

LT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

MARCH 30, 2019

The Vermont legislature is deep in the process of building the FY2020 State Budget. The Governor's budget always begins its process in the House. Issue committees tackle challenges, offer solutions and then make budget recommendations to their Chamber's Appropriation committee for funding. This week the House debated and passed the FY2020 budget, it now heads to the Senate. Budget decisions have direct impact now and for future generations.

It is abundantly clear that stable and affordable housing is the most important social determinant for health, education and reducing future societal costs. Nationally, over 75% of whites own homes compared to less than 45% of non-whites. This is largely due to policies and practices enacted decades ago.

For instance, after World War II, the U.S. government wanted to support our returning service members and passed the G.I. Bill. Unfortunately, it was drafted in a way that discriminated against black and brown veterans. Home loans for white veterans were subsidized while excluding access to veterans of color. This resulted in disproportionate home ownership rates, a legacy we live with today.

With the housing crunch in Vermont, robust funding of housing initiatives is one of the most important investments our state can make to ensure a better standard of living for all Vermonters, and especially for those living in poverty or experiencing racial discrimination. On the back, you can read more about the impact of affordable housing and Vermont's housing crunch.

The Senate Economic Development Committee passed out a committee bill (S.161) with a new, \$50 million housing bond to create affordable housing. Sadly, this may create a state credit problem because Gov. Scott refused to pay down debt in recent budgets. This is an example of how one year's choice affects future possibilities.

Along with housing impacts on health, climate change also has a large effect. I recently met with the Vermont Climate & Health Alliance (www.vtcha.org) and learned more about the health impacts of climate change. You can read some of their findings on the back.

Thank you for staying connected.



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 4

7:00 – Live on 'The Morning Drive with Marcus & Kurt'. WVMT 620AM

5:30 – Public Info Session on Ranked Choice Voting. Room 10, State House, Montpelier

April 5 & 12 8:30-10:00AM

'Coffee with Constituents.' Lt. Gov. Office, State House, Montpelier

April 6

10:00 – Math Fair. UVM

1:00 – Made in VT Expo, Champlain Valley Exposition, Essex

April 7 6:00PM

Economy for All Town Hall. Kennedy Brothers Auditorium, 11 Main Street, Vergennes

April 8 7:00PM

'Paris to Pittsburgh' screening and panel discussion. Colchester Meeting House, 830 Main Street

April 11

12:00 – Financial Literacy Award Ceremony. Pavilion Auditorium, Montpelier

6:00 - Economy for All Town Hall. U-32, 930 Gallison Hill Rd, Montpelier

April 14 2:00PM

Economy for All Town Hall. Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 108 School Street, Bennington

April 17 6:00PM

Cabot Centennial Celebration. Double Tree Hotel, South Burlington

For a complete list of events please visit the calendar on our website:
www.LTGov.vermont.gov

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CHANGED OUR LIFE

In February, Isaura, a resident of the Housing Trust of Rutland County, shared her experience with the House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee. Below is an excerpt from her testimony.

“Today, my husband has been healthy for a year and half because we were able to stay in one place with one set of providers. My daughter is off seizure medications and no longer goes to weekly counseling services. My son still struggles with the effects of recent concussions, but we have hope now because we can access the services we need. I absolutely attribute these improvements to our stable, quality and affordable housing that would not have been possible without the support and funding from the Vermont Housing Conservation Board.”

VPR HOUSING CRUNCH PODCAST

VPR's recent podcast “*Why Does Vermont Have Such A Housing Crunch?*” illuminates some of Vermont's struggles with housing. Vermont's housing stock is old with 26.7 percent of its stock 80 years or older, more than double the national average. Because of this, buying a home in Vermont often takes greater investments in repairs, updates and insulation.

Another challenge is that most vacant houses in Vermont are seasonal and recreational homes. Additionally, the vacancy rate is uneven across the state. For example, nearly 47 percent of homes are vacant in Essex County while just 5 percent are empty in Chittenden County.

Affordability is also an issue and mortgages are expensive; a typical ‘inexpensive’ home could still cost over \$850 month. According to data by Vermont Housing and Finance Association, 36 percent of all Vermonters are cost-burdened, that is, paying more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing costs.

You can read more here: <https://www.vpr.org/post/why-does-vermont-have-such-housing-crunch>.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

At the Global Climate and Health Summit in 2018, national political leaders met with an international group of physicians, health care NGOs, and leaders of major hospital systems to discuss how “climate change is a global health emergency”. Sea level rises in Florida, flooding in the mid-west and extreme storms across the country, including in Vermont, demonstrate how climate change is radically destabilizing the ways in which our society ensures the health and well-being of all Americans. The oldest and youngest are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. In Vermont, the heat wave of 2018 caused a record spike in heat related illness and emergency room visits, heavy rains caused an unprecedented release of untreated waste from municipal water treatment plants, and we have the highest per capita rate of Lyme disease in the nation. One way Vermont can address climate change is by greatly expanding weatherization funding.

You can learn more about these issues and our work by attending one of our showings of the National Geographic Documentary *Paris to Pittsburgh*. From coastal cities to America's heartland, this movie celebrates how Americans are demanding and developing real solutions in the face of climate change.

April 8th at 7:00PM at Colchester Meeting House, 830 Main Street, Colchester. Panel discussion led by Lt. Governor David Zuckerman

April 10th at 7:00PM at the United Community Church, 1325 Main Street, St Johnsbury