

End of Session Speech
Gov. Peter Shumlin, May 6, 2016

Thank you. At a time in America where government is under attack, where some are arguing that we should simply leave people to fend for themselves, we are showing that our democracy is alive, well, and working for Vermonters. Because of your tri-partisan work since January we've passed legislation together that is worthy of the trust voters have placed in us. Consider this:

- Vermont will become the fifth state in America to ensure its citizens aren't faced with a choice of going to work sick or potentially losing their job.
- We'll be the fourth state to enhance our democracy by automatically registering voters when they apply for a driver's license.
- We'll be the seventh state to ban the box statewide, ensuring that past mistakes will not sentence Vermonters to a lifetime of struggling to get an interview and find a good job.
- We have acted to eliminate outdated traffic fines, which have become a permanent economic disability for tens of thousands of lower income Vermonters.
- We repealed the caps in Act 46 that had become the enemy of a very good bill that is working better than most had expected.
- You funded my Step Up program, allowing us to help Vermonters stuck in low-wage jobs get back to school with the classes and mentoring they deserve to achieve higher wages and a brighter future.
- You helped fund a new addiction treatment hub in St. Albans, which will serve 400 Vermonters.
- We expanded resources for those on the front lines of Vermont's opiate crisis and increased penalties for anyone who threatens the safety of our hard working DCF employees who are fighting for Vermont's most vulnerable children.
- We are expanding the successful naloxone program so that fewer addicts lose their lives before our eyes.

- We are putting an end to passing out FDA-approved painkillers like candy. Thanks to your work, fewer Vermonters will be sent home with enough painkillers to invite a lifetime of addiction.
- We passed an energy bill that continues to get us off coal and oil as we aggressively build out renewables with the support and consideration of local communities.
- And we passed a balanced budget that for the first time in nearly a decade does not rely on any one-time funds for ongoing state expenses and maintains my pledge to not raise income, sales, or rooms and meals tax rates.

All of this builds on the progress we have made together in the last five and a half years. By any measure, those accomplishments have lifted up Vermont.

- Coming out of the worst recession since the Great Depression, we invested in job creation and made the single largest investment in transportation infrastructure in Vermont's history. In five and a half years, we have cut in half the number of crumbling roads and bridges. We enjoy one of the lowest unemployment rates in America. We've added nearly 17,000 jobs. And for the first time since we've been keeping records, per capita personal income has grown each of the last four years at or above the national average.
- We created the Green Mountain Care Board to help control health care costs, embraced Obamacare, and extended health insurance to over 19,000 Vermonters who faced horrid choices between getting sick, buying their medicine, or going bankrupt. That's resulted in Vermont being tied for the lowest uninsured rate in America and hospital budgets that are growing at the lowest rates in 40 years.
- We invested in renewable energy, expanded Vermont's net metering program, set a comprehensive renewable energy goal, enacted a first-in-the-nation law that transforms our utilities into energy efficiency companies, and advanced the most comprehensive clean water legislation in Vermont's history. As a result, one in every 20 jobs in our state is in the clean energy industry. We have ten times the amount of solar and 20 times as much wind as we did in 2010. And Vermonters' have more money in their pockets because electric bills have gone down for three of the last four years at the same time as our neighbors have watched their rates skyrocket.

- We launched the War on Recidivism, expanded our expungement laws, decriminalized small amounts of marijuana, got naloxone to anyone who would take it, vastly increased addiction treatment services, and sent Vermonters into drug treatment rather than jail. Today, we've expanded those in treatment by 65 percent and have the lowest prison population since the early 2000s, saving Vermonters tens of millions of dollars. Most importantly, we have reduced the stigma surrounding opiate addiction, treating it as a disease instead of a crime.
- We're the first state in America to guarantee universal Pre-k for all three and four year olds. We've made college more affordable by expanding early college and dual enrollment. Free school meals are now available to all who need them. We established personalized learning plans for all Vermont kids, and we passed Act 46. As a result, we've seen a 57 percent increase in Pre-K enrollment, a 150 percent increase in the number of high school kids getting college credit for free, and our schools are making local decisions to streamline our education enterprise and improve educational outcomes for kids. Those actions should reduce the burden of ever-increasing property taxes in the future.
- We enacted a law that gives terminally ill patients the dignity to make end-of-life choices, raised the minimum wage, and we're leading the nation in giving consumers the right to know what's in their food with GMO labeling. Today, as other governors in America are signing bills that discriminate against the LGBT community, Vermont's at the forefront of strengthening their rights.
- And we've enacted six balanced budgets over six years that never raised income, sales, or rooms and meals tax rates because they're already high enough. Today, despite the revisionist history we hear of budgets growing faster than our economy, the average budget since 2011 has grown at just over three percent, roughly the same growth rate as the economy.

This is not the era for ticker tape parades for public servants and endless thank you tributes from your constituents. But you should be proud of the work we've accomplished together; it will have a lasting impact for generations of Vermonters to come.

What also makes me extremely proud of our work together is the way we've gone about it. We've done a lot, and we've done it together, as a family. I am acutely aware of this tonight as myself, and many of you, are moving on from our current roles in public service. Like all families, we've had our spats. But we've always come together to do what is best for Vermont. I

will be forever grateful to all of you and to Vermonters for giving me the privilege of serving as governor of the greatest state in the nation. Thank you for your service. And thank you for your great work.