our personal freedoms, too. Farmers and landowners are stewards of the land who understand that we must protect and preserve our environment for future generations. Recent pushback on Act 181 from rural landowners highlighted a breakdown of trust that we need to work together to rebuild. It's important to me that anyone affected by decisions be included in the decision-making.

We must continue efforts that reward responsible and innovative agriculture and forestry, like the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative and the VT Research and Development tax credit. There's so much creativity and scrappiness here in Vermont, especially in agriculture.

We also need to address the environmental concerns that neighbors throughout our district are raising around their waterways and the lake. Most of our farms use modern practices to protect waterways and their neighbors downstream, but there are others who don't have as good a record. We should update our regulations and practices in order to respond to this problem, and continue to work with farmers to modernize their practices and innovate to save our land and water.

Stroup

(Continued from Page 15D)

more economic development here.

Housing is a crucial step. In my life professionally, I have offered someone a job and they refused. They wanted to be here, but there was no housing. Housing is a crucial step. Another crucial piece is childcare for working families. Republicans voted against childcare against the interests of the business community. I support greater access to childcare because it's fair and good for families but also because it is an absolute economic imperative that working families have ways to continue their careers. I also think we can expand career and technical education to better align with Vermont's future job market.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Property rights are fundamental, and I believe that Vermonters care deeply for their land and those of their neighbors, but we also have zoning laws for a reason. One

person's right to use their land ends when it impacts a neighbor's capacity to use their land as they desire. Water quality is crucial to that.

We have a moral and economic imperative to ensure that our lakes and waterways are clean. We simply cannot allow Lake Champlain to further degrade. It is already impaired under the Clean Water Act and just think about what's going to happen as the climate continues to warm. Phosphorus runoff creates conditions for algae blooms that impairs our drinking water, our recreation and our fishing stock. Moreover, I do not support widespread data centers unlike Republicans, and the Governor's veto of that data center bill was a significant mistake. Vermonters know a bad deal when we see one. After the ingenuity of our people, we know that our reputation for a clean, beautiful, healthy environment is our most valuable asset.

North

(Continued from Page 15D)

is working: CHIP to finance roads and utility infrastructure to unlock wise developments; Act 250 exemptions for housing construction in designated areas while standard Act 250 rules apply everywhere else; and VHIP and MHIP programs to bring Vermont's aging housing stock and empty manufactured home lots back into service. But infrastructure funding trapped in a multi-year permit cycle doesn't get us there.

The next step is to improve permitting predictability, speed, and costs by requiring a one-stop-shop for all housing permit applications, concurrent reviews with transparent application status and elapsed time, hard deadlines for housing permits, energy code flexibility to keep prices down, and various permit and mitigation fee reductions. This will have the double effect of reducing housing costs for existing Vermonters and attracting more people to Vermont to staff businesses that desperately need help, thus improving our whole economy.

4) **BUSINESS** Vermont already has good targeted business assistance programs like VEGI, STEP, Elevate, and Brownfield Revitalization. And we have businesses that use and promote the Vermont brand well like Vermont Cookie Love, Dakin Farms, and Beta Technologies. What we need is relief from the stack of burdensome policies that drove the need for the targeted assistance programs in the first place.

Even with all our natural beauty, Vermont's net migration is negative. Business owners tell me they can't find staff because housing is scarce and expensive, taxes punish good years and crush growth, and permitting is a huge barrier to those trying to expand. Kevin Chu of the Vermont Futures Project

confirmed the data shows that across all states there is a strong correlation between out-migration and low housing permits per capita.

The catalyst? Follow Governor Scott's lead: build enough housing so workers can live here; make permitting faster and predictable; and reduce the tax load. Businesses will thrive when workers can afford to stay and success is not penalized. Vermont is a beautiful place to live and work. Our policies should stop making that a luxury.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** I don't see property rights and clean, working landscape as a "one-or-the-other" choice. It's a "yes-and." Vermont is the gold standard for our Use Value Appraisal program (aka. Current Use). It does both well. Approximately 2.6 million acres is in UVA. That's 43% of Vermont! Landowners keep title, pay tax on use value instead of development value, and follow a land management plan ensuring sustainable practices. That is conservation WITH people on the land, not INSTEAD of them. UVA has steadily grown for the past 30 years independent of Acts 250, 59, and 181 which too many rural towns saw as government overreach. When the two conflict, I prefer incentives and local control.

Vermonters want to be good stewards of their land. Clean water is a must and contamination hurts us all. While the legislature debates solutions to these issues I initiated the Advisory Committee on Clean Water and Agriculture here in our district. We've shared concerns, brought in the experts, and are putting practices to work locally. Stewardship is preventing harm and keeping land in production so the next generation can stay. We can live on it, work it, steward it, and keep it beautiful at the same time.

Scheu

(Continued from Page 18D)

can create all the programs and housing policies we want, but if Vermonters vote against housing in their community, we are limited.

4) **BUSINESS** Having run the Addison County Economic Development Corporation for nine years, I know that there is always more we can do to support businesses. However, I think it is important to consider evidence-based approaches rather than those that sound good but in reality do little to create good jobs for Vermonters. The state needs to do a better job of tracking results.

I have always been a fan of the “economic gardening” approach to business development. Rather than trying to lure out-of-state businesses here with financial incentives which ends up being a race to the bottom, economic gardening is focused on an entrepreneurship-led approach to economic development. Essentially, it is growing your own businesses locally. When we focus on growing local businesses we are working with Vermonters and entrepreneurs who want to stay in Vermont. You can learn more at the National Center for Economic Gardening.

We have done some things well. I was on the council that developed the Working Lands program and then on the Working Lands board for several years. This is a great example of a program that supports smaller local businesses to grow and thrive, and results are continuously measured. The

Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) needs to do more of these things. They also need to fully support the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and finally, they need to measure to success of the regional development centers differently, so they aren’t primarily focused on larger businesses.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** This isn’t an either/or issue. I believe that we can do both at the same time. Most Vermonters, including farmers, loggers and others who work the land are good stewards and prioritize taking care of their property because that is their livelihood and/or their home. Vermonters across the state value our beautiful land, clean air and clean water.

People should be able to use and take care of their property as they see fit. However, if a property owner is doing something that negatively impacts another person’s property or harms our waters, that must be addressed. We have done much to support those who work the land and we need to continue to encourage efforts for responsible stewardship. It is also critical that we work WITH farmers and those in the forestry industry to find workable solutions when there are problems that affect our land and waters. We are all affected by land use and we need to work together to ensure that personal property rights and the public’s right to a clean, beautiful, and healthy environment are in harmony.

Byker

(Continued from Page 17D)

requires a range of solutions. The solutions that work in bigger towns are often not a good fit for the rural towns in my district. In rural towns, in addition to improving wastewater options, we can encourage accessory dwelling units (ADUs), allow thoughtful increases in density in village/town centers, and streamline regulation to reduce time to construction.

4) **BUSINESS** ---To promote business growth in Vermont, we need to ensure Vermonters have access to high-quality, affordable housing, education, and healthcare. This is how we will attract and keep the vibrant workforce essential to business growth. So, my answers to the previous questions are my answers to how to catalyze economic development in Vermont.

A skilled workforce is the key driver of economic development. Skilled workers will be drawn to working in Vermont if they can afford to buy or rent a house, find great schools for their kids, and feel like health insurance premiums and property taxes are not breaking the household budget. I want my kids to stay in Vermont and that is what it will take. It is a tall order. But I remain hopeful we can work together to face these challenges.

Vermont’s recent child-care law is a good example of policy innovation. Vermont businesses told lawmakers that lack of affordable childcare was making it harder to attract and retain workers. With support from business leaders and legislators from both

parties, Vermont is making major investments in expanding access to affordable childcare. Vermont is now seen as a national leader in taking on a problem that has challenged states for decades.

5) **ENVIRONMENT** Absolutely! We need to reject the false narrative that thriving farms and businesses are at odds with a healthy environment. Vermont can lead the nation in both.

I learned about environmental conservation growing up in a family of hunters. My parents taught me that human beings have a vital role to play in protecting and preserving the land and creatures that sustain our existence. They also taught me that government oversight is part of the way we ensure we have a clean, beautiful and healthy environment that will sustain us into the future.

I believe that the rules we ask people to follow should be transparent and fair and that crafting them should involve the input of the people who will have to abide by them. Our farms also need support when regulations impose financial and procedural burdens. Farmers are producing the food we eat; we should help bear the cost of producing food in an environmentally sustainable way.

Adopting renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies is essential to protecting our environment. I also believe the legislature has a role to play in helping Vermonters to adopt these technologies so that protecting our environment is affordable for all Vermonters.



Ruth & Hannah SHOW UP

SINCE JUNE 1ST, RUTH & HANNAH HAVE . . .

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— attended **125+** events

— talked with thousands of people in all **26** towns of the Addison District.

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Paid for by Ruth Hardy for VT Senate PO Box 343, East Middlebury, VT 05470 and Hannah Sessions for VT Senate PO Box 107, Middlebury, VT 05753

Who's on the ballot?

2026 General Election candidates

Addison County races

Addison-1 (two seats)

Robin Scheu, D-Middlebury
Mike Roy, D-Middlebury

Addison-2

Tanya Byker, D-Cornwall
Annie Wilson, R-Cornwall

Addison-3 (two seats)

Joseph "Joe" Baker, R-Ferrisburgh
Ariel Bolles, D-Ferrisburgh
Rob North, R-Ferrisburgh
John Stroup, D-Vergennes

Addison-4 (two seats)

Jeannie Albert, D-Lincoln
Lynn Dike, R-Bristol
Chanin Hill, R-Bristol
Karen Lueders, D-Lincoln

Addison-5

Jubilee McGill, D-Bridport
Del Thompson, R-Bridport

Addison-Rutland

Jim Casey, R-Hubbardton
Jonathan Hescoc, D-Shoreham

State Senate

Andy Klein, R-New Haven
Hannah Sessions, D-Leicester
Ruth Hardy, D-Middlebury
Steven Heffernan, R-Bristol

High Bailiff

Dave Silberman, D-Middlebury
Steve Willson, R-Cornwall

Justice of the Peace

Specific to each town

Sheriff

Michael R. Elmore, R/D-Middlebury

State's Attorney

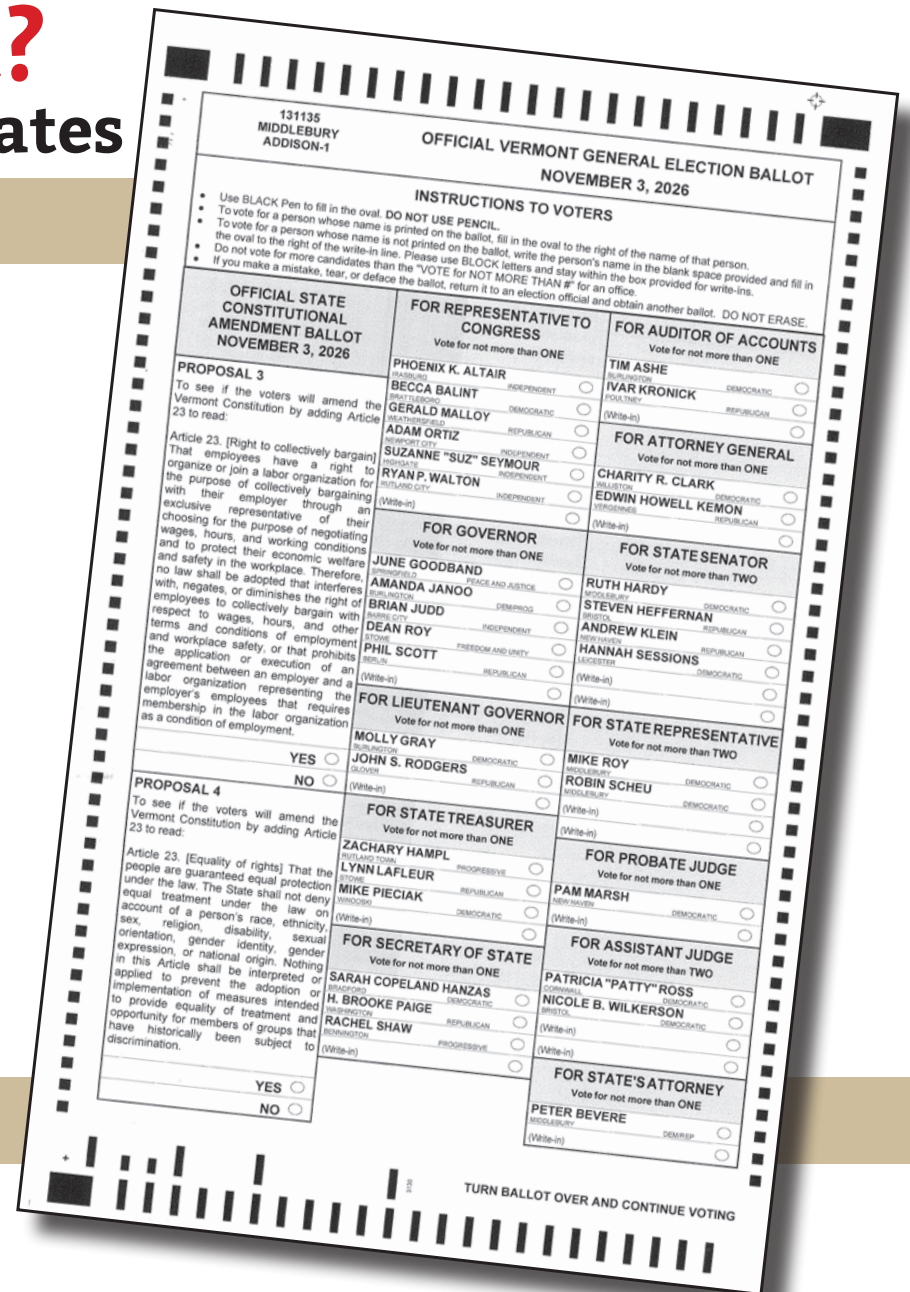
Peter Bever, D/R-Middlebury

Probate Judge

Pam Marsh, D-New Haven

Assistant Judge (two seats)

Patricia "Patty" Ross, D-Cornwall
Nicole B. Wilkerson, D-Bristol



National & Statewide races

Representative to Congress

Phoenix K. Altair, I-Irasburg
Becca Balint, D-Brattleboro
Gerald Malloy, R-Weathersfield
Adam Ortiz, I-Newport City
Suzanne "Suz" Seymour, I-Highgate
Ryan P. Walton, I-Rutland City

Governor

June Goodband, Peace & Justice-Springfield
Amanda Janoo, D/P-Burlington
Brian Judd, I-Barre City
Dean Roy, Freedom & Unity-Stowe
Phil Scott, R-Berlin

Lieutenant Governor

Molly Gray, D-Burlington
John S. Rodgers, R-Glover

State Treasurer

Zachary Hampl, P-Rutland Town
Lynn Lafleur, R-Stowe
Mike Pieciak, D-Winooski

Secretary of State

Sarah Copeland Hanzas, D-Bradford
H. Brooke Paige, R-Washington
Rachel Shaw, P-Bennington

Auditor of Accounts

Tim Ashe, D-Burlington
Ivar Kronick, R-Poultney

Attorney General

Charity R. Clark, D-Williston
Edwin Howell Kemon, R-Vergennes

Q

A

Are individuals removed from the checklist after a set period of time?

Per the purging process set up by federal law, voters who do not vote in two elections (held every two years) and do not respond to a notice sent by the local board of civil authority via first-class mail, may be removed from the checklist. However, 17 V.S.A § 2147 provides that a voter removed from the checklist in error can be added back to the checklist. Once a voter has registered in Vermont, there is no need to re-take the Voter's Oath, but the registrant will need to indicate where he or she was registered in Vermont previously.

Get to know your Addison County district

ADDISON COUNTY — The Legislature rejiggered Vermont House and Senate districts a little bit after the 2020 Census. Most residents in this part of the Green Mountain State are in the same legislative districts they were during the teens. But that's not true for all of our readers.

Here is a rough outline of our districts.

Addison Senate District is represented by two state senators who represent all 23 towns in Addison County plus Huntington, Buel's Gore and Rochester.

Addison-1, a two-seat district in the Vermont House that covers most of the town of Middlebury, except a

portion that includes the west side of Route 7 to Main Street, Elm Street, Seymour Street, the Marble Works, the west side of Main Street and the north side of Weybridge Street. All of that carveout was put in the Addison-5 district.

Addison-2, a single-seat district that includes Cornwall, Goshen, Leicester, Ripton and Salisbury.

Addison-3, a two-seat district including the communities of Vergennes, Ferrisburgh, Addison, Pantton and Waltham plus a slice of New Haven that is north of Lime Kiln Road, west of Route 7 and north of the New Haven River.

Addison-4, a two-seat

district including Bristol, Lincoln, Monkton and Starksboro.

Addison-5, a single-seat district that encompasses Bridport and Weybridge, most of New Haven (minus the northwesterly part put in Addison-3) and a northwest carve-out of Middlebury as described above in Addison-1.

Addison-Rutland, a one-seat district that includes Orwell, Shoreham, Whiting, Hubbardton and Sudbury.

Windsor-Addison, a one-seat district that includes Hancock, Rochester, Bethel and Stockbridge.

Orange-Washington-Addison, a one-seat district that includes Granville, Roxbury, Brookfield, Randolph and Braintree.

For a more precise description of the Vermont House district boundaries, head online to the Secretary of State's website at: tinyurl.com/VtHouseDist.

Can I be registered to vote in more than one Vermont town?

A voter may only register and vote in one town. It is unlawful to vote, or to attempt to vote, in more than one town.

Prop 4 broadens equal protection

By SHAUN ROBINSON
VTDigger.org

MONTPELIER — Vermont voters on Nov. 3 will have the chance to weigh in on Proposal 4, an amendment to the state's constitution.

The proposal, which got a final sign-off from the House in May, is aimed at ensuring all people are treated equally under the law regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or nationality.

A statewide vote is the last step in the yearslong process that PR.4, or any other proposed change to Vermont's founding document, must follow. The Senate, where the measure was first proposed nearly a decade ago, gave its final sign-off to the amendment in March.

Supporters say the proposal builds on the equal protection clause in the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, in part by explicitly identifying groups of people who have historically faced discrimination in Vermont and around the country.

If approved, the measure — a similar version of which exists in a majority of other state constitutions — could form the basis of future Vermont Supreme Court decisions, supporters have said. It would become the 23rd article of Vermont's founding document.

"The federal Constitution represents a floor, not a ceiling, of rights. It shows us the minimum we can do, not the maximum," said Rep. Barbara Rachelson, D/P-Burlington, presenting PR.4 on the House floor this past spring. "Therefore, it's important that Vermont develop its own jurisprudence regarding equal protection, and not simply rely on the one found in our federal Constitution."

The proposal got near-unanimous support on the House and Senate floors, though it faced more opposition this year than when it got initial approval from both chambers in 2024. In Vermont, proposed constitutional amendments need to win support from back-to-back legislatures before going to voters.

In the House, the proposal passed 128-14. Two years ago, it passed the chamber with just four votes against. All but one of the House members who voted against PR.4 this year are Republicans. There are more GOP members in the House today than there were two years ago.

None of the House members who represent Addison County voted No, but Rep. Jim Casey, R-Hubardton, who represents Whiting, Orwell and Shoreham, was absent from the vote.

No senators voted against PR.4 in March, nor did any vote against it in 2024.

One senator, however, was not in the chamber for the vote this year. That was Sen. Steve Heffernan, R-Bristol, who

(See Prop 4, Page 23D)

Governor

(Continued from Page 2D)

raising taxes on high income-earners. This year, a version of the proposal got significant airtime in a key House committee but ultimately did not have enough support from Democratic leaders to advance beyond that.

Her campaign has proposed a 2% tax surcharge on personal income over \$250,000 and an 8% surcharge on personal income over \$500,000. Together, these measures would raise \$344 million in state revenue each year, according to estimates from Fair Share for Vermont, a group that has lobbied in Montpelier for those proposals.

Janoo was part of that advocacy effort before running for governor and says her proposals are based on the group's modeling. Revenue garnered from the surcharge plan would effectively replace, in Vermont, the tax cuts included in last year's Republican-led federal tax and spending law, according to Fair Share for Vermont.

Broadly, Janoo said her goal is to use the surtax revenue to fund primary and preventive healthcare for all Vermonters, regardless of their insurance coverage. She's previously estimated that such a system would cost more than \$300 million. Janoo said in an interview, though, that the details of which services the surcharge would pay for would need to be worked out with legislators after she was elected.

Vermont would not be the first state to raise income taxes on wealthy people. Several other states, including two in New England, have similar policies in place. Since 2023, Massachusetts has had a 4% surcharge on income over \$1 million; and starting this year, Maine has levied a 2% surcharge on income over the same amount.

If Vermont's goal is to bring in as much new revenue as possible from a new tax, it makes sense the threshold starts at a relatively lower level of \$250,000, so that as many people pay it as possible, said Robert McClelland, a senior fellow at the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington, D.C.

He said some questions to consider about the proposal are whether it would be indexed for inflation — so that it continues to impact only the wealthiest people — and whether married people's income would be counted together or separately when calculating who meets the surtax threshold. If married people's income is counted together, it could create a "marriage penalty," he said, which might not be a good policy decision.

Scott, for his part, has been a sharp critic of the tax surcharge idea and contends that it would drive businesses and wealthy individuals out of the state at a time when Vermont needs to be growing its population, not losing more residents.

"You're raising a tax on a group that I don't think will pay it, because I think they'll make a decision at that point as to where they live," he said earlier this year.

Vermont has a neighboring state, New Hampshire, with no income tax — which could draw some people across the border,

McClelland suggested. But he said there is little evidence from elsewhere in the country that significant "tax flight" would occur.

In Massachusetts, the so-called "millionaire's tax" has exceeded projections for how much revenue it would bring into the state each year it's been in effect since 2023.

Supporters there argue this would not be the case if wealthy residents were leaving in large numbers to avoid paying the new charge.

"The best evidence is, that's not much of a concern. People tend not to do that," McClelland said.

TAXING 2ND HOMES

At a campaign town hall in Newfane recently, Janoo got a rousing ovation and even some loud cheers for another tax proposal: raising taxes on some second homes.

Her campaign platform draws a distinction between types of housing that she thinks are good for a community — primary homes, affordable housing, homes owned by small landlords and "modest family camps" — and those that she has described repeatedly as "extractive" of the types of housing people who live in the state need. The latter includes "luxury second homes, commercial vacation rentals, vacant investment properties" and those owned by large corporations and private equity, her website states.

She's proposed imposing a higher tax rate on the latter types of housing, which would discourage wealthy investors from buying up properties and allow the revenue to be "reinvested to reduce property taxes for Vermont residents," according to her site.

Her platform doesn't list a specific dollar amount that could be raised from those taxes. In a social media post in May, she cited a figure as high as \$1 billion a year, though later told VTDigger and Vermont Public that "was a rough estimate of the potential long-term revenue" and not an amount that the state could immediately count on taking in.

Janoo said in an interview that it was hard to give a solid estimate because so much work would need to be done first to determine which types of properties would be taxed in what way. VTDigger and Vermont Public reported that even counting the number of second homes in the state is complicated, much less deciding how to tax them.

The idea is, at least, popular: in a recent Vermont Public poll, 57% of respondents said they thought that the state should impose a new yearly tax on second homes.

Scott, at a recent press conference, wouldn't directly say whether he'd support new taxes on certain types of second homes. He said he's waiting for more analysis of the idea by the state Department of Taxes before making up his mind.

Still, the governor said, "I would prefer not to raise any taxes" at all.

TAXING BIG TECH

Another one of Janoo's proposals is to tax the revenue that large technology companies earn from digital advertisements. She says tech companies collect troves of data on Vermonters to target them with

ads, but in her view the state gets little benefit in return. She called it another "extractive" process, as is corporate ownership of housing.

Revenue from the tax would be invested in community broadband projects, local journalism and other initiatives, Janoo said. She also hopes that taxes on big tech companies dissuade them from running targeted ads, in the first place.

"We don't have billboards in our state. Why don't we discourage digital advertisements? Nobody likes them, anyway," Janoo said.

Numerous other states have considered or enacted some form of tax on digital advertising, some of which are similar to Janoo's proposal. In August, a Maryland court struck down a digital advertising tax in that state after finding it violated federal internet tax freedom law, though state officials have since appealed that decision.

One of the challenges for Janoo's proposals might not be whether or not they will discourage business from operating in the state, but rather, the cost the state would have to take on to administer them, Amanda Gregg, told VTDigger.

"This happens in Vermont. What I see is that sometimes, our reach exceeds our grasp administratively," said Gregg, an associate professor of economics at Middlebury College. "We have a small state government."

Broadly, Gregg said she thinks Scott is right to be concerned about the impacts of new taxes on the state's demographics and businesses. But she also said that voters are eager for new ideas, like the ones Janoo is proposing.

Recent polling and campaign fundraising data suggests Janoo has built significant momentum around the state in recent months, especially compared to most other Democrats who have run against Scott in years past.

Even Scott acknowledged that Janoo's ideas were generating excitement. Janoo is "a different voice and I think that people just are looking for change," he said. "And she's very articulate."

He contended that the change voters should support is sending more of his Republican allies to the Statehouse, rather than replacing him with a Democratic governor.

But Janoo's ideas are "popular for a reason," Gregg said. "It feels like doing something — and it addresses a sense of unfairness."

Olivia Gieger contributed reporting.

My son or daughter is away at college, can I request an absentee ballot for them?

Yes.

Lt. Gov. candidates largely agree on politics, clash personally

By TIERNEY FLAVIN
VTDigger.org

Lt. Gov. John Rodgers and challenger Molly Gray met Oct. 6 for a tense debate hosted by Vermont Public.

Incumbent Republican Rodgers and Gray, a Democrat and former lieutenant governor, mostly challenged each other on past experiences rather than policy in the debate.

“My opponent and I agree with one thing,” Rodgers said. “And that is that we can’t afford the status quo.”

Rodgers and Gray, the former executive director at Vermont Afghan Alliance, talked bipartisanship, education, healthcare, property taxes and rural-urban divides in a debate hosted by Vermont Public. The candidates agreed that Vermont needs to lower the cost of living and support the state’s rural population. Deflections and personal attacks, however, left little room for policy outlines.

Throughout the debate, Rodgers accused Gray of political opportunism and questioned her rural credentials and schooling, while Gray defended her education and later accused Rodgers of bullying.

In an opening question, moderator Mikaela Lefrak asked the candidates to discuss how they will fulfill the duties of the role, which has little authority in passing legislation. They agreed that the role should not be seen as a ceremonial one. Gray, who previously served as lieutenant governor from 2021-2023, said the job should be used to advance state priorities and address federal overreach. Gray did not run for reelection in 2023, instead making an unsuccessful bid for the U.S. House of Representatives. Rodgers criticized that decision noting that his time in office has been spent focusing on “constituent work.”

“When you look at the two of us who’ve each had two years there, I used the office to help Vermonters, and my opponent used the office to run for Congress,” he said.

Throughout their campaigns, both candidates have touted their rural

upbringings. While the candidates agreed that legislators in Montpelier are disconnected from the state’s farmers, Rodgers, 61, of Glover, brought up Gray’s high school education at Stratton Mountain School, a private boarding ski academy.

“I don’t think it’s appropriate to make light of that,” Gray, 42, of Burlington, responded, noting that she had received a scholarship having learned to cross-country ski while growing up in Newbury.

They also agreed on education spending, healthcare, land-use policy and property tax. Gray said she would advocate for universal primary care and affordable housing, noting a five-point housing plan she’s proposing. On high property taxes, Rodgers, who served in the Legislature for 16 years, recalled an amendment he proposed on Act 46 in 2015 that would have mitigated education costs but ultimately wasn’t passed into law.

“It is clearly the same folks that are supporting my opponent that have caused us to get here,” he said, speaking to Vermont having one of the highest property taxes in the country.

Rodgers also said that Gray has yet to explain how to pay for universal primary care.

“What I believe is that we have a responsibility to consider recouping the Trump tax cuts and possibly increasing the tax on luxury second homes in Vermont, not hunting camps, not workforce housing, and investing that directly into a program that we know brings down costs, helps stabilize our education system and provides Vermonters meaningful property tax relief,” Gray responded.

Gray won the Democratic primary in August. After her unsuccessful bid for Congress in 2022, she served as the first executive director of the Vermont Afghan Alliance, a nonprofit which supports Afghans resettling across the state. This, she said, allowed her to see “the cruelty and inhumanity of the Trump administration up close.”

Rodgers has also previously spoken against the Trump administration’s cuts



REPUBLICAN LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR John Rodgers, left, and Molly Gray, a Democratic nominee to be the lieutenant governor.

Photos by Glenn Russell/VTDigger.org

to Medicare and Medicaid, tariffs and the detentions of migrant workers.

Before his 2024 Republican bid for lieutenant governor, Rodgers served in the Legislature as a Democrat. During the debate, he said that he felt disappointed in the impacts of Democratic policies on the working class.

“Their policies are literally crushing them,” he said. “I have a long history of being independent, no matter what party I was part of, because I work for Vermonters”

During a segment where the candidates could offer questions to one another, Rodgers asked Gray why she had not spoken out against labor violations on her family’s farm in 2024, which found unfit living conditions for migrant workers. The case was resolved and closed in January 2025.

Gray responded that she was on the ballot, not her family.

“I’m a little bit caught off guard here, and I’m a little bit shocked,” she said. “Vermonters have a chance in this election to really think about the type of leadership they want in the state. When I think about

what we see nationally right now, I think about what I want for my kids. I don’t want a self-serving, self-interested bully.”

She then asked Rodgers if he could change anything he had done in office he had regretted.

“I mean, quite frankly, I can’t think of any mistakes,” he said, noting speaking against the Trump administration and constituent work.

Rodgers questioned whether Gray had encouraged Democratic leaders to bully state Rep. Leanne Harple, D-Glover, who told Gray in a phone call that she was supporting Rodgers. Gray said she couldn’t speak on “anything that happened after” she received a call from Harple. She then criticized Rodgers for his “small, petty, personal” attacks throughout the debate, saying that leadership means focusing on “big issues” in the state.

“It’s showing up every single day, making sure that Vermonters feel protected ... We’re not bullying other candidates. We’re not bullying other people into providing support for us. And I think that’s what Vermonters deserve right now.”

Prop 4

(Continued from Page 22D)

got up from his seat right before the roll call vote was taken.

Heffernan told VTDigger at the time that he left because his stomach was feeling “agitated” and he needed to use the restroom. He said he had not made up his mind on how to vote on the amendment, largely because he’d heard from constituents urging him both to vote for and against it.

“My pizza hit at the right time, I guess,” he said, calling the timing “convenient.”

Voters will be able to weigh in on PR.4 during this fall’s general election, which is Nov. 3. The proposal needs a majority vote to pass.

If approved, it would be the third change to the state constitution in the past four years. In 2022, voters passed amendments explicitly prohibiting slavery and indentured servitude under the state constitution and, broadly, preventing the state from interfering in reproductive health care decisions.

Prop. 3 would guarantee workers’ rights to bargain

By SHAUN ROBINSON – VTDigger.org

It’s not every year that Vermonters get to vote on changes to the state’s Constitution. This year, there are two up for consideration.

The first would codify employees’ right to join a union and collectively bargain with their employers. It’s known as Proposal 3. Supporters say the amendment would prevent Vermont from passing laws in the future that prohibit employers and labor unions from making union membership a condition of employment, known as “right to work” laws. These laws are on the books in a majority of states.

Prop 3 states that “no law shall be adopted that interferes with, negates, or diminishes the right of employees to collectively bargain.” The measure would also create a constitutional protection for workplace agreements that require workers to join a union as a condition of their employment.

Supporters say the move is necessary in light of anti-

labor policies across the country, while critics argue it could give unions too much power and lock in a flawed status quo.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled aspects of such “union shop” agreements are unconstitutional for public sector employees. And in 26 states, they are illegal in the private sector, too, under policies broadly known as “right to work” laws. Prop 3 would prohibit a future Legislature from enacting “right to work” laws in Vermont, supporters have said.

When the Vermont House voted on PR.3 this past May, 125 representatives voted Yes, 15 voted No, and nine were absent.

Rep. Rob North, R-Ferrisburgh, was absent. Rep. Jim Casey, D-Hubbardton, represents Shoreham, Orwell and Whiting, and voted No.

When the State Senate voted on PR.3 in March, the proposal passed 29-0, with a senator from Caledonia County absent. Both Addison County senators voted Yes.

Experience that Counts.

Ready to Serve

Across the county, our candidates have been listening to your concerns, your priorities, and your hopes for our communities.



They're ready to put what they've heard into action to serve our communities, and get to work on the issues that matter to you.

Sen. Ruth Hardy
(Senate)

Hannah Sessions
(Senate)

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(Addison-1)

Mike Roy
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Tanya Byker
(Addison-2)

Ariel Bolles
(Addison-3)

John Stroup
(Addison-3)

Jonathan Hescock
(Addison-Rutland)

Rep. Karen Lueders
(Addison-4)

Jeanne Albert
(Addison-4)

Rep. Jubilee McGill
(Addison-5)

Peter Bevere
(State's Attorney)

Dave Silberman
(High Bailiff)

For more information, visit: www.addisoncountydems.org/candidates

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