

april 13, 2019

LT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

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Recently, the Senate passed Prop 5, a Constitutional Amendment that would protect a woman's reproductive autonomy. With 28 votes in favor, greater than the 20 required to amend the Constitution, Prop 5 now proceeds to the Vermont House for the next step in this process. Prop 5 must pass both the Senate and House in two different Biennium and then must be supported by a majority of Vermonters in the November 2022 General Election before our Constitution would be amended. We are also working on H.57, a bill established to protect these rights in the years before this process is completed.

Prop 5 would amend the state constitution to say, "*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.*" On the back are excerpts from remarks made by Sen. Lyons when presenting Prop 5 and Sen. Benning's reasons for supporting it.

Establishing women's right to decide if and when to reproduce is vital to creating equality for all Vermonters. It is essential we enshrine women's autonomy to decide; when to advance their career, pursue education or start a family, into our constitution. Protecting women's choice is integral for women to have the power over their own lives, families, education and employment goals. These rights ensure a strong and vibrant state.

Opponents have been working for decades to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and erase women's rights to safe and legal abortion. Fifteen states have introduced or passed bills that would outright ban abortion at six weeks — before many women even know they're pregnant. Prop 5 would ensure access to reproductive choice, even if national laws change.

In addition to unplanned family circumstances, affordability is a barrier for many Vermonters when considering college and technical training. Students from Castleton University share their thoughts about the positive impact of free college tuition on Vermont and Vermonters on the back.

Thank you for staying connected.



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 14 2:00PM

Economy for All Town Hall.
Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship, 108 School Street,
Bennington

April 17 6:00PM

Cabot Centennial Celebration.
Double Tree Hotel, South
Burlington

April 18 4:00PM

VT Human Rights Commission
30th Anniversary Celebration.
State House Cafeteria,
Montpelier

April 19, 26 8:30-10:00AM

'Coffee with Constituents.' With
special Cannabis Legalization
Presentation 4/19. Lt. Gov.
Office, State House,
Montpelier

April 22 6:00PM

Economy for All Town Hall.
The Engine Room, 188 S.
Main St., WRJ

April 25 5:30PM

Lt. Gov. Movie 'White Like Me.'
Cafeteria, State House,
Montpelier

April 27 9:00AM

ReSource Earth Day Walk.
Rockpoint, Burlington

April 29 6:00PM

Sunrise Movement Town Hall.
Fletcher Fee Library,
Burlington

**For a complete list of events
please visit the calendar on
our website:**

www.LTGov.vermont.gov

EXCERPT FROM REMARKS BY SEN. LYONS

Prop 5 was presented on the Senate floor by Senator Ginny Lyons, Chair of the Health and Welfare Committee. Below are some of her remarks.

“When approved by the voters Prop 5 will provide a fundamental right – ensuring personal reproductive autonomy for Vermonters. Consistent with other rights in our Constitution we intend it to be an umbrella. In this case an umbrella that covers the most personal decisions we make about our lives.”

“If approved it will ensure reproductive liberty for family planning, contraception, and decisions important to both men and women. These are the personal decisions of when to have children that can be based on one’s economic or family stability. Without the autonomy to decide for oneself about when to have a family, many women and men become stuck in a lifelong struggle for success.”

“We heard from the Commission on Women that access to reproductive health care – to contraception and family planning has resulted in ‘an increase in women’s wages, participation in the labor force, and in completion rates of college.”

“Since 2018, 37 states have introduced over 300 abortion restrictions. Twenty states are ready to ban abortion when Roe v Wade is overturned.”

PROTECTING PRIVACY

Senator Benning shared his reasons for supporting Prop 5 in a recent news article.

I decided to vote for Proposition 5 for three reasons:

1. It is gender neutral, demonstrating that the right to privacy is not limited to just one issue.
2. In the case of abortion, it preserves a balancing test between a woman’s right to privacy and a state’s interest.
3. Since it is a proposal to amend our state’s constitution, it must be presented to the populace for a vote.

All of us have the right to make decisions about our own life’s course. Absent a compelling state interest, that right should never be infringed upon. In the presence of such an interest, the state should still be required to use the least restrictive means necessary. Proposition 5 is self-evident in the Vermont Tradition.

THE CASE FOR FREE COLLEGE TUITION

As Castleton students we were shocked to learn Vermont currently ranks 50th of 50 states in terms of state support for public higher education; that’s worse than Alabama and Mississippi. Our students pay one of the highest tuition rates in the country and graduate with more debt, which places a significant financial burden on Vermont families.

Free tuition might encourage the 40% of our students who don’t go on to college to do so. Imagine if those students had the opportunity to go to college because of free tuition. We could: tackle the nursing shortage happening statewide, grow our population of skilled laborers, fund the next generation of K-12 teachers, and grow our green economy with new entrepreneurs.

Free tuition to public colleges, technical schools and universities in Vermont would mean:

- Students could graduate with less debt, so they can afford to live and work in Vermont after graduation.
- Students would not have to postpone buying homes, starting businesses or having families.
- We would attract and keep young people so Vermont is no longer has the second oldest population.

An investment in public higher education is an investment in Vermont.