

VLS INTERVIEW

How did your time as a VLS student prepare you to run for, and win, statewide elected office?

Much like law school, running for statewide office, requires a lot of mental and physical discipline. You are constantly digesting information, listening and engaging constituents and working to make your case. You are often on your feet and the days are long! During debates and press interviews, I often found harkening back to Appellate Advocacy and Moot Court at VLS. I recalled and deployed the tools we learned to remain calm and focused while at the podium or in delivering a persuasive argument.

Can you think of any specific memories, lessons learned, teachers, etc., at VLS that you will lean on during your time as Lt. Gov.?

Of all the lessons I learned, I think most of the what the VLS community fostered in terms of inclusivity, compassion and accountability. In many ways, VLS is like a large law firm operating in a small village. Not only do you see colleagues in the café, library and bookstore but also at the South Royalton Market, the Worthy Burger and everywhere in between. Everyone is transforming together and with that comes compassion for the human experience, accountability for one's actions and those of your colleagues, and an inevitable desire and responsibility to be inclusive. I think those values make for good lawyers as well as good leaders and elected officials. I carry close my time at VLS.

The path between law school and elected office is well worn, but do you think VLS's strong focus on public interest will help you bring a different sensibility to the Lt. Gov. position? If so, how?

Yes. I was attracted to VLS not only because VLS, in my mind, is Vermont's law school, but also because of the strong focus on public interest law, specifically the robust international and comparative law program. Although I had no plans of running for public office at the time of applying, the school's mission and motto—"Law for the Community and the World"—drew me in. The mission and motto could not be more necessary and fitting today as we work to address our greatest challenges and restore faith in the essentialness of good government and international engagement. From the climate crisis to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we need good lawyers and leaders who recognize the connectivity between local and global. We also need good lawyers and leaders committed to upholding the constitution, the rule of law and promoting respect for human dignity. I reflect on the motto often as I approach my work as Lt. Governor.

Do you think your experiences as Lt. Gov. will find their way into some of the classes you teach (if/when you are able to teach of course)? If so, how?

Absolutely! I look forward to returning to the classroom and teaching international human rights law once COVID-19 lifts and I have settled into my new role. Staying connected with students and the VLS community is extremely important to me. Additionally, this is such an important and exciting time to teach human rights and to support students in exploring careers in the field. With President Biden in the White House we will continue to see a recommitment to international engagement and promoting and protecting international human rights. VLS has an important role to play in training and preparing the next generation of advocates and leaders. That being said, and as I have always told my students, universal human rights begin locally and we have so much work to do right here at home in our communities across Vermont.

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What do you hope to accomplish as Lt. Gov.?

I was inspired to run for Lt. Governor because of what I saw and heard across Vermont—a generation struggling to make it work because of crippling student loan debt, a lack of paid family and medical leave, affordable and quality childcare as well as housing. Vermont is one of the oldest states in the country. Our population and workforce continue to shrink along with our rural communities and tax base. These issues were present before COVID-19. This pandemic laid everything bare. Particularly, the critical need to make strategic investments in the economic wellbeing of our families and communities and to address deeply rooted inequities. As Lt. Governor, I look forward to working with the Governor, Legislature and communities across Vermont to recover stronger from COVID-19 and doing so in a way that addresses our demographic crisis and promotes respect for human dignity.

What message do you hope your election sends to VLS's current students and younger alumni?

I want VLS students, alumni and the next generation of leaders across Vermont to know that there is no single or correct path to public office. Now, more than ever, we need diverse voices and backgrounds in government at all levels. A strong democracy is a diverse democracy. We also need good lawyers in government ready to uphold and defend the constitution. Our future depends on the next generation across Vermont knowing that government is accessible, participation is possible and that it can represent all of us.