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**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

**Lt. Governor Molly Gray to Join General Joseph Votel, USA (Ret.) and Michael Abramowitz for a Live Discussion: *The Business of Freedom: How Markets Can Support Democracy and Counter Authoritarianism***

**Montpelier, Vt.** — Lt. Governor Molly Gray will moderate a live discussion between General Joseph Votel, USA (Ret.) and Michael Abramowitz, president of [Freedom House](#). The discussion, *The Business of Freedom: How Markets Can Support Democracy and Counter Authoritarianism*, will be held on Saturday November 12<sup>th</sup> in Stowe at the Spruce Peak Arts Center and virtually online. The discussion will focus on the economic consequences of global democratic decline and how the business community can push back against authoritarianism, support human rights, and help build a more secure and prosperous world.

“In a globalized world, businesses of all sizes, and from all corners of the world, can support human rights and democratic principles in their labor practices, supply chains, and where and how they decide to do business. Vermont has always been a leader in promoting human rights and it’s exciting to host this timely event with two unique global leaders,” said Lt. Governor Gray.

General Joseph L. Votel is a retired U.S. Army Four-Star officer and most recently the Commander of the U.S. Central Command. During his 39 years in the military, he commanded special operations and conventional military forces at every level. His career included combat in Panama, Afghanistan and Iraq. He preceded his assignment at CENTCOM with service as the Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command and the Joint Special Operations Command.

General Votel serves as President and CEO of Business Executives for National Security, a nonprofit that brings the best talent in business together with senior national security leaders to apply best practices and cutting-edge ideas to solve some of the Nation's most complex and pressing national security challenges.

"I believe in Freedom House's core conviction that freedom flourishes in democratic nations where governments are accountable to their people. In a world economy and a fragile global security landscape, it is of critical importance to align international efforts between democratic states and private sector businesses to work collaboratively as frontline defenders of freedom," said General Votel.

Michael Abramowitz is the president of Freedom House, a nonprofit that works to defend human rights and promote democratic change, with a focus on political rights and civil liberties. Prior to joining Freedom House, Abramowitz was the director of the U.S.

Holocaust Memorial Museum's Levine Institute for Holocaust Education. He was also previously the national editor and then White House correspondent for The Washington Post.

"The business community can play a critical role in combating the erosion of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism, one of the existential challenges of our time. Executives understand that core tenets of democracy—such as transparency, rule of law, and respect for human rights—all contribute to strong economic growth and a vibrant, resilient private sector," said Michael Abramowitz.

More information on the event, including in-person and virtual ticket details, can be found [here](#).

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