

## **Introduction**

Thank you. When I had the privilege of speaking to you for the first time four and a half years ago, Vermont was in a much different place. The Great Recession had ripped through our country, causing a trail of destruction. Vermont had lost 10,000 jobs. Unemployment had spiked and businesses were contracting and shedding jobs with hope in short supply. Four and a half years later – in part because of the work we have done together – our state is a much different place.

- Since January 2011, Vermont has added over 14,000 jobs.
- We are now home to the lowest unemployment rate this side of the Mississippi.
- Today every baby born in Vermont has a brighter future regardless of their financial circumstance because of the work we've done together to be the first state to implement universal pre-k for all, make free meals in our schools to every child who needs them, and give every Vermont student the opportunity to earn two years of college for free. And because of your work this session they've got a better shot at paying for college thanks to the Child Savings Accounts you authorized. Importantly, the child protection bill you sent me improves our chances of protecting our most vulnerable.
- Together we've also transformed Vermont's clean energy economy, saving Vermonters hundreds of millions of dollars on their energy bills, building an economy that now supports over 15,000 clean energy jobs, and ensuring that we help to win the battle against climate change. The RESET legislation you passed this year will pave the way for an even cleaner, greener energy future with Vermont once again leading the way.

## **Transition**

But we came into this session knowing that we had more work to do and that Vermonters had sent us a clear message: Do everything in your power to make this economy work for every single Vermonter and fix the things that are undermining our quality of life.

## **Lake Champlain and Water Quality**

The clean water bill that you sent me, and to which I dedicated most of my Inaugural Address, answers that call. Our rivers, lakes, and streams are more than just a part of our everyday life; they help define who we are as Vermonters. The blue green algae blooms are a living testament to our collective failure. But your courage in finally passing a bill that's going to clean our state's waters and lakes will serve as an extraordinary legacy to our children and their children.

## **Education and Property Taxes**

Vermonters are sick and tired of rising property taxes and supporting a growing school infrastructure for a shrinking number of students. Improving quality and building a partnership to administrative reform has evaded governors and lawmakers for too long. You've just sent me a bill that changes that and will right-size our educational system while improving quality and building a brighter future for every child in Vermont. That's a big deal. Thank you.

## **Economic Development**

I've also said that we must continue to grow jobs in Vermont by investing in economic development. You have answered the call by strengthening VEGI to help grow existing jobs and attract new companies. We've unleashed more capital for start-up business and helped first-time homebuyers get into a home.

## **Budget**

And we all had the unenviable task of balancing a \$113 million budget gap and the collective responsibility of matching Montpelier's spending with the growth rate of our economy. Of all the tough things we did together, this was the most difficult. I appreciate that in the last few days we made additional cuts and came up with a sensible revenue package to help put Vermont on a fiscally strong foundation for the future. The fact that we did it without raising income, sales, and rooms and meals tax rates or removing the ability to deduct charitable giving and major medical expenses is good Vermont common sense.

## **Conclusion**

We are blessed to live in a state where the legislature and the governor come together to take on the really tough issues that are holding our state back. In current day America, elected officials often don't address the tough issues because we are in an era where there are no popular solutions. Together we have bucked that national trend by coming up with the tough solutions that secure the people who elected us a more prosperous future.

- Education reform.
- Cleaning up our lakes and waterways.
- Charting a cleaner, greener energy future.
- Closing a \$113 million budget gap.
- Helping to protect our most vulnerable Vermonters.

Those are gigantic issues that have been ignored for too long. Thank you for having the courage to come together to solve the problems that Vermonters sent us here to solve.