

# LT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

APRIL 27, 2018

It can be easy to blame the individual when we think about the most vulnerable in our communities. But we must look deeper to understand the systemic circumstances that affect our neighbors.

I like to use the metaphor of a seed to illustrate this. A seed with good water and healthy soil will grow and be successful. A seed without enough water and poor soil will have a much harder time growing into a strong and fruitful plant. People are the same – we need stable roots and an enriching environment in our lives to grow into productive members of society.

Many of the solutions to our over-arching societal challenges are being taken up in the State House this session. Among them are increasing our state's minimum wage, providing paid family leave, increasing childcare availability and improving access to education for all Vermonters. To bring more awareness to these issues I have highlighted many of them in 'live' Town Hall discussions which stream every Wednesday at noon on my Facebook page @VTLtGov. You can now watch all past episodes, and offer comments, on my website: <http://ltgov.vermont.gov/lunchtime-town-hall-0>.

This year the Governor offered another budget proposal that disregards our most vulnerable. Many of the problems that we are talking about can't be solved in a year or two – they are long-term, but the proposed budget is shortsighted and puts us on a path that intensifies the challenges.

One program in the budget is the Community High School of Vermont, our state prison system high school. It provides educational resources to our inmates. To help reduce recidivism and increase opportunities for inmates when they are released, this school must be funded. Many European countries prepare their inmates for life after incarceration. I recently visited a class and participated in a discussion about education and criminal justice reform. Read more about this experience on the back in an op-ed by one of my interns, Owen Gomory.

Economic stagnation, educational inequity, systemic racism and so many other systems are entrenched, and it will take all of our vigilance and attention to tackle these issues head on.



(Over)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### April 29 12:00PM

Attending 52<sup>nd</sup> Maple Festival and Parade. St. Albans

### May 1 4:30

Attending May Day Rally State House Lawn. Montpelier

### May 2 & 9 12:00PM

'Lunchtime Town Hall with Lt. Gov. Zuckerman and Guests' Live on Facebook VTLtGov

### May 3 7:00AM

Live with Charlie, Ernie & Lisa on WVMT 620AM

### May 4 8:30-10:00AM

Final 'Coffee with Constituents' of 2018.

Lt. Governor's Office, Montpelier

### May 5 Green-Up Day!

### May 13 1:00PM

Keynote speaker at Vermont Cannabis and Hemp Convention. Doubletree Hotel, Burlington

### May 18 5:00PM

Speaking at VT Library Conference. Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee

### May 19 5:30PM

Panel member after screening of "Modified." Fable Farm, Barnard

### May 24 6:30PM

Lt. Gov. Movie Series showing "The Devil We Know" Main Street Landing, Film House, 60 Lake St., Burlington

**For a complete list of events**

**please visit our website:**

**[www.LTGov.vermont.gov](http://www.LTGov.vermont.gov)**

## END OF LIFE CHOICES ANNIVERSARY

As a leader of Vermont's End-of-Life Choice Law (Act 39), I am very proud to have helped get people access to this choice. Below you will find three events that commemorate this important law.

**Facebook 'Townhall':** On May 9<sup>th</sup> I will host advocates of Act 39 and engage in a discussion about end-of-life choices. The discussion will begin at noon on Wednesday and will be broadcast live on Facebook.

**Statehouse Reception:** On Wednesday, May 16, we recognize the Fifth Anniversary of Act 39 with a reception at the Statehouse from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. This will be an opportunity for people who have had experience with Act 39 to share their stories with those of us who were instrumental in adoption of the law. You are welcome to attend.

**Theater Performance:** Author, composer, and actor, Elliott Cherry, presents *A Finished Heart*, his deeply personal story of love, life and dying. The hour-long performance uses humor and loving conversations to bring audience members in touch with the universal experience of dying. Each performance will be followed by audience reflection and discussion. The play will be performed from May 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> in Norwich, Shelburne and Randolph. To reserve your seats, visit <http://www.patientchoices.org/>.

## OWEN GOMORY PRISON VISIT OP-ED

Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, I visited Northern State Correctional Facility in Newport with Lt. Governor Zuckerman to participate in a discussion about criminal justice. It was my first time visiting a prison – a place that for many in our society is hidden or invisible; out of sight and out of mind. I was inspired to tag along mostly for the opportunity to meet the inmates. In our country's laws and culture incarcerated people are often misunderstood and dehumanized, so the opportunity to meet them and try and reverse these constructed ideas was one I did not want to pass up.

There were about 25 of us in the visiting room where we met – a mix of current inmates and a group of students from Sterling College. The discussion took many turns throughout our two hours and a number of interesting topics were covered. It was inspired largely by the documentary "13<sup>th</sup>" which features many prominent criminal justice reform activists and discusses the role of prison, and criminal justice more generally, as a form of oppression. Inspired by the many injustices highlighted in the film, the inmates told us about some of their struggles. Among them were that participation in work or educational programs, like the Community High School, is optional and is not counted towards a reduction in their sentence. In many states this is an incentive for participation. If they do choose to work they are only paid \$.25 to \$1.25 an hour, making it impossible to save anything substantial for the day they are released.

As has been consistently proven, education reduces recidivism and without incentives to participate in educational programs we are all losing. The members of our society who are incarcerated are simply not set up to succeed. The cards are stacked against them before they go to prison and it's even harder for them when they get out. Russ, Tyreke and many others I met made it clear that they are not thought of as full citizens and humans. Speaking with them, candidly and as equals, has changed the way I think about our citizens behind bars.

Vermont Lt. Governor David Zuckerman

802-828-2226

[www.LtGov.vermont.gov](http://www.LtGov.vermont.gov)