

# Office of the Lieutenant Governor

## **Executive Summary**

The Lieutenant Governor serves as President of the Senate, casts a tie-breaking vote to create a majority when the Senate is equally divided, and whenever the Governor leaves Vermont, the Lieutenant Governor stands in for the Governor. As a result of its limited constitutional duties, the Lieutenant Governor has the opportunity to dedicate time to special projects and initiatives that will improve government efficiency and accountability. He also allocates a significant amount of time for interaction with Vermonters from all corners of the state.

During his first year in office, Lt. Governor Zuckerman has made increased citizen engagement a top priority. Every Friday during the legislative session he opened the office for '*Coffee with Constituents*.' This event brought together hundreds of Vermonters eager to share ideas and learn the inner workings of the State House. Many participants left saying they now felt more comfortable engaging in the democratic process. In addition to these weekly public meetings, the Lt. Governor also scheduled hundreds of smaller gatherings with constituents, advocacy groups and lawmakers, to create opportunities and amplify the voice of everyday Vermonters in Montpelier.

Over the summer and fall the Lt. Governor traveled all around Vermont to emphasize and promote citizen participation as essential to a functional and successful democracy. The same message of citizen engagement and activism was brought to elementary classrooms and Rotary club meetings, as well as to college campuses and statewide conferences. In addition to the 183 written invitations to attend events, the office has received heartfelt expressions of gratitude for the time spent listening and sharing the Lt. Governor's perspective in communities far and wide. He was particularly honored to hear from folks who, while disagreeing with his positions, felt he and his office were a valuable place in state government where people are willing to listen and work with everyone.

Vermonters come to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor to share their thoughts and insights, as well as to garner support on a variety of issues. In 2017, our office responded to more than 1,150 constituent messages. Water quality, education, cannabis reform and health care were leading issues motivating constituents to contact the office. The office also dedicated a lot of time to help Vermonters identify and access the correct state agency to address their needs.

Lt. Governor Zuckerman will remain engaged with Vermonters during the 2018 legislative session, to help lawmakers in Montpelier understand and tackle the daily economic struggle facing our communities. While visiting Vermonters throughout the state, the Lt. Governor is constantly reminded of the need for rural economic

development, job training, and more economic opportunities. Vermonters regularly share how our regressive property tax and education funding system burdens them by taxing wealthier Vermonters at lower rates than working class Vermonters. Lt. Governor Zuckerman hopes committees will consider the experiences of Vermonters as they work toward meaningful reforms to help all in a nonpartisan fashion. He will be working closely and collaboratively with the Senate President Pro Tem, as well as Senate Committee Chairs, on these matters.

Lt. Governor Zuckerman continues to find new ways to connect with constituents. In January he will launch *'Lunchtime Town Hall: A weekly conversation with Lt. Governor Zuckerman and guests.'* This Facebook 'live' event will take place every Wednesday from 12-12:30 and allow those who can't travel to Montpelier an opportunity to learn about current legislation and the inner workings of the state house. The Office will continue our open-door policy and Friday morning *'Coffee with Constituents.'*

The Lieutenant Governor has a regularly updated website and continues to grow his social media presence making his office even more accessible to Vermonters. Through his Twitter account (@VTLtGov) and Facebook page (VTLtGov), the Lt. Governor communicates with people on everything from public safety to some of the lighter sides of his life. Last year, Lt. Governor Zuckerman began publishing a monthly email newsletter. In addition to the thousands of Vermonters already connected to

the Lt. Governor, an additional 1,379 Vermonters signed-up to receive the newsletter via email in 2017. The Lt Governor will continue sending monthly updates to this list throughout 2018.

In 2017, the Lt. Governor regularly brought advocacy groups into his office to find ways to work together on legislation that was mutually supported. Focus groups included labor, the environment, energy, agriculture, racial justice, and cannabis. These meetings will continue in 2018.

This past April, The Lt. Governor's office partnered with the Sierra Club for a screening and panel discussion of *The Merchants of Doubt* at the State House. This event attracted over 60 community members, as well as legislators, and was highly regarded by all. This legislative session, the Lt. Governor will host a monthly movie series at the State House. Themes of racism, criminal justice, the environment, indigenous and native rights and labor will be highlighted and are sure to spark meaningful discussions around some of these pressing issues.

Whether it's facilitating more open dialogue among the stakeholders in state government; acting as ombudsman for Vermont citizens who need help from state agencies; or encouraging Vermonters and Vermont businesses to be more involved in the legislative process – the Lt. Governor's goal is to have the office maintain a culture of openness and accessibility by welcoming all.