

October 19, 2022

Scott Beck's post 10/19/22:

Vermont's public policy on carbon is intentional and longstanding - public incentives for Vermonters to shift their transportation to electric and home heating to wood or electric, and support for non-carbon electric generation (wind and solar). THAT'S THE PLAN and it's strongly supported by both the Vermont Republican and Democratic parties.

What hasn't been supported by both parties is penalizing Vermonters that can't make the change to electric as quickly as Montpelier wants. Vermont Democrats want to penalize carbon use right now. Vermont Republicans do not.

My esteemed colleague, Rep. Scott Beck, says "public incentives for Vermonters to shift their transportation to electric and home heating to wood or electric" is "THE PLAN." And he adds that Democrats want to "penalize carbon use" and Republicans do not.

Sorry, fact check here. All agree on incentives, but nobody is talking about "penalizing" anyone. That is a partisan talking point and it is false.

The question is, how do we help not only consumers but businesses, the transportation network and the construction industry to transition to electric? In fact, the opportunities for smart businesses and good-paying jobs are huge. And the pay off, in stable, predictable energy costs for everyone, are likewise enormous.

I don't think this should be a partisan issue. The economic landscape is shifting, and Vermont must shift too. The need is urgent, because transforming our energy sources is a big deal and will take much planning, effort and investment. We shouldn't be talking about what we can't do, we need to come to agreement on what we can do.

And how do we pay for those "public incentives"? In a world where fossil fuel prices can double in less than a year -- adding \$2 to \$3 per gallon of fuel oil or gasoline -- a dime or so per gallon to fund those incentives is hardly "penalizing." If it is, the minimum 30 cents per gallon of gasoline that Vermonters pay now for roads is an unbearable burden indeed. Does anyone have another source of revenue to suggest?

The energy transition requires time and investment. The longer we argue, the steeper the cost. I appreciate hearing Rep. Beck's thoughts on the issue, but I hope to see deeper engagement from him and his colleagues.

I have written much more about this. See <https://www.campbellforvermont.com/>

October 17, 2022

Is climate change a Vermont problem?

Heating oil prices average \$4.50 to \$5.00 a gallon right now, 50% higher than a year ago. That's a drag for most of us — and a serious threat to the most vulnerable.

What can a small state like Vermont do about that?

Not a darn thing. Oil is a global commodity controlled by huge companies and "petro-states" like Saudi Arabia and Russia.

But climate change is changing the game. Look around. Ford and GM will have only electric vehicles in a few years. Solar panels and heat pumps are popping up everywhere. Why? They are far cheaper to run, and electric prices are stable compared to fossil fuels' runaway rollercoaster.

It's true that EVs, solar, and heat pumps are too pricey for most Vermonters right now. Prices are coming down, but we should help people get over that purchase hump, so we can stop being hostage to Putin and Big Oil.

Moving to electric vehicles and heating also helps Vermont's economy. It is a golden opportunity for businesses and workers ready for it. And it helps us get ahead of what's coming at us anyhow as the world's economy shifts from near-total reliance on oil.

Such a major shift is not without costs. We must start planning now to minimize them, fairly share them, and help those most impacted. The longer we wait, the more it will cost.

The point is, climate change is not only an environmental challenge, it's an economic challenge. How will we meet it?

We know rural Vermont has an aging and shrinking population. We know we need better housing, childcare, broadband, education, healthcare and more to attract and retain working families. We would be wise to make a virtue of necessity and use the energy transition to build a foundation for sustainable prosperity for all.

Preparing Vermont's economy for the inevitable is serious business. We can't just say No.

October 3, 2022

St. Johnsbury Voters:

By now most registered voters in the area will have received their general election ballots.

The instructions on the back of the return envelope explain clearly how to fill out and return your ballot.

St. Johnsbury has a secure drop box outside the Town Clerk's Office staff door, to the right of the main entrance to the Welcome Center. If you wish to bring your ballot to the polls on Election Day — or simply vote that day — that is also at the Welcome Center, from 8:00am to 7:00pm on Nov. 8.

A couple of things to mention about the ballot itself.

Proposal 2, amending Vermont's Constitution, might look confusing with its many strikeouts and underlines. This is standard format for showing deleted and added language to existing law. (The [bracketed] text is neither added nor deleted; it's just the title of the Article.) The intention of this amendment is to clarify a blanket prohibition of slavery of all types, regardless of a person's age or debts.

Proposal 5 adds Article 22 to the Constitution. Article 22 is new language, and therefore all underlined. Much confusion and misinformation is being sown about this language. Constitutional language generally is intended to be a broad statement of principle. Here, the intention is to state the general principle that neither the Legislature nor Executive agencies shall pass laws or rules restricting a person's right to make their own decisions about having or not having children. This does NOT change the current state of affairs in Vermont; it enshrines it in the Constitution. Note also that Article 22 says nothing about "late-term abortion", as opponents would have it. Much has been written about that and I won't repeat it here.

I believe both Proposals advance the cause of liberty and personal freedom. I will vote Yes for both. I understand my opponents for election as State Representative will vote Yes as well.

Two other notes about St. Johnsbury's ballot.

There are 15 positions to be filled for Justice of the Peace, and there are 16 names. You do not have to vote for 15 people, but you must not lose count and vote for all 16 or your vote (on this item) will not count at all.

The last "Ballot Question" asks about whether to "amend and restate" the Town charter, but doesn't say what the amendments are. Town Manager Chad Whitehead explained to me that a Town charter committee has been meeting for a year to untangle the current charter that has many amendments and is hard to follow. The effect of this Ballot Question is to authorize a special Town meeting to consider the revised charter. I will vote Yes for this too.

See more election information on my website, <https://www.campbellforvermont.com/election-info>. Or contact me directly at scott@campbellforvermont.com, or 802 595-5580.

September 7, 2022

Friends and neighbors in St. Johnsbury, Concord and Kirby,

I invite you to join me and other area candidates for my campaign kickoff on Saturday, Sept. 10, 4:00-6:00pm, at Democratic Campaign Headquarters, 166 Eastern Ave., St. Johnsbury (opposite Palmer's drycleaning).

I will share my reasons for seeking re-election and look forward to hearing your thoughts and concerns.

Reapportionment following the 2020 census added Concord and Kirby to St. Johnsbury in the two-seat House district, now called "Caledonia-Essex."

The general election is Tuesday, November 8. Ballots will be mailed automatically to all registered voters by about October 1. Ballots may be returned by mail or delivered to the town clerk in your town during regular office hours. St. Johnsbury and Kirby also have secure dropboxes where ballots can be deposited after hours; Concord's dropbox is not similarly secure.

You can check your registration and register at the Secretary of State's MyVoterPage website: <https://mvp.vermont.gov>. You can also register — and vote in person — at your town clerk's office during regular hours.

As always, you can check out more about me and my views on issues at my website, <https://www.campbellforvermont.com>.

I hope to see you Saturday!

August 10, 2022

Interesting that my praise for Governor Phil Scott's new electric F-150 generated such response. Although he and I are in different political parties and I have some policy differences with him, I will always lean toward compromise and bipartisanship to advance the common good.

Obviously some respondents doubt electrification of transportation and heating is in the common good. Batteries still require mining; yes, that's true. Electric Vehicles are still expensive; yes, still true. Electrification requires grid upgrades and more generation from renewables; yes, no question.

Start with mining. Everything humans do, build, and produce involves altering the environment. I completely agree we must find ways to minimize the damage we do and live on this earth sustainably. But, equally obviously, burning fossil fuels has led us to the brink of disaster, and we must stop as quickly as possible.

(I'm not going to debate the climate crisis. The military, the insurance industry, automobile manufacturers, our country's strategic competitors, and everyone else — apparently except the Ethan Allen Institute — are focused on it.)

EVs are still expensive. New technology always is. Some may remember early color TVs cost \$500 in the 1960s, nearly \$5000 in today's money. Then technology and production efficiencies bring prices down. The same pattern will play out with EVs. Public policy can facilitate it with incentives.

Electric grid upgrades is a complex question. I don't understand enough yet to explain it, but clearly integrating more distributed intermittent generation, storage, resilient micro-grids, and sophisticated load management are the extremely important challenges ahead.

Meeting those challenges, and dealing with a rapidly destabilizing climate generally, is the task ahead of us. To suggest that Vermont is so small, it doesn't make any difference to global warming what we do, completely misses the point. First, it's a cop out. Just because your trash is a small part of the landfill doesn't mean you have no responsibility for minimizing your trash.

Second, and more to the point, climate change is not only an environmental crisis, it's an economic one too. The global economy is transitioning away from fossils. Supply and demand imbalances will only increase the historic volatility of fossil-fuel prices (as during the pandemic). The federal government and neighboring states are investing now in the energy transition. Vermont, with fewer resources, must plan ahead to make the scale of investments needed to stabilize energy prices and remain competitive in attracting businesses and workers.

What are those investments? Examples: Infrastructure resilience. Weatherized buildings. Heat pumps (no, the Clean Heat Standard would not "force" people to install them). EV charging network. Grid upgrades. Emergency preparedness. Community amenities and cohesion.

This perhaps is the real point. Those of us entrusted with a role in government, I believe, must balance our community's immediate needs — and there's lots right in front of us — with a view of the horizon, a vision of where we're going. I think most public servants in our state strive for a vision driven not by ideological obsession, but by practical necessity. Certainly I do.

And that's why I complimented the Governor.

August 5, 2022

Gov. Phil Scott took delivery of an F-150 Lightning electric truck at St. Johnsbury's Twin State Ford on Wednesday. He appears to be the first governor to purchase an EV for his official security vehicle. I was happy to join him and praise his initiative.

He mentioned in his remarks that the State would retain the previous security vehicle, a Ford Expedition SUV, for longer trips. He was showing a bit of "range anxiety." The range on the Lightning is about 300 miles, and DC fast-chargers are still not as thick on the ground as gasoline stations.

If you're new to this, DC fast-chargers are what's known as Level 3, and add anywhere from 100 to 300 miles ranger per hour. Level 1 is a regular wall plug and adds about 10 miles per hour. Level 2 uses 240 volts, like an electric clothes dryer or range, and adds 30-40 miles per hour. Most public chargers are Level 2, but Level 2 equipment is also widely available for residential use.

Level 2 public chargers are useful for folks without the ability to charge at home, for those staying at a location for several hours, and for people with plug-in hybrids who want to minimize their gasoline use. Level 3 chargers are nearly all available to the public and are necessary for long-distance travel.

Level 3 charging costs more, of course, but is still less than gasoline for most vehicles. Level 2 public charging is at most three-quarters the cost of gasoline per mile. And for those who can charge at home, the electricity cost per mile is less than half compared to gasoline.

The Governor said yesterday Vermont already has more publicly available Levels 2 and 3 EV chargers per capita than any other state. But we need still more in order to make EVs truly viable — and for him and future governors to leave the Expedition at home, or even better, retire it.

It's a little bit of the chicken-and-egg problem: We need enough EV chargers that people can rely on them, but we need enough EVs on the road to make building chargers economically practical.

Investing in a new Electric Vehicle "fueling" infrastructure is a big lift, and it takes time. It makes sense to continue picking away at it. Nearly all major auto manufacturers have committed to stop making gasoline and diesel vehicles within the next 8 to 13 years. Their research-and-development and plant construction spending shows they are not fooling.

While the electricity and maintenance costs of owning an EV are already well below that of gasoline and diesel vehicles, the upfront cost is still high. But it's coming down. As production ramps up, technology improves, and EVs and plug-in hybrids start entering the used-car market, there will come a point when the market will flip and EVs will become standard. Past technological disruptions show that this point arrives suddenly, and seemingly unexpectedly. But whether 5 years off, or 10, we know it's coming.

Before it gets here, in addition to charging infrastructure, we will need to solve the problem of road taxes. The Federal highway tax is 18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline and 24.4 cents/gal for diesel, and has not changed since 1993. To better reflect inflation, the Vermont Legislature a few years ago decided to peg the state rates to average quarterly prices, within set limits. Right now, the total Federal and Vermont road tax is 55.36 cents/gallon for gasoline and 56.4 cents/gallon for diesel. The Legislature and VTrans are both well aware of the need to craft a road tax for EVs in a way that maintains the Transportation budget yet does not discourage EV adoption, and also assesses out-of-state EV travelers fairly. We will be working on it.

As I was congratulating Gov. Scott, I suggested finding a compromise on the Clean Heat Standard (for buildings), which he vetoed. Transitioning transportation and building heating away from dependence on fossil fuels over a period of years will reduce our vulnerability to future price spikes and position Vermont's economy to thrive as the energy transition takes hold nationally and globally. To his credit, the Governor was receptive. If re-elected, I look forward to working on that, too.

I am not available for coffee hour this Saturday. But I look forward to seeing Concord folks at the VCRD Community Visit meeting at Concord School on Monday at 6:30 PM. As always, please see my website for more info and to connect with me, <https://www.campbellforvermont.com>.

July 28, 2022

I have just returned from 3 weeks away. Primary election races have heated up!

Early balloting started June 25 and continues until Primary Election Day, August 9, less than 2 weeks from now. At this point, rather than rely on the mail, it is safest to go directly to your Town Clerk's office before Aug. 9, or of course, vote in person on the 9th. Details on my website, link below.

A number of qualified candidates are running. In case it's useful, here are my recommendations for contested races in the Democratic primary.

U.S. Senate: Peter Welch. Peter has long experience as a consensus builder in Vermont and DC. When I asked him about his age (75) and consequent lack of opportunity to gain seniority, he responded that the next few years are critical for U.S. democracy and for dealing with the climate crisis, among other things. Unfortunately I think he's right, the possibility of chaos cannot be discounted. A steady, experienced hand has my vote.

U.S. Representative: Becca Balint. Becca is a serious leader with relevant legislative experience. She was very effective as President of the Senate the past two years, coordinating passage of a heroic series of legislative initiatives. She also was -- and is -- not afraid to take principled policy positions.

Lieutenant Governor: Kitty Toll. Most of us in this area know that Kitty has an unbelievable work ethic, is whip-smart, and understands state government inside-out as a former House Appropriations chair. She also has a good relationship of longstanding with Gov. Phil Scott, which will help her be an effective advocate for policies with him (no doubt he will be re-elected).

Secretary of State: Sarah Copeland Hanzas. I've worked with Sarah during my four years in the House on many issues. She is chair of House Government Operations committee, which oversees the SoS office, and co-chair of the legislative Climate Solutions Caucus. She's knowledgeable, experienced and politically savvy.

Attorney General: Rory Thibault. I met Rory this week during his visit to St. Johnsbury. He is currently Washington County State's Attorney, and I was impressed with his knowledge of all levels of the state's legal system and his policy positions on various issues.

As for my primary, I do not have a contested race for another term as one of two State Representatives in the new Caledonia-Essex district (St. Johnsbury, Concord, Kirby). In fact on the Democratic ballot the other State Rep position is blank, but I heartily recommend Brendan Hadash who is running as a write-in candidate (must write his name AND fill in the oval).

I am holding another 'office hour' this Saturday, July 30. I will be at Kitchen Counter Cafe, Railroad St., St. Johnsbury, at 8:00 AM. Join me for coffee and conversation, and then go to the Caledonia Farmers Market. Let me know to expect you by signing up at <https://www.campbellforvermont.com>.

July 2, 2022

Continuing previous weeks' updates, besides workforce, housing, childcare and infrastructure, many other issues had to be addressed. Chief among these were pensions, school funding equity, State college system, mental health support, and climate disruption.

Pensions. The compromise worked out by the 2021 task force that included legislators, administration, and labor representatives passed unanimously, was vetoed by the Governor, and passed unanimously again over his veto. While perhaps not forever, it ensures solvency for many years to come.

School funding. Another task force proposed changes to the statewide school funding formula to deal with demonstrated inequities in place for more than 20 years. We passed an adjustment to "pupil weights" to recognize the added costs of serving students in rural areas, in middle and high school, in low-income households, and who are English language learners. They are all our children and our community depends on them. Universal no-cost school breakfast and lunch was also continued for another year.

State college system. After a near-death experience in 2020, the Legislature has reaffirmed support to maintain all campuses of the State college system as it transforms into Vermont State University. Significant funding and oversight was passed to ensure a successful transition.

Mental health. The pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on the social, emotional and mental health of much of our community, including healthcare providers, other essential workers, children and many others. Opioid overdoses are spiking. Funding was increased for current mental health providers, for training more providers and other services. New initiatives and funding were approved to help those coping with substance use dependence.

Climate. As mentioned last week, the Governor vetoed the Clean Heat Standard (H.715) and the House failed to override by 1 vote. No bill is perfect but this would have set a path in place to wean our heating fuel supply off price-volatile sources. Instead we have lost valuable time — valuable in the sense that the longer we wait, the more expensive and disruptive the inevitable energy transition will be. But there were other successes. The annual Transportation bill included much support for electrifying transportation and supporting public transit. An omnibus housing bill included changes to regulations to encourage denser housing development in towns and villages.

The 2021-2022 session allocated a windfall of resources to long-neglected needs. All parties, Legislature and Administration focused on the twin goals of addressing those suffering losses due to the pandemic, and setting the stage for future prosperity for the entire State. Of course there were some disagreements, but on the whole we — and all Vermonters — have much to be proud of.

I will taking a few weeks off with family and begin posting again in August. In the meantime, please vote in the primary election on August 9 or by early ballot available from your Town clerk now. I will post some thoughts on the candidates on my website, <https://www.campbellforvermont.com/>.

June 23, 2022

These updates have been discussing four interrelated areas that were the focus at the start of the session: worker supports, housing, childcare, and infrastructure. I touched on housing two weeks ago, and workforce and economic development last week. (Previous posts are on my website, link below.)

This week let's talk about childcare and infrastructure.

Vermont parents of toddlers spend on average more than a quarter of their income on childcare, typically their biggest expense after housing. At the same time, quality childcare is hard to find, and childcare providers are scraping by on very low salaries. This situation is sapping the financial stability of our families, and keeping many parents or other caregivers out of the workforce.

The Legislature has responded with several initiatives over the last 4 years. Highlights —

- Expanded support for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program;
- Reduced co-pays for lower-income families;
- Early-educator loan repayment assistance and retention bonuses;
- Studies specifically to analyze limiting family costs to 10% of income, and on supporting providers and improving reimbursement models;
- Targeting significant Federal pandemic relief funding (\$27 million) to childcare stabilization;
- New Vermont Child Tax Credit: \$1,000 for each child age 5 or under in the home.

Ultimately I believe we must recognize childcare is really a public need, like public education, and it should be funded as such. Working families depend on it, businesses depend on it, and children benefit from it. How we get there is not simple, but the first step is agreeing on the direction we need to go.

On infrastructure, between Federal relief to States and to individuals (effectively increasing State revenues above last year's forecast), funding available for infrastructure is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Significant investments are being made in —

- Clean Water: Over \$100 million for stormwater and wastewater projects, and reducing runoff pollution;
- Broadband: \$250 million over last 2 years to build publicly controlled infrastructure targeting most underserved areas of the State, with another \$100+ million expected in the Federal Infrastructure bill;
- Transportation: \$868 million total, including \$46 million one-time funding, for roads, bridges, public transit, and electric-vehicle charging network and incentives;
- Weatherization: \$80 million to accelerate efficiency retrofits for low- and moderate-income households;
- Municipal energy resilience: \$45 million to support expansion of a State program, making available expertise and project funding for towns and cities to improve efficiency and resilience of their buildings;

A major disappointment was the Governor's veto of the Clean Heat Standard, H.715. The bill would have begun the necessary and inevitable shift away from highly price-unstable fossil fuels for heating our homes and businesses, and towards less polluting and more stable sources. It would have also provided a pathway for existing fuel dealers to transition their services over a period of time. Senate amendments to the final bill included language to meet the Gov's stated objections, but he vetoed it anyway.

Reminder to please join me for 'coffee hour' this Saturday morning at 8:00 AM, June 25 at Mooselook Diner, Rte. 2, Concord. I will be unavailable much of July due to family commitments. Please let me know to expect you Saturday by registering at <https://www.campbellforvermont.com/>. A longer report on the session is also posted there.

June 16, 2022

What else did the Legislature accomplish in the 2022 session?

As I highlighted last week, four interrelated areas were the focus at the start of the session: worker supports, housing, childcare, and infrastructure. For many, housing tops the list, and I discussed two housing bills last week, S.210 and S.226. (Previous posts are on my website, link below.)

This week, let's talk about workforce and economic development. S.11 (Act 183) allocates over \$113 million in Federal and State funding to workers and businesses for recovery from the pandemic and building future prosperity.

S.11 creates or enhances programs to engage workers currently out of the workforce, and to help those considering or already in nursing, mental health care, childcare and construction trades. It includes training and internships, scholarships and forgivable loans, and unemployment and paid-leave due to covid.

Some specifics: S.11 targets over \$12 million for nursing educators, training grants, and loan forgiveness to relieve the critical shortage of nurses and mental health staff. It also provides more than \$4 million for trades training and scholarships, and a \$15 million revolving loan fund for tech-ed centers to buy and rehab blighted properties as a real-world education experience.

S.11 also includes support for businesses and municipalities, with forgivable loans, community recovery grants, and assistance for specific sectors, notably the creative economy such as our own Catamount Arts.

Specifics: VEDA short-term forgivable loans for pandemic losses, \$19 million. Community recovery grants, \$40 million. Creative economy supports, \$9 million. Downtown & Village tax credit, \$2.5 million.

Governor Scott signed S.11 on June 8. The following day he signed H.740, the State budget, that officially appropriates all funds. Due to the influx of Federal pandemic relief funds both to the State and to individuals and businesses (which increased State tax revenues), the total budget this year is \$8.3 billion, compared to about \$6 billion pre-pandemic. The Legislature and the Governor committed to investing this windfall in ways that assist those most affected and set the stage for future prosperity. Nothing is ever perfect, but I believe we accomplished a lot.

Another reminder to please join me for 'coffee hour' on Saturday mornings at 8:00 AM. Currently scheduled: June 18 & 25 at Mooselook Diner, Rte. 2, Concord; and July 30 at Kitchen Counter Cafe, Railroad St., St. Johnsbury. I expect to show up anyway, but please let me know to expect you by registering at <https://www.campbellforvermont.com/>. A longer report on the session is also posted there.

June 8, 2022

The 2022 session adjourned on May 12 with the passing of the budget, the last bill as usual. After bills are passed, they are reviewed again for consistency and editing, and then sent to the Governor. So far this year, by my count, the Gov. Phil Scott has signed 116 bills, allowed 3 to become law without his signature, and vetoed 11. He is the all-time Vermont veto champ, with 32 vetoes so far in 6 years in office; runner-up is Howard Dean with 21 in 11 years.

The flurry of vetoes is frustrating, after all the work and compromise that went into passing all those bills. But I'd rather focus on huge amount accomplished through the agreement of the Legislature and the Administration.

My party's caucus, as the majority, sets the agenda. The year began with the pandemic still causing havoc. The urgency of immediate needs was obvious to all, regardless of party: workers, housing, childcare and infrastructure.

Longer-term issues also could not be ignored: climate disruption; mental health and substance use; the pension system; education funding equity; the State College system; social inequities, and more.

With the help of a huge infusion of pandemic relief funding, we made substantial progress on all these fronts. How? Over the next few weeks I am going to give a little more detail.

Housing first. Yesterday, June 7, the Governor signed two important housing bills. S.210 is a rental housing bill that includes grants up to \$50,000 for landlords to bring out-of-service rental units back online. It also helps local town health officers, often fire chiefs, by formalizing the role of the Division of Fire Safety (which already has jurisdiction over all rentals) in setting rental standards.

S.226 is an omnibus housing bill that supports first-generation homebuyers, homeowners in mobile home parks, and homeownership for moderate-income households. It also includes neighborhood development provisions and Act 250 reforms to make it easier to build higher densities in villages and towns.

S.226 also includes language from a bill I originally introduced, H.157, Builder Registration. The Governor vetoed H.157 in February, but suggested a compromise which was incorporated in S.226. Builder registration, although it does not require credentials, still helps protect both consumers and builders by requiring written contracts. It also provides a communication link to advise builders of changes to codes and standards, and of available trainings and optional certifications. Up-skilling the industry was my main motivation; construction is far more complicated than even a few years ago.

Again, please join me for 'coffee hour' on Saturday mornings at 8:00 AM. Currently scheduled: June 11 at Kitchen Counter Cafe, Railroad St., St. Johnsbury; and June 18 & 25 at Mooselook Diner, Rte. 2, Concord. I expect to show up anyway, but please let me know to expect you by registering at <https://www.campbellforvermont.com/>. A longer report on the session is also posted there.

May 31, 2022

Greetings, voters of St. Johnsbury, Concord and Kirby! You are in the new State representative district "Caledonia-Essex" (CAL-ESX). I hope to have the honor to represent you in the General Assembly next year.

The new district is the result of re-districting that happens every ten years following the once-a-decade census. Every two years, in even-numbered years, nearly all State elected offices are up for election.

First, voters choose which candidates will be party nominees for the various offices in the November General election. This nominating election is the Primary, and this year will be on August 9. Early voting begins June 25.

The General election this year is November 8, with early voting starting September 24.

As I mentioned in my last FPF post back on March 12, the 2022 session, was 'even more all-consuming than usual.' It's been an exhausting few years, including for your elected representatives — about a third of whom are not running for re-election.

I fell way behind in email (apologies if I haven't responded to you yet!), and behind also in FPF posts. But I have started posting discussions of legislation passed on my website (see link next paragraph), and will post brief summaries here over the next few weeks.

I also will resume 'coffee hour' meetings on Saturday mornings at 8:00 AM. Currently scheduled: June 4 & 11 at Kitchen Counter Cafe, Railroad St., St. Johnsbury; and June 18 & 25 at Mooselook Diner, Rte. 2, Concord. I expect to show up anyway, but please let me know to expect you by registering at <https://www.campbellforvermont.com/>.

March 11, 2022

Something about this legislative session has been even more all-consuming than usual. Perhaps it's returning to in-person work, or work on a combination policy / money committee, or the surplus money from Federal pandemic relief funding. Whatever, it has kept me from writing more regular posts here.

From the recent back-and-forth about politics on FPF, perhaps that is preferred by some. But I will try to keep it as factual and nonpartisan as possible, considering that legislative matters are inevitably political.

My committee, Corrections & Institutions, has been almost wholly taken up with the "money" side of its work. We handle the Capital Bill, which appropriates funding for long-term projects with money from the sale of bonds (as opposed to annual expenses handled by the Appropriations committee). Working from the Governor's recommended budget, with minor changes, capital expenditures including available Federal money is up about 9% for the two-year cycle of the Capital Bill. Significant, but not earth-shaking.

Another pot of Federal money will add \$113 million in long-term projects, nearly doubling the two-year Capital Bill. Projects are still being vetted, and must be approved later this year by the Treasury Dept, but much of this is restricted to building out broadband. We can be glad we set up communications union districts two years ago to effectively handle this shot of investment. It may also free up other funding originally intended for broadband to use elsewhere.

On the corrections policy side, we are working with the new Dept of Corrections commissioner, Nick Deml, and staff and union reps, to address the workforce crisis in the facilities. We are also continuing the long-term work to shift the focus from strictly punitive, to a more rehabilitative model that provides effective tools and support as offenders re-enter the community.

Beyond my committee, huge issues abound. The economy-wide workforce shortage connects to the lack of housing (both affordable and market-rate), the lack of childcare, often the lack of broadband and cellphone service, and for some, the lack of transportation. Many bills and funding initiatives target these critical areas.

Also expected are bills implementing pension reform efforts agreed to by the task force last fall; school funding and the pupil-weighting issue identified two years ago; and redistricting as required by the decennial census. And then there is the economy-wide transition away from fossil fuels and resilience preparation for the changing climate already upon us, as required by the Climate Action Plan.

The need to free ourselves from the tyranny of volatile global fossil-fuel prices could not have been made more obvious than by Russia's ruthless attack on Ukraine. Beyond the unspeakable suffering, callous murder, and deplorable destruction unleashed by Putin, we must recognize his war machine is fueled by fossil-fuel production and sales. His confidence that he can subdue any rival and cow the West is in direct proportion to his ability to hook Europe into depending on Russian energy supplies. We are paying the price at the pump now, and will continue to be vulnerable as long as fossils fuel our economy. The long transition has begun, with auto manufacturers converting to electric vehicles, and it must -- and it will -- accelerate. Vermont must not be left behind. Several bills are in process to ensure we are not.

As COVID finally seems to be waning, at least here, I look forward to resuming an in-person 'office hour' again soon. If you are interested in getting together on a Saturday morning please let me know either through my website <https://campbellforvermont.com> or by emailing me scott@campbellforvermont.com. Folks in Concord and Kirby might be interested in joining us, as it appears they will join St. Johnsbury in a new House district for the next election.

February 1, 2022

I have gotten several emails and calls regarding Proposal 5 that will be voted on by the House this week. I have also seen a mass-mailing sent out by "Vermonters for Good Government" that is very misleading and outright false in many respects. I would like to set the record straight about what Proposal 5 is, and what it isn't.

What it is is authorization to ask the voters next November whether to ratify the following amendment to the Vermont Constitution:

Article 22 [Personal reproductive liberty]. That an individual's right to personal reproductive autonomy is central to the liberty and dignity to determine one's own life course and shall not be denied or infringed unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means.

The Legislature is not deciding this matter; the voters are (or will, after the proposal passes).

Proposal 5 is NOT enshrining "late-term, anything-goes abortion in the Vermont Constitution." It does NOT "eliminate conscience rights for doctors and nurses who don't wish to perform procedures that violate their beliefs."

Background: Until passage of the Freedom of Choice Act, Act 47 (H.57) in 2019, there were no laws protecting the right of women to obtain whatever reproductive care they sought, including abortion consistent with Federal law and medical ethics. (Federal law prohibits late-term so-called "partial-birth" abortions; medical ethics do not allow abortion after viability, or the ability of a fetus to live outside the womb, except in dire cases after review by a hospital ethics board.) H.57 passed by a vote of 106-37 in the House and 24-6 in the Senate, and was signed into law as Act 47 by Governor Phil Scott on June 10, 2019.

If Proposal 5 passes the House, voters will decide in November whether to reinforce that statute by adding Article 22 to the Vermont Constitution.

Many people have profound convictions on the sanctity of life and the wrongness of abortion. No one can second-guess these deeply held beliefs. I absolutely respect both the beliefs and those who hold them.

But public policy also must encompass those with other beliefs and other life circumstances. And it must encompass public health. Some women, faced with an unwanted pregnancy, will seek to end it by abortion, whether performed by a professional in a clinic or hospital and according to medical ethics, or performed in a back room by a dangerously unqualified person — or the mother herself. Often women with the least resources and the fewest options are who would be forced into the latter, sometimes deadly choice.

As a public servant, I don't feel I can decide this question for everyone. I will vote to advance Proposal 5 so that the voters can have their say.

January 10, 2022

The 2022 General Assembly session started Jan. 4 and has a number of major issues on its docket.

Omicron is ripping through the land, causing major challenges for our schools, hospitals, businesses and working parents. Cases statewide are now at least 5 times the peak after Thanksgiving. Fortunately sickness from Omicron appears to be less severe for most people, but the sheer number and resulting staff shortages puts added strain on already-stressed teachers, healthcare workers and others.

We are all exhausted. Please, please continue to take precautions for yourself, your loved ones, and our community. Get vaccinated and boosted if you can, and wear masks in public indoor spaces at least.

The Governor, legislative leaders, and all members recognize the urgent staffing needs across the State, a longstanding problem that has reached a crisis point. Recruitment and training, pay and benefits,

affordable and market-rate housing, access to affordable childcare — all intersect in the workforce challenge. Federal Covid money offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make significant progress at last. We may disagree on fine points, but I am hopeful that negotiation and compromise will yield effective strategies to set the stage for prosperity.

(In addition to my duties on House Corrections & Institutions committee, I am participating in a non-legislative Energy Action Network team focussed on coordinating training and recruitment for the "climate economy" workforce. Weatherization, heating and ventilating, electric vehicle charging and service, electric grid upgrades, and more will be in high demand as our economy transforms in coming years.)

Other issues urgently needing action this session include: closing the pension gap for teachers and state workers; updating school funding to address inequities stemming from inaccurate pupil weighting; and providing mechanisms necessary to implement the Climate Action Plan.

The Legislature also must approve a reapportionment plan for House and Senate districts, as required every 10 years by the census. In many States this is a highly politicized process, with districts gerrymandered to the extreme to benefit one party or the other. I am hopeful we in Vermont will avoid that and maintain adherence to town boundaries as much as possible.

Covid also highlighted the tight quarters and poor ventilation in the State House. It's a problem that has festered for decades, and the unprecedented Federal funding finally offers a chance to deal with it. My committee has jurisdiction in this area and I expect will recommend starting immediately a multi-year process to add and enlarge committee rooms. This is important not only for citizen legislators, but also for administration and outside experts called to testify, and for the general public to be able to witness the legislative process in safety.

Adequate quarters to conduct the public's business, unbiased voting districts, unfettered access to ballots: these are hallmarks of a functioning self-government. Democracy is under assault in many parts of the world — and even here last January 6 at the U.S. Capitol and today in the lies repeated incessantly by the former president, amplified by irresponsible media, and shamefully ignored by some public officials who lack the courage to speak up.

Vermont is a small State but we can have an outsized influence by vigorously defending the norms that protect access, fairness, open debate and compromise. Republicans, Democrats, Progressives, Independents — we all want what's best for Vermont, the nation and the world. Let's all remember that.