

February 1, 2020

LT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1, 2020

The 2020 Legislative session is extremely active with many important issues that Vermonters have raised being discussed in committees and coming to the floor for action.

As we discuss the economy and the future of Vermont, there has been a lot of focus on Vermont's declining rural population. According to data from the US Census Bureau, eight of our 14 counties lost population in the last decade, with the most rural counties experiencing the largest losses. However, that same data shows this is not a unique problem to Vermont nor driven by Vermont specific policy. In fact, rural areas in New England and across the country are losing population faster than Vermont.

One way Vermont can retain and attract people to our rural communities is to ensure there are employment opportunities that meet their basic needs. This month the legislature has debated and passed a Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) bill (H.107) and a bill to increase the minimum wage (S.23). Both bills have tangible benefits to our hard-working Vermonters.

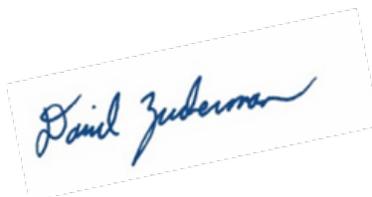
As a small business owner, I can attest that S.23 allows small business to adjust while putting more purchasing power into working Vermonters' pockets.

You can read more about the details of these bills on the back. I encourage you to contact your legislators and the Governor with your thoughts on these pieces of economic development legislation.

I also see many opportunities to support small businesses and individuals in our rural areas by expanding Broadband access, addressing the affordable housing shortage, increasing public transportation options and investing in childcare. I would like to hear some of your ideas for supporting small businesses and employees in our more rural areas.

I want to thank all the Vermonters who have come to my office during my Friday morning 'Coffee with Constituents' event. We have had great conversations around regenerative agriculture, economic development, the climate crisis and more. If your organization would like to co-sponsor one of these weekly events, please be in touch and if you are near Montpelier, I hope you will stop by.

Thank you for staying connected.



UPCOMING EVENTS

February 5

11:00 AM – Speak with Jericho Elementary Fourth Grade Students, Office of Lt. Gov., State House, Montpelier

12:00 PM – Speak at VT Leadership Institute Cohort Lunch, Capitol Plaza, Montpelier

February 6

10:00 AM – Speak with VT Wildlife Coalition Members, Office of Lt. Gov., State House, Montpelier

11:00 AM – Speak at Press Conference Mother Up! Families Rise Up for Climate Action, Cedar Creek Room, State House, Montpelier

6:00 PM – Attending Climate Action Film Festival, Main St. Landing, Burlington

February 7, 14, 21 & 28

8:30-10:00 AM

'Coffee with Constituents.'
Office of Lt. Governor, State House Montpelier

February 12

11:00 AM – Speak at Recovery Day, Pavilion Auditorium, Montpelier

11:30 AM – Speak with Vermont Learning for the Future Summit, Capitol Plaza, Montpelier

February 27, 5:30 PM

Lt. Gov. Movie 'Brother Outsider, the life of Bayard Rustin, Cafeteria, State House, Montpelier

**For a complete list of events please visit our website:
www.LTGov.vermont.gov**

PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE H.107

The legislature recently passed a paid family leave bill. The bill begins to offer what all other modern nations take for granted. Most in fact offer more generous benefits, which is why many advocates and organizations, don't believe the bill goes far enough. Even if it's not perfect, this is a significant first step.

H.107 allows employees to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave for new-parent bonding, and up to eight weeks to care for an ailing family member.

Employees receive between 55% and 90% of their wages depending on their average wage. (Lower-wage folks receive a higher proportion of their average wage.)

This bill is essentially an insurance plan for workers to help them when they face a planned or unplanned medical emergency. The cost for this insurance is a 0.2% payroll tax paid by employees. A worker earning \$27,665, would pay \$55. When they need the benefit they would receive approximately \$479/week. When passed in tandem with increasing the minimum wage, working Vermonters will be significantly better off financially.

The bill includes an individual option to add personal medical leave; the cost is 0.38%.

Unfortunately, this proposal is paid for entirely by employees, with no cost shared by employers. This is one reason some advocates oppose this plan. This policy benefits both employees and employers so I hope this will be considered in the future.

It appears the Governor will be vetoing the bill. But if signed, or if the legislature overrides the veto, Vermont will join the rest of the developed world in providing this family-based benefit.

RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE S.23

By Chair of House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs, Rep. Tom Stevens

The legislature is sending a bill (S.23), raising the minimum wage, to the Governor. The bill raises the minimum wage to \$11.75 in 2021, and \$12.55 in 2022, followed by annual inflation adjustments. While this is not as robust as the original proposal to raise it to \$15 by 2026, it will be a great benefit to many hard working Vermonters. Increasing the minimum wage is one of the best ways to move people out of poverty, put more money into the pockets of working families and stimulate the local economy. It is a good start toward restoring the purchasing power of minimum wage families.

Many Vermonters, with an average age of 38, and a majority of whom are women, receive the minimum wage. Increasing the wage makes an important impact on their daily lives. They can eat better, feed their kids better, they can shop more. We fight for this wage to give these workers a little more money and a little more dignity. We know it is not enough, but anytime we have an opportunity to raise wages for Vermonters, we should embrace it.

BROTHER OUTSIDER, THE LIFE OF BAYARD RUSTIN

Next in the Lt. Governor's Film Series -- February 27, 5:30 pm. In the State House Cafeteria -- Bayard Rustin was there at most of the important events of the Civil Rights Movement - but always in the background. **Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin** asks "Why?" It presents a vivid drama, intermingling the personal and the political, about one of the most enigmatic figures in 20th-century American history. One of the first "freedom riders," an adviser to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and A. Philip Randolph, organizer of the March on Washington, intelligent, gregarious and charismatic, Bayard Rustin was denied his place in the limelight for one reason - he was gay.