

From: Coriell, Scott [Scott.Coriell@state.vt.us]
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To: Coriell, Scott
Subject: Gov. Shumlin Weekly Op-Ed

Please find below Gov. Peter Shumlin's weekly op-ed. Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Scott Coriell
Office of the Governor
(802) 353-1449

Making Progress in Montpelier

By Governor Peter Shumlin

As we head into the second half of this year's Legislation session, it's a good time to evaluate the progress that has been made in the two months since the session began. In January, I laid out a number of priorities to keep Vermont moving forward that included cleaning up Lake Champlain and other waterways, investing in clean energy to create jobs and save people money, addressing the Medicaid cost shift to save individuals and businesses on rising health care premiums, working to reduce school spending to relieve the property tax burden on hard working Vermonters, passing economic development initiatives to help Vermont businesses continue to grow jobs, and developing a balanced budget that sets the state on a sound fiscal footing going forward. While we still have lots of work ahead, I am encouraged by the progress we have made on these priorities thus far.

Already, two House committees have approved a comprehensive proposal to help clean up Lake Champlain and its tributaries. Combined, the House and Senate have taken hours of testimony on this subject, and the Legislature has already made unprecedented, tri-partisan progress to provide the appropriate tools and resources to improve the state's water quality. We know our economic vitality and quality of life are inextricably linked to the health of our natural environment, and I am very encouraged that all parties are collaborating to make real progress on this problem that affects us all.

When it comes to clean energy, the House last week gave overwhelming initial approval to legislation that will grow jobs, reduce energy costs for Vermonters, and make tremendous progress in our efforts to fight climate change. We've made incredible progress growing a clean energy economy in Vermont, which currently supports over 15,000 jobs. The legislation the House is set to pass will strengthen Vermont's energy innovation leadership, create over 1,000 jobs, save Vermonters a net of \$275 million on our energy costs, and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions at the same time.

I am pleased that the legislation being considered by the House Health Care Committee contains priorities that align very closely with the ones I laid out in January. There is broad consensus that we need to strengthen primary care to improve health care quality and access for Vermonters,

and that we must address the Medicaid cost shift to begin to fix a broken system that drives up private insurance premium rates on Vermont businesses and individuals. These are not easy tasks, but we must do them if we are to have a more affordable, accessible health care system going forward.

The House Education Committee has made an important start by passing a bill that includes many of the ideas that I put forward in January and those of other lawmakers that will be debated in the months ahead. Lawmakers of all parties have made good on the promise to address rising property taxes by listening to all ideas and creating an atmosphere of collaboration that will be key to making progress on this issue. Together, I am hopeful that we will pass legislation to help districts control education spending, strengthen academic offerings, and ensure their schools are able to provide the best education for our children at a price taxpayers can afford.

When it comes to economic development, we are working together to build upon the innovative Vermont Economic Growth Incentive (VEGI) program by broadening participation and making it easier for businesses to expand and create jobs. Just last year VEGI awarded \$4.7 million that will help create 708 new full-time jobs, generate \$15.3 million in new payroll, and \$136 million in investment in Vermont. Making it so more Vermont entrepreneurs can access this program will grow jobs and economic opportunity for all.

Lastly, as we face one of the most difficult budgets in recent memory, we are working closely with the Legislature to craft a balanced approach to align Vermont's spending with revenue growth so we are not back here year after year facing the same problem. This will not be easy and it will require us all to make difficult decisions, but I am committed to balancing the budget thoughtfully and in a way that does not simply raise more money to fix this year's gap without real, long-term cuts to put us on a more stable fiscal footing going forward.

On these and other issues, we're making strong progress on priorities that will grow jobs and make Vermont a more affordable place to live. While it has been an encouraging start to this year's Legislative session, the real work and difficult choices start now. I look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature to make the tough choices required to continue moving Vermont forward.