**Montpelier Notes,** An occasional email for Pownal and Woodford residents. If you would prefer not to receive these notes please reply to botzow@sover.net and I'll remove you from the list. If you would like to be added please let me know. I do not give your email address to others. --Bill Botzow

January 18, 2010

Hello All,

We are all shocked by the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti. In the 1970’s I visited friends in Haiti for extended staysd and was deeply impressed by its people, culture, beautiful land, and long suffering history. Haitians are resilient and resourceful in the face of adversity, but the earthquake is unimaginably devastating. If you are looking for a way to donate, here are links to reliable organizations.

**Organizations providing direct assistance to victims of the Haitian Earthquake**

* [**The American Red Cross**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VESl3NbP7-ldwW9oAJjLl0rfudZB-0-h3nt0xHKDSCUcxW-xc_U3KyiNUSFARXanshpsz-kT4PZLHnJFlKzKnSD7lIVA2MkJDoGIongdMCIJw==) is pledging an initial $200,000 to assist communities impacted by this earthquake. They expect to provide immediate needs for food, water, temporary shelter, medical services and emotional support. They are accepting donations through their [**International Response Fund**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VESl3NbP7-ldwW9oAJjLl0rfudZB-0-h3nt0xHKDSCUcxW-xc_U3KyiNUSFARXanshpsz-kT4PZLHnJFlKzKnSD7lIVA2MkJDoGIongdMCIJw==)**.**
* [**UNICEF**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VHK9BjwWm1cT0x7mMdu369NlawZvYjwsGs4_m_x2T0IAQeGXRHBL0IGFBeluixBdG7snFOZSFPN26ngCSjmtWjlUGRlJZHq4vI=) has issued a statement that "Children are always the most vulnerable population in any natural disaster, and UNICEF is there for them." UNICEF requests donations for relief for children in Haiti [**via their Haiti Earthquake Fund**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VGHaEZfakULD-HD1-hcAqJS_nNZ6wv0S7bOyJt4SjKQ1zTW1sqy3xL7Iryvn-COIG8V_HOnAM8kCC31IiVP_QNhKF9o-AhR5b5EP4N2ZDjNuNGz9ihRWcIx)**. You can also call 1-800-4UNICEF.**
* [**Partners In Health**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VG4iQj10xUZjTbR8sEsRbSDkkmHaOEDRfTd6tBUXIY2cKzhctBWYy8wTVmgiZ4qFsw_ZW7FPgsMMGaE_9RIvN_AaKFfdQ0JaDIIcV_dFjWDiQ==) reports its Port-au-Prince clinical director, Louise Ivers, has appealed for assistance: "Port-au-Prince is devastated, lot of deaths. SOS. SOS... Temporary field hospital by us at UNDP needs supplies, pain meds, bandages. Please help us." [**Donate to their Haiti earthquake fund**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VGJnNA9y6E7VfxxbdXspGlH5dC6x0Ei3P9T61Oen3U5u_QqWRWQEvS4ZlVGvvK-uYJYtYxDWZi9K4NzqsMbCiMYIVku19wUsmVJnmMxwQGuKf6nI3npBGFRgG5OOIvndOIE7Gwg33OZPK8hxpGerkQ8y9e6AwGrEyXM6twdUrSZO4Yp1mNPbQ0FgbVJNRisUNnFM3wRpK0LzYn6PUmixsJS)**.**
* [**Mercy Corps**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VHFdQ9oC7-G7lNNqco1ugWh_cMVHckHEQAIMippIavzZ48BlYZLFtAlMz6_IdMjgrDTK_h39qruQ0tK1jbrKYtBa3gwvpN3Nz2iOoMuvGszwnz2uqNbE9X8W7CtWgEqBVyF5OxUlRhKWeslDHX0kNpL_Eul9r8eOBY=) is sending a team of emergency responders to assess damage, and seek to fulfill immediate needs of quake survivors. The agency aided families after earthquakes in Peru in 2007, China and Pakistan in 2008, and Indonesia last year. [**Donate online**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VHFdQ9oC7-G7lNNqco1ugWh_cMVHckHEQAIMippIavzZ48BlYZLFtAlMz6_IdMjgrDTK_h39qruQ0tK1jbrKYtBa3gwvpN3Nz2iOoMuvGszwnz2uqNbE9X8W7CtWgEqBVyF5OxUlRhKWeslDHX0kNpL_Eul9r8eOBY=)**.**
* [**Direct Relief**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VEd2OcW8QQeOd3n_lB_mX9qpHjp4eYq-h9gGJFJvGDmNypTYoRkC1Hrf50bwtCgucCDq2Xr1mOfCF3mSew6vUmSrB0RAXQcW91pOqCvjDcTUUWLrKcYZyfU) is committing up to $1 million in aid for the response and is coordinating with its other in-country partners and colleague organizations. Their partners in Haiti include Partners in Health, St. Damien Children's Hospital, and the Visitation Hospital, which are particularly active in emergency response. [**Donate to Direct Relief online**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VEd2OcW8QQeOd3n_lB_mX9qpHjp4eYq-h9gGJFJvGDmNypTYoRkC1Hrf50bwtCgucCDq2Xr1mOfCF3mSew6vUmSrB0RAXQcW91pOqCvjDcTUUWLrKcYZyfU)**.**
* [**Oxfam**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VEiyJQSPfXDmnzXQ-yFtl2ihtG-zoKq-k1DRrhNpXqFtwRahGiRy3bpGPEp8Fo4qK4JANWJ1uESegVxaun2MaD9RK-cOIwztYL05lqhxuFECw==) is rushing in teams from around the region to respond to the situation to provide clean water, shelter, sanitation and help people recover. [**Donate to Oxfam America online**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VFcQlt3YDkJW2GeE1NQDF0jpS37y1pwGSm9XFZCHEQq8LlA-Too1mK0PrQ_ccisRciILUA-nGhGUdUIOLcuTtadcsTNWmOqxDYcTN6M99H2_ZdRxdmv5nMml-pCg0bPIWTGN8KmyM_kqqUgNRlrjU0GdIegfP44McY=)**.**
* [**International Medical Corps**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VHcfdr4FxAAxlgOpxwGKAyDtmzidVsdlLtrxjmaOLcPOTw0PE_YagWP45597EIR3yDrexcJbUoeBeK3xSXexLP7ipJzIcSC9rSVPRbwN7BrTw==) is assembling a team of first responders and resources to provide lifesaving medical care and other emergency services to survivors of the earthquake. [**Donate online**](http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1102942052705&s=251&e=001jmZUFBiq7VHTYnBzKqMFc12m1p3rGSQlyXX3s6WQCwvkjSvBtC-jhji7a5AMIw6f0nG7C7sb8VpUcpz4kHBKh1lJ27lI2kEQ-VPBoZRzYRSzP9XwHzYuCpfnnd2TMSCpzJ5FQZO0wGqXxMaFukUdRw==) .

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This last weekend’s January thaw was a relief. The warmer weather brought many people out and about. After spending much of Saturday morning at the Transfer Station, I went  up on the mountain in Woodford with Ruth and enjoyed skiing through the state park. It was good to see that numerous people were enjoying snowmobiling, skiing and snowshoeing. In this area we’re fortunate to be able to enjoy the beauty and stillness of the deep forest in winter.

Although we are early in the session and spending most of our time in committee, the legislature passed two bills this last week.

**S.93 An act relating to commercial vehicle operation on the interstate system**

We swiftly and unanimously passed legislation to allow the largest trucks operating in Vermont to use the Interstate highways. Previously weight limits on Vermont’s interstates meant that the larger multi-axle trucks hauling logs, milk, fuel oil, stone, etc. were forced to use state and local highways. This should relieve some congestion and, more importantly, wear and tear on roads and bridges.

**H. 477 An act relating to reauthorizing the Lake Champlain reciprocal fishing license**

The reciprocal fishing license agreement with New York State for fishing in Lake Champlain was due to run out. The legislature acted to renew the agreement and maintain Vermont’s competitive position in selling fishing licenses that cover the lake. Otherwise Vermont licenses would not cover the larger portion of the lake that lies within New York.

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**Legislative Committee reports:**

Committees meet daily to take testimony on proposed legislation and to exercise their oversight responsibility in their respective areas of jurisdiction. To keep up with work in other committees legislators rely on reports from colleagues. Here are some edited reports on some of the legislature’s current work.

**Government Accountability Committee By Rep. Debbie Evans**

CHALLENGES FOR CHANGE: RESULTS FOR VERMONTERS

The committee was charged with a dual mission of improving government efficiency while identifying $30 million in direct general fund savings for FY 2011. The bottom line and the focus of this committee is to restructure state government in order to do more with less. With long term success in mind, government needs to be efficient, effective, and sustainable in good and in challenging times.

The eight member Joint Legislative Accountability Committee endorsed a report that included areas where the state could save money and improve service by rethinking the way it does business. The report recommends:

CHARTER UNITS- Several agencies, departments or smaller units within state government would agree to deliver specified results while spending less. Under signed agreements, the government units would operate with greater flexibility.

PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS- Private contracts would pay for results not effort using measured results to determine payments.

A CLIENT CENTRIC, RESULTS BASED HUMAN SERVICE PACKAGE- Introduce a “one stop shopping” system for varied services to reduce redundancies in service delivery.

CORRECTIONS REBALANCE- To reduce the prison population and recidivism, the state would invest $5 million in transitional housing, chemical dependency programs and less expensive alternatives for those serving weekend sentences.

FOCUS ON LEARNING- School districts would receive less money for administrative expenses to spur more collaboration.

SPECIAL EDUCATION INCENTIVES- School districts would redesign special education services to focus on improving outcomes such as graduation rates and employment, while reducing paperwork.

REGULATORY REFORM- The agencies of Natural Resources and Agriculture would streamline regulatory procedures and take a new approach to compliance. Streamlining these processes could provide faster licensing and permitting without compromising quality standards.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT- The state’s economic development initiatives would focus on spending that achieves measurable results.

PURCHASE HEALTH NOT PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES- This is a longer term initiative where savings are achieved by pooling purchasing power.

The above short synopsis is a quick overview of the proposal of the Government Accountability Committee.

[Tom Esvlin, the State's Chief Technology Officer, has been named by Administration Secretary Neale Lunderville to coordinate the executive branch activities necessary to successfully meet the Challenges for Change agreed to by the Governor and Legislative leaders last week.  He serves on the Steering Committee which is charged with overseeing the implementation of the Challenges. Here’s the link to an article Tom has posted on his blog that gives an accurate assessment of the task at hand, <http://cto.vermont.gov/blogs/cfc> ]

**House Agriculture Committee by Rep. Tess Taylor**

In a joint session with the Senate Ag Committee, we heard a report from Secretary Allbee and staff highlighting events in 2009. *Staff reductions and changes reflect 1983’s level of staffing for the Agency*. The budget has already been reduced by 20% and the Secretary is concerned that the Agency is being compromised as it works to deliver quality service. The Agency does not see how it can withstand another 8% reduction.

Secretary Allbee pointed out that National Geographic magazine named Vermont the #1 place in the US to visit citing Vermont’s “policies and plans” to keep the working/cultural landscape viable.

Vermont is down to 5 slaughterhouse facilities, with a new plant anticipated to open in Westminister.

Inspection of scales, scanners and gas pumps is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up. The Agency is down from 8 to 4 inspectors, and so the work becomes complaint-driven; most complaints are for scanners and gas pumps.

Programs are being offered to help farmers with stress management. There are now 1,026 dairy farms in Vermont, down from 1078 at the end of 2008. Dairy farms struggled with extremely low milk prices in 2009. Anti-trust and immigration reform are high on the priority list for Sec. Allbee as he works with the Washington delegation for reform.

Commonwealth Yogurt will break ground in Brattleboro in 2010 producing up to 50 million pounds of yogurt. Their reasons for settling in Vermont were: access to regional markets, the Vermont brand and assurance of a steady milk supply.

**Current Use:** the committee heard from representatives of the VT Land Trust, Farm Bureau, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, VT Assessors & Listers Assn., VT Forest Products Assn., Consultant Foresters Assn., the Secretary of Agency of Natural Resources, Rural Vermont and 2 farmers on the issue of achieving savings in the Current Use Program which taxes land on the use value not the development value and makes up the difference in payments to municipalities to keep property taxes equitable. A 5-point proposal was created last summer to find $1.6 million in savings.  Concerns were raised that the far-reaching ramifications of the proposal had not been fully addressed by a broader group of interested parties. Sec. Wood asked for more time to work with Sec. Allbee on a solution that would not undermine the sustainability and predictability of the program.

**Winter Manure Application**: The committee discussed H.345 a bill that would exempt farms with an approved nutrient management plan from the winter ban on the spreading of manure. The reasoning is that any farm with an approved nutrient management plan already adheres to rules that prohibit spreading on frozen or snow-covered fields. The ban from Dec 15 to April 1 does not take into account the variety of weather in any year and at different locations in the state and that the aims of the ban are already addressed in the NMP.

**Education, by Rep. Gary Gilbert**

The Education Committee has been receiving updates and reports: Roots of Success; Truancy; Transformation Policy Commission; Retirement Study Committee; Small School Grants; Education Finance Study Committee; Pre-K -16 Partnerships as well as the Joint Legislative Government Accountability Committee challenge for change.

We have taken initial testimony on H. 471 related to supervisory union policies regarding class size, and a report on Educational Governance in VT from the VT Business Roundtable and various Superintendents. We met with Tax Commissioner Westman to better understand educational costs and funding in relationship to other government services and available revenues. We also had joint sessions with Government Operations (Retirement system), Senate Education (Challenges for Change/PSG) and Agriculture (Farm to School).

Choices will be driven by our financial situation now and in the immediate future. However, current financial concerns may make it possible to develop long term public policy yielding long term dividends. The Transformation Report, PreK-16 Report, The Challenge for Change, and the Business Round Table analysis  point to structural changes which offer the promise of improving access and improved educational quality on a state wide level.

**Government Operations, by Rep. Debbie Evans**

The committee’s time has been spent on hearing testimony on S.117 which proposes changing the date of the primary election. A federal law was recently enacted requiring a 45 day window for ballots to be sent and returned from overseas---particularly from the military, but it would also benefit Peace Corps volunteers and students in school abroad. Vermont is one of 10 states plus the District of Columbia with September primaries. The committee is considering a two week change. The current primary election is the second Tuesday in September, which is the 14th. The change would be to the last Tuesday in August.

The committee heard numerous individuals who thought that moving the date would be the best way to ensure that those living or serving overseas could cast ballots that would be counted. It is possible for states to apply for a waiver with regard to compliance with the federal law. The issue of applying for a waiver and actually obtaining one is an arduous task.  Our committee was told by the Director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program that a state must present a comprehensive plan on addressing the “time” factor.

**Commerce & Economic Development, by Rep. Jason P. Lorber**

The committee’s top four immediate goals:

* Create an environment for businesses to thrive and jobs to grow
* Meet the goals of Challenges for Change (PSG)
* Address the needs of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund
* Address the issues raised by the Workers’ Comp Task Force, which that strengthens compliance requirements for the classification of workers vs. independent contractors

Part and parcel of the first two challenges is to articulate our outcomes and how to measure them.  We’ve already made great headway, due in large part to the benchmarks of the Commission on the Future of Economic Development (CFED), shepherded by Rep. Bill Botzow.

Members from our committee are working closely with Ways & Means and members of a summer committee on the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. They have created the groundwork for a balance of benefit reductions and revenue increases.

**General, Housing and Military Affairs, by Rep. Tom Stevens**

The committee heard testimony on H.132, an act that would remove a loophole in electrician licensing which allows single family homes and duplexes to be wired by non-licensed electricians. We consider this legislation to be, primarily, a public safety bill. In order to lessen installation of wiring by unlicensed electricians and risk questionable work, removing the loophole would require that any electrician taking money for work be licensed as a journeyman, master or Type S electrician.

Exemptions would remain for several classes of work, including work done by owners of the home.

This legislation has found widespread support, from IBEW, Independent Electricians, Associated Homebuilders and General Contractors, as well as DPS.  We are still taking testimony from power companies and other interested parties.

**Judiciary,  by Rep. Cynthia Martin**

The Legislature directed the Supreme Court in 2008 to appoint a Commission on Judicial Operation composed of members of the three branches of government and the citizens of Vermont for the purpose of restructuring the Vermont Judiciary which would see a reduction of one million dollars in the Judiciary budget.

This goal was to be accomplished by building a system based on values important to the judicial system of the future, taking into account the rural nature of the state, access to justice, the advantages and disadvantages of new technologies, and judicial independence. The Commission issued a report containing its recommendations and which provided the basis for H.470 which is presently under consideration in House Judiciary.

Realignment, consolidation, and technology are measures by which the goal of cost reductions is expected to be realized. And as each of these areas is explored, the guarantee of every Vermont citizen’s right to due access to justice must be maintained.

**January 28th Pownal 250th Event**

The Pownal Historical Society has sent me the following announcement:

Pownal Historical Society offers 250th Anniversary Pictorial Postmark.

On January 28th, to commemorate the Recording of the Charter on that date in 1760, the Pownal Historical Society will be offering a commemorative Postal Cover and a special 250th Anniversary Pictorial Postmark.

You may pre-buy your souvenir cover and take it to the Pownal Post Office on January 28th to have it hand cancelled with the special postmark.  Karen Nixon, Postmaster of the Pownal Post Office is also offering a special cancellation time at the Solomon Wright Library, Main Street, the evening of January 28th from 6 PM to 8 PM.   Covers will be available at this cancellation event.

If you are unable to attend the Library Cancellation Event you may obtain this collectors piece by contacting Fran Lampman at 802-823-7344.

You may purchase the un-cancelled cover with stamp for $3.00 until January 28th.

After January 28th, the cancelled cover will be $4.00 while supplies last plus $1.00 if you want it mailed to you.  You may send your check payable to the Pownal Historical Society, PO Box 313, Pownal, VT 05261

Text of the legislative resolution congratulating Pownal on its 250th anniversary

The text of the resolution read at the January 8th 250th birthday party for Pownal is now on the legislative web site. Here’s the link. Thanks again to Ken Held and many others for all their work selecting the historical facts for the resolution.

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/database/status/summary.cfm?Bill=HCR181&Session=2010>

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Last week Vermont’s Certified Public Accountants held their annual meeting in Montpelier. I attended the legislative reception and enjoyed visiting with Kristin Reed, a Pownal constituent and a former chair of the CPAs. Also last week, I listened to many of the Vermonters who came to testify in the first public hearing of the session. The subject was health care. A number of health care bills have been introduced and I expect there will be a great deal of continuing conversation on the need to ensure reliable affordable health care to all Vermonters.

I hope you have a very good week.

Stay in touch,

Bill

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