

Economic growth has been the focus of my public service since I was first elected to the Vermont Senate. I firmly believe responsible growth is the path to success for our State, our businesses, and our people.

Last January, I stood before the Vermont Senate and called for all bills that will have a positive, measurable impact on our economy, grow jobs and ease the crisis of affordability to be put on the front burner. This was not the first time I urged this focus on the fundamentals of a healthy economy. I made this same request at the beginnings of the 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 sessions, because the future of Vermont, and the security of working families, hinges on economic growth. As Vermonters, we know this to be true.

Just last month, I suggested that we don't have to wait for a new governor to redirect our focus; we have this session to work on prioritizing the economy and restoring the fiscal fundamentals of state government. At forums over the last several months I specifically suggested, among other proposals, prioritizing funding for higher education, restoring funding to the Vermont Training Program and the Workforce Education & Training Fund; encouraging and growing the use of the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive (VEGI) Program; and replenishing the Enterprise Fund so it can be used for its original purpose of providing added incentives to recruit and retain businesses who will add jobs in Vermont.

I am pleased that the Governor, in his final year in office, is choosing to focus on economic growth. In today's State of the State address, he builds upon suggestions I have made over the years. This is a path I will continue on throughout this legislative session and beyond. We can't afford any more empty political promises. Vermont needs leadership that is focused, listens and can build consensus. Working together, we can strengthen our economy, make our state more affordable and invest in our future without sacrificing the values that are so important to us as Vermonters.

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