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Secretary Jim Condos: Hundreds of Vermonters Trained on Open Government

Montpelier, VT—Every two years since taking office in 2011 Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos has travelled the state as a part of his biennial Transparency Tour training government employees, elected officials and engaged citizens on the responsibilities and tools that all Vermont government officials have to serve Vermonters in an open and transparent manner.

“We travel the state every two years with a simple message: in government, the ultimate boss is the public. It’s important that government officials, state and local, better understand Vermont’s sunshine laws in serving the public in an open and transparent way,” said Secretary Condos.

This year’s Transparency Tour traveled over 1,700 miles in 15 locations training over 300 Vermonters on Vermont’s Open Meeting Law, the Public Records Act, and the importance of transparency in government.

“From Newport to Bennington, St. Albans to Brattleboro, and many stops in between, we embarked on this year’s tour with the message: the public has a right to know, the right to attend, and the right to participate.”

Secretary Condos believes transparency is the key to restoring faith and trust in government. We’re proud that after this year’s tour, over 300 Vermonters have a deeper understanding of how to ensure our government entities operate openly and transparently.

Secretary Condos believes Vermont’s communities are best served by proactive education, rather than a ‘gotcha’ mentality. Most locally elected officials are well meaning volunteers and citizens with a desire to best serve their communities. Engaging them on the nuances of Vermont’s open government laws helps them do so while stressing the responsibilities they have to conduct government business in the open and with maximum public involvement.

Secretary Condos was accompanied on this year’s tour by Deputy Secretary of State Chris Winters and Municipal Assistance Director Jenny Prosser. The tour’s stops included locations around the state, in addition to requested presentations for groups like the VT Developmental Disabilities Council and the VT Library Trustees and Friends.

Any individuals who were unable to attend and are interested in the training materials can find the presentation and video of one of the tour stops on the Secretary of State’s website, under the municipal resources section:

<https://www.sec.state.vt.us/municipal/handbooks-guides/open-government-ethics.aspx>

“Openness, transparency, and accountability are the pillars of responsible government. Embarrassment or public ridicule are not valid reasons to exclude the public from the decision making process,” said Secretary Condos. “Over 300 Vermonters are now better prepared to open the doors of government and let the sun shine in!”

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