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 9, 2011

Hello All,

The first week of a new legislative biennium combined with the inauguration of a new Governor is a time of extraordinary energy in the State House. Organizing the legislature for a new session takes well prescribed and traditional paths that fittingly remind us that  our Vermont brand of democracy, based on informed citizen participation, honed and developed over centuries is unique and very special. Democracy is based on government with the consent of the governed. In Vermont we extend that to government with the proactive participation of the governed. It has made our small state a very special place well worth caring for and celebrating.  Here’s an account of my first week.

**Tuesday** Ruth and I left early for Montpelier as I had pre session meetings to attend to at the State House and also needed to unpack and settle in to my lodging. I will be staying in the same place on Cliff Street as I did the last two years. It is a convenient though steep walk to the State House—good exercise, especially going home at the end of the day. Tuesday night there was a caucus dinner at the Montpelier Elks. We met new members, said goodbye to retiring ones and focused on our commitment to the challenges ahead in the next four months to rebuild our economy and care for the unfortunate.

**Wednesday** the House met to elect the Speaker who will be Shap Smith from Morrisville. This will be his second term as Speaker. Shap and I came to Montpelier at the same time. He has proved himself a judicious,  effective, and well respected leader who works well with all parties. His election was unanimous and the House is in good hands. Shortly after his election, electing the Clerk of the House and our taking the oath of office, the Speaker announced committee assignments. I return to the Commerce and Economic Development Committee and will continue as chair. I’m also fortunate to have Rep. Mike Marcotte from Coventry returning as Vice-Chair. We have a good mix of committee members from around the state with diverse backgrounds such as entrepreneur, small business owner, web site developer, real estate and property management professional, telecommunications worker, fire chief, and airline steward. As soon as we were appointed we met to select seats in the committee room, introduce ourselves and our interests, elect one of our members as clerk, and orient new committee members to the committee’s responsibilities and jurisdiction. Later on Wednesday afternoon we returned to the House for a joint session with the Senate to hear Governor Jim Douglas’s farewell address. I have included a copy of his speech below.

Wednesday was also Health Care is a Human Right day. Tracy Dorman from Pownal was there to advocate for a universal health care system.

**Thursday** we met with the Senate in two Joint Sessions. In the morning we heard the report of the canvassing committee for the statewide officers. This fall neither the Governor-Elect Peter Shumlin nor the Lieutenant Governor-Elect Phil Scott received 50% of the vote. In this case the final vote goes to the legislature as directed in the  Vermont Constitution and both were easily elected by the members. In the afternoon we gathered again with many honored guests including Governors from prior administrations, the Vermont National Guard and our family members to witness the swearing in of Governor Shumlin. The ceremony included posting of the colors by the Vermont National Guard Drill Team, singing of America the Beautiful and later the Vermont State song, “These Green Mountains are my home” by the Vermont Youth Choir, two invocations and a benediction along with the Governor’s Inaugural address. I have included the address below. After the ceremony the Governor held a reception in his office, people gathered to renew acquaintances and to meet with their representatives.

**Friday** the legislature met briefly in full session before adjourning to committees. In Commerce and Economic Development we began by reviewing the committee’s charge and then the major bills from last year—the Jobs Bill and the Economic Development Section of the Challenges for Change Bill. These bills called for a number of studies and reports we will soon receive and remind us of the ongoing work of the legislature to improve the economy and improve the delivery of state government. Next week we will meet with the agencies and departments we oversee such the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Banking, Insurance, Securities and Health Care Administration, Consumer Affairs division of the Attorney General’s office, the Public Service Board and Department and the Vermont Telecommunications Authority. Soon bills will be introduced, assigned to committees and we will begin taking testimony on the legislation that will be the legacy of the session. We worked into the afternoon Thursday before adjourning for the week. Commerce will have a great deal of work in the months ahead. You will see in Governor Shumlin’s address five goals and over half of them will come through Commerce and Economic Development.

Friday night, with a few legislative friends and their spouses Ruth and I went to the Inaugural ball in Warren at the Sugarbush ski area. The inaugural committee and the ski area did a good job handling the estimated 1000 attendees . I heard the event raised over fifty thousand dollars for the Vermont National Guard Foundation. I saw people from across the spectrum of government and business in Vermont who were there to help launch the next chapter in Vermont’s governance history. The coming days will not be easy because of the economic situation but there will be opportunities to make improvements in Vermonters lives, to continue to care for this special place and ultimately to prepare for a bright future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve my community and state.

Stay in touch,

Bill

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"**Inaugural Address of Governor Peter Shumlin**
January 6, 2011

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, Members of the General Assembly, distinguished guests, fellow Vermonters:

Thank you. It is an honor to stand before you today.

Thank you, Governor Douglas, for 38 years of exemplary public service to the Green Mountain state. We are grateful for your hard work and sacrifice on our behalf and to Dorothy and your family for sharing so much of your life with us.

Thank you to Brian Dubie for your service as Lieutenant Governor for the past eight years. While Brian and I had a spirited campaign this fall, I am proud to call Brian my friend; we are united in our love for our state and the constituents we serve.

Since my election in November, I have had the honor of joining Governor Douglas and our Congressional delegation in welcoming home our soldiers from Afghanistan after the biggest deployment of National Guard troops since World War II. We are so proud of you and thrilled to have you home. Our hearts go out to our Gold Star families who have made the ultimate sacrifice to our state and nation. Today, joining Adjutant General Michael Dubie in the gallery are veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: Brigadier General Jonathan Farnham, Captain Cathy Cappetta, and Chief Master Sergeant Steven Zappi. Also joining them is Command Sergeant Major Michael Datillio, who is retiring after 44 years of service to his state and his country. Please join me in recognizing these brave women and men – and all the Vermonters who have served in our armed services in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere abroad.

I am grateful to my loving family and friends for your faith and support; and to all who worked so hard to make this moment possible. Above all, thank you Vermonters for giving me this opportunity to serve you as Governor; I am both honored and humbled.

That I stand before you today as Vermont's 81st Governor was improbable, and no one can attest to that better than my mom and dad, who are here today. My mom reminded me again on election night that it often seemed more likely in my grade school years that I would struggle to find a job than to run for office. As a kid who learned differently, I remember well in second grade being called into the principal’s office with my parents to have them be told what I already knew, but hoped beyond hope that they would never find out: that with all the good efforts of my teachers they could not teach me how to read; that the prospects of my being a successful student and going onto college were unlikely, but they would do the best they could. That was not a great day.

I had a single teacher who believed in me. Her name was Claire Ogelsby; she later became Vermont's teacher of the year. Her husband Mac and daughter Molly are here today. Claire would be here too had she not lost her battle with cancer a year and a half ago. After her long day at school, Claire loaded me in her Willy's Jeep and took me to her log cabin deep in the woods on Windmill Hill Road in Westminster West. In the warm weather we sat on her lawn; in the cold weather we huddled around the wood stove; and slowly and creatively she taught me how to read. What I remember best about Claire was no matter how difficult the challenge; no matter how innovative she had to be or how hard she had to work, she never gave up on me and therefore neither did I.

I share that part of my life today because we are living in difficult times and we need to be creative to overcome our challenges. Let me be clear about the fiscal reality that our great state faces at this moment. After several years of making necessary but painful spending cuts, we are still confronted with a $150 million shortfall in the next fiscal year. Our economic challenges are real, and so is my firm commitment to address them responsibly and swiftly – with hard, sometimes painful but sustainable choices. There is no easy or popular path ahead.

While I am bound and determined to put Vermont on a sustainable spending path this year, balancing the budget is not our biggest challenge. All across our state, too many Vermonters are living in fear: fear that they might lose their jobs, face another pay cut, fail to keep their home, send their children to college, afford health insurance or a secure retirement. That fear knows no political party; it has lost patience in finding solace in political slogans and false promises, it takes no more comfort from a tea party rally in Tallahassee than it does from a bickering government in Washington, DC. Vermonters wonder: is anyone in government listening? Can we let go of the political speak, stop playing pretend, face the facts, and arrive at a common purpose?
From Bennington to Burlington, Guilford to Guildhall and Stamford to Swanton, our state is uniquely united in what we wish for. Vermonters want jobs and a brighter economic future for themselves and their children.

The guiding principle for my administration’s work is simple: we will commit ourselves every day to making the lives of Vermonters more economically secure. With the same fortitude and creative determination that Claire showed in her zeal to teach me and other students who learned like me, one student at a time, I believe in Vermont’s opportunity to replace fear with a bright economic future, one job at a time. A clear vision for job growth and a bold plan to deliver that vision is what Vermont needs right now.

The last Putney boy to become Governor, almost three quarters of a century ago, was George D. Aiken, whose wife Lola joins us here today. Governor Aiken also had a bold vision for Vermont's job growth that he shared with this Joint Assembly as he bid farewell as Governor. He said, “Vermont is one of a few states that can sell four feet of snow and twenty below at a profit.”

Aiken delivered those words at the dawn of the Vermont snow rush, as chainsaw toting men carved ski trails and second home sites into Green Mountains as rugged and majestic as Vermonters themselves. From Killington to Jay; Stratton to Stowe; Mount Snow to Mad River Glen; Aiken articulated a plan that remains a potent economic force almost 75 years later.

As we close out the first decade of the 21st century, Aiken's world of predictable winters, with twenty below and four feet of snow has been slowly but certainly melting away from us. It's at Aiken's home at Vermont's southern border; at the soil he tilled; the maple trees he nurtured; the ponds he adored; that his horticulturalist’s eyes would gaze in stark amazement at the magnitude of change. The Elm and Butternut are all but gone, the buckthorn is choking out the young hardwood saplings, and many of the ponds that once bubbled with life are now empty waterways.

While leaders across America, influenced by the extraordinary economic power of oil, coal and automobile companies, equivocate about climate change, we must not. That our planet is warming at an alarming rate is undeniable. But I raise this not to engage in an abstract discussion of climate science. I raise it because I believe Vermont’s economic future will be determined by how we respond to this challenge. We will provide the brainpower, make the products, and seize the job opportunities a lower carbon economy requires.

Vermont’s diversified jobs future is bright. Manufacturing, deployment and production of renewable energy and efficiency, tourism, technology, and agriculture are all sectors of our economy with potential for unlimited growth.

As we work to put Vermonters back to work, one job at a time, let us always be mindful that government does not create jobs; entrepreneurs do. What government must do is to make the necessary infrastructure choices that are essential to job growth for this new era.

This agenda consists of five goals: expanding broadband, containing health care costs, educating our work force, providing tax fairness and credit for emerging businesses, and supporting a renaissance in Vermont agriculture. It is big, it is ambitious, and it is achievable if we view it as our common purpose.

Today I am launching Connect VT, an initiative to deliver by 2013 my promise of high-speed Internet access and cell service to every corner of our state. If not confronted, our connectivity deficit will relegate us to an economic backwater. Vermont lags behind the developing world and ranks 46th among the fifty states in connectivity. Governor Aiken, when facing an equally daunting challenge of bringing electricity to every last mile of this rural state, in the 1930's, launched a strategy he called “Initiative and Cooperation.”

Listen for a moment to the words he wrote in August 1939, about that effort: “A few weeks ago I pulled the switch that started the current flowing through a cooperative electric line that is bringing the blessings of light and power to hundreds of farms and homes in another Vermont community-homes which, in the past, had been almost completely isolated from urban civilization.”

Seventy-two years after Aiken wrote those words about the need to bring Vermont out of its isolation, we must display the same foresight to confront an equally daunting isolation. The spirit that led Aiken to bring Vermont out of the darkness is the same innovative cooperation that is called upon today from our private sector telecommunications providers, the Vermont utilities, regulators and our citizens, if we are to deliver the new electric current of the modern world to Vermont.

We have $410 million in private, federal, and bonded capital to be strategically deployed. These resources present Vermonters with a once in a life-time opportunity to “initiate and cooperate” by completing the build out of the Smart Grid, broadband and mobile phone service in a collaborative marriage of the telecommunications and electrical utility sectors to create one shared broadband infrastructure for Vermont.

We will not and cannot compete and prosper in the global economy until and unless we deliver on this promise. We all know success won't be easy, but Vermonters elected me on my pledge to get tough things done, and we will. Indeed, we are too small to fail.

The rising cost of healthcare for Vermont's middle class and small businesses provides an equally daunting threat to economic prosperity. Just ten years ago our little state was spending $2.5 billion a year to stay healthy. Today we spend over $5 billion. That increase represents an enormous hidden tax on families and small businesses across our state. If left untethered, the rising cost of health insurance will cripple us.

That's why we must create a single-payer healthcare system that provides universal, affordable health insurance for all Vermonters that brings these skyrocketing costs under control. Let Vermont be the first state in the nation to treat healthcare as a right and not a privilege; removing the burden of coverage from our business community and using technology and outcomes-based medicine to contain costs. By doing so, we will save money and improve the quality of our care.

Some will say it can't be done. The special interests; insurance companies, pharmaceutical industry, medical equipment makers; the same lobbyists that spent hundreds of millions of dollars to make sure that real reform withered in Washington can be expected to exercise their will to protect their enormous profits.

Others will say reform will destroy our existing healthcare system. But logic suggests – and our experience shows - that our current system is unsustainable; that underfunded reimbursements starve our doctors and hospitals; that duplication, waste, inefficiencies and rising costs will drive more rural providers into bankruptcy and destroy our quality of care, which is the very best in the land. I ask the defenders of the current system to explain how small businesses, municipalities and taxpayers can sustain double digit premium increases year after year.

Shortly we will receive plans from Dr. William Hsiao to help us design a health care system that Vermonters can afford. I've assembled a healthcare team that will invite providers, consumers, businesses, municipalities, insurers, and our congressional delegation to the table to help Vermont build a sensible healthcare system. I call upon single payer supporters to resist the temptation to oversimplify the challenge. I call upon skeptics to challenge us, but to join us at the table. I call upon Vermonters to join together with the common purpose of our state once again leading where others dare not go; universal, affordable, quality healthcare that follows the individual and is not tied to employment.

In a democratic society, educating our citizens is our single greatest obligation. I hereby call for an end to the war of words launched from Montpelier that pits property tax payers against our children, teachers, principals, and school board members, and invite instead a respectful conversation on how to create the best education system for our future; how to produce the best workforce for the jobs we’ve just discussed. We take pride in Vermont's quality education system that is the envy of the rest of the country. Let’s build upon our success by doing even better. The objective is simple: every Vermonter must have the same opportunity for success that Claire Ogelsby made possible for me; economically, intellectually and socially.

Part of achieving that success is ensuring that our children don’t grow up in poverty. Almost one in three Vermont children live in low-income households. Without proper nutrition, quality early education, or a stable home, these children too often enter kindergarten far behind their peers, and the spiral begins. They are more likely to drop out of school, abuse substances, and become statistics later in life. We can make a difference in their lives, and we will.

We can also do better at ensuring the success of all of our students in school. While we are rightfully proud of our outstanding education system, we are not delivering what is required for every student. Time spent in class does not measure acquisition of skills. For those who quickly demonstrate clear levels of achievement, let's accelerate their path to enriched programs in that area of study. For students who do not learn in traditional ways, let’s support creative approaches that may be outside the four walls of our classrooms.

From early education to higher education; from dual enrollment to technical school; we have the most innovative offerings in the country. Our challenge is to break down the silos into a seamless system that allows each individual learner to integrate the array of programs that inspire lifelong learning.

Of course, education extends beyond our schools and to our workforce. Herein lies a great challenge. At a time when Vermonters are facing unemployment and underemployment, many of our jobs creators can't find qualified employees, and it’s government’s responsibility to help fix this problem. Let me be specific: right here in the chamber today we have representatives of businesses who are looking for qualified employees. IBM in Essex is looking; GE in Rutland is looking; Vermont Circuits in Brattleboro is looking; Sonnax in Rockingham is looking. Our job is to have a pool of applicants trained and ready to work.

It should be the policy of the state of Vermont that learning never ends. Working together in a partnership with our educational community we will close the gap between those Vermonters who want work and our job creators who have work to do.
At no time in my memory has the future of agriculture in our state had more potential to grow and make money, despite the extraordinarily difficult times facing our dairy farmers. Vermont still produce over 60 percent of the milk in New England, and our dairy community is as unified and focused as I have ever seen it. Working together with our Congressional delegation – the best in the country – we will continue the fight for fair prices for our dairy farmers.

The renaissance in Vermont agriculture is rooted in the growing concern by consumers across America about where and how their food is produced. Consumers are increasingly demanding locally grown, chemical-free, high quality food. We must take Vermont’s strengths – buy local, farmers markets, farm to plate, Vermont Fresh Network restaurants – and expand our view of local to everything within 200 miles of Vermont, which includes Manhattan, Boston, and Montreal. Investing in processing and bottling facilities, combined with a dynamic marketing effort for Vermont quality foods, will bring our farmers the value-added price that they deserve for a hard day’s work, and they will prosper.

Finally, my jobs agenda will expand the ability of emerging enterprises and businesses to access capital and credit when they need it the most. If our Green Mountain State can be recognized by young entrepreneurs as the innovative leader in financing and venture capital for micro-businesses when banks say “no,” small businesses will thrive.

Let me give you an exciting example of what I mean by innovation in financing and venture capital. The EB-5 program, championed in Congress by Senator Leahy, is an established means of generating capital that is creating jobs. Thousands of them, right here in Vermont. We must take this program to levels not imagined by its creators. EB-5 gives us a vehicle not only to raise essential capital, but also to spread Vermont’s stellar reputation from one end of the globe to another.

We have a pioneer in this effort, Bill Stenger, of Jay Peak, deep in the Northeast Kingdom, who joins us today. Bill has plumbed this federal program to its fullest potential. Through this initiative he has created over a thousand new jobs in the highest unemployment area of the state that would not otherwise exist.

Let me say one last word on my economic priorities. Our choices about taxes directly impact job growth. Vermont's tax challenge is not that our burden is not high enough; it is that our tax burden is too high. We must develop a tax policy that grows our customer base and grows wealth. The upcoming report from our tax commission will help us in this task. Our patchwork of broad based taxes that have accumulated over the years, combined with overburdened property taxes, require our attention. But let me be clear: as we tackle the difficult challenge of balancing our budget, we must not and cannot succumb to the idea that Vermonters have the capacity to pay higher taxes right now. In order to grow jobs and be more competitive with neighboring states, we must resist the temptation to raise broad-based taxes.

I am the first to acknowledge that this action plan is ambitious, and I have not mentioned many of my administration’s other priorities: reducing recidivism for non-violent offenders; rebuilding our roads and bridges; reforming our campaign finance laws; and making government more transparent. You will be hearing more about these and other initiatives in the near future.

Our obstacles are many, and our challenges are daunting. The change we are proposing this afternoon is transformative and systemic. It will not happen quickly or easily. Yet as I stand here today to begin a new era of government in Vermont, I remember Claire Oglesby and the many Vermonters who embody her belief that we can overcome adversity with courage and creativity.

Vermonters are a rugged people with an abundance of spirit and toughness.

Each day is another day in which we can excel.

We must intensify our individual efforts to nurture the health and well being of our state and its people.

Together we can be bold.

Together we must be bold.

Let’s begin now.

Thank you."

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**Farewell Address of Governor James Douglas**

January 5, 2011

*“Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, distinguished guests, my fellow Vermonters:*

“Thirty-eight years ago, in this very chamber, I was sworn in as the new member from Middlebury – humbled by the confidence of voters, motivated to represent my community and inspired to strengthen Vermont. Over the years I have been blessed to serve the people of this great state in different ways – and in different eras – culminating with the honor, and profound responsibility, of the governorship.

“When I contemplated running for governor in 2001, I outlined my reasons for wanting to serve in this office. I wrote then:

““I love Vermont… I want every Vermonter to reach his or her highest potential. I want every child to begin life in good health, with a loving family, and eager to learn. I want every young Vermonter to be able to access a higher education and to secure meaningful and rewarding work. I want families to be able to afford a home and ultimately to enjoy retirement in comfort and dignity….”

“I carried this piece of paper with me every day. This vision was at the center of every discussion, every proposal and every decision. My inspiration never changed. My motivation never wavered.

“We are blessed with the finest system of self-governance the world has known, one that requires leaders who value actions more than words, who can be bold but humble, and speak plainly the truth; leaders who have passion and patience, resilience and restraint; and, above all else, leaders who are unwavering in their commitment to the people they serve.

“It is our great responsibility to devote ourselves to service so that we may build a better future for the next generation. That is what I have tried to do.

“As I reflect on the last eight years, I am proud of the progress we made in health care, for the safety of our communities, for our natural environment, for our economy and in our fiscal strength. I am proud that we ensured that access to government is not a privilege, but a right for all people. But most of all, I am proud of the improvements we made in the lives and well-being of the people of Vermont. After all, that is why we serve.

“But the work of democracy – our role in the constant cultivation of an ever more perfect union – is never done. Tomorrow, my service as your governor will end. I will return to private life, handing the reins to a new administration that will take up the responsibility of protecting and advancing the goals we share. On behalf of all Vermonters, Governor-Elect Shumlin, I wish you and your team the very best.

“For four consecutive years, Vermont has been ranked the healthiest state in the union. We achieved real results by getting to the root cause of illness. Our approach has set us apart and has become the model that others, including the federal government, would look to as they sought improved access to health care in America.

“We understood that making health care more affordable means the most important issue is not “who pays,” but “how much we pay.” A patient-centered approach that focuses on chronic conditions, wellness, and greater utilization of technology has been at the heart of our Blueprint for Health. This is the same formula we used to save Medicaid with Global Commitment. And it was with the same principles – and with a sincere commitment to bipartisanship – that we enacted cutting-edge reforms in 2006 resulting in Catamount Health and Green Mountain Care.

“Today, Vermont enjoys one of the lowest percentages of uninsured residents of any state and we are the best positioned to adapt to ongoing federal reforms.

“Vermonters can be proud of the national leadership we have demonstrated on this critical social, economic and fiscal challenge – but there will always be more to do. Vermont’s ground-breaking approach holds the greatest promise for reducing costs, increasing quality and providing universal access.

 “Providing for the protection of the people is a fundamental obligation of government. We lived up to that commitment and made our communities safer from drugs and violent criminals.

“We created the DETER program – Vermont’s first comprehensive and coordinated commitment to combating drugs. We invested in education and prevention, expanded treatment and rehabilitation, and significantly increased penalties for those who seek to poison our children for profit.

“In the last eight years, we passed sweeping sex offender legislation, stepped up efforts to end child abuse and domestic violence, and confronted the insidious effects of bullying.

“We strengthened law enforcement by putting more troopers on the road and placing special investigation units in all regions of our state to combat sex crimes.

“At the same time we reformed our system of corrections, ensuring that those who are threats to society have the proper supervision, while others who can be given a second chance have the best opportunity to succeed.

“As a result, crime rates have declined, we have turned the tide on the growth of our inmate population and Vermont is consistently ranked one of the safest places in the nation.

“I want to thank those in the Legislature and in our law enforcement community who have worked closely with me on these critical issues. We have always put the safety of Vermonters first.

“There are few places in the world that match Vermont’s natural beauty. No matter how long you have lived here, you can never get over the excitement of winter’s first snow, the sight of sugaring in spring, the summer

smell of newly-mown hay or the stunning colors of a brilliant fall. Indeed, this is a special place.

“In the last eight years, we not only upheld our state’s environmental traditions – we strengthened them in realistic and responsible ways. We pursued “The Vermont Way,” recognizing the codependence of our

environment and our economy.

“Today, we are at the forefront of energy efficiency and renewable energy policy. And we took a strong leadership position in addressing climate change through efforts like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and tough automobile emission standards.

“Our commitment to preserving Vermont’s outdoor traditions has resulted in the improved health and size of our big game populations and thriving fisheries. We prioritized the active management of state forest land and

revitalized Vermont’s state park system. We invested unprecedented resources in the health of Lake Champlain and our network of rivers and streams.

“Vermont is known the world over for its green ethic. Because of our efforts and the efforts of those who have come before, we are ranked repeatedly as the greenest state in the nation – a distinction we expect and

deserve.

“I can’t remember a day on the road when I didn’t hear concerns about the economy and the burden of taxation from the people of our state. Small business owners would tell of how high heating and electricity costs threaten their livelihoods. Homebuilders spoke of the need for permit reform and young entrepreneurs expressed their frustration at the lack of access to the capital necessary to make their dreams a reality. And I will never forget the stories from mothers and fathers struggling to get by on one income or reduced wages, having to make sacrifices to weather the economic storm.

“Over the last eight years we fought back against two global recessions, including the deepest downturn since the Great Depression. We did that with fiscal discipline and innovative economic development strategies to encourage employers to expand here and others to locate here. We renewed our commitment to our traditional industries by helping those who keep our working landscapes working. We leveraged our natural gifts in support of our tourism economy and helped Vermont businesses realize greater access to emerging foreign markets. We took steps to make our permitting system more predictable and our tax policies more competitive.

“Vermont’s brand of quality, our deserved reputation for a well-educated workforce and our commitment to environmental excellence make this a great place to start or grow a business.

“But to compete in today’s globally connected economy we must continue to fortify our foundations of growth, as we have. With the help of the Road to Affordability, our transportation system is better maintained and funded. Together, we embarked on an ambitious plan to connect every resident with the tools of the 21st century. Young Vermonters now have a better chance to compete and succeed thanks to new investments in scholarships and workforce training. And we secured a large portion of our energy future from a renewable, reliable and affordable source.

“By advancing pro-growth job creation policies, Vermont has fared better than most states. Our unemployment rate is among the lowest in the nation and our economy is considered one of the most resilient.

“Our ability to prosper is also a function of our fiscal management. We spent within our means, replenished and protected our stabilization reserves, and improved the effectiveness and efficiency of government. Even as the Great Recession squeezed revenues, we protected the most vulnerable and reformed programs to help those who haven fallen on hard times realize a path back to self-sufficiency and independence.

“When people look to Vermont they see a greater degree of certainty in our public finances than elsewhere. They see a history of responsible spending and prudent management of public funds. Our bond ratings are among the highest and Vermont is recognized as one of the best managed states.

“From groundbreaking health care reforms to our unprecedented efforts to clean up our waterways, we have achieved so much in the last eight years because of – not in spite of – our rock-solid commitment to fiscal discipline.

By closely managing the state’s finances, pushing necessary reforms and working to ease the burden of taxation, we have been able to advance responsible initiatives for the betterment of all Vermonters. Without that

commitment, hard-won progress will be easily lost. “So as the dark clouds of recession start to break, I’m proud of all that we have done to lead our state forward to a new era of prosperity.

“But success is not rankings, initiatives and legislative accomplishments alone. Indeed, our plans will evolve and change; new technologies and new ideas will allow for new opportunities; and unforeseen challenges will emerge. But what endures – the legacy that is left – is found in the lives and stories of the people of this great state.

“It is found in the story of a mother who, because of our Choices for Care program, can now care for her daughter at home. It is found in the story of a high school graduate who was able to pay for college with the help of a Next Generation Scholarship.

“It is found in the story of a woman who gained control of her chronic illness because of our Blueprint for Health.

“It is found in the story of a small business owner who, aided by the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive, is providing jobs to fellow Vermonters.

“It is found in the story that fortunately does not have to be told because a young Vermonter made the right choice when confronted with drugs.

“And this legacy is found in the stories of the Green Mountain Boys, and all Vermonters serving in our armed services who have volunteered to stand in harm’s way on battlefields around the world, and in our sorrow for those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

“It is these stories and countless others like them that have inspired me to work as hard as I could, every day.

“Serving as governor of Vermont has been an honor unmatched in my life. My will to lead, the courage to do what is right, and the determination to fight for those who do not have a voice is renewed from the strength of Vermonters I’ve met along the way.

“This job was not one that I could do alone – no one can. I am deeply grateful to all who helped. Finding the right words to properly acknowledge the contributions of so many is difficult, if not impossible – but I would be

remiss if I did not try.

“To our elected leadership at every level, from school boards to the State House, public service is a noble endeavor and I commend you for your willingness to serve and thank you for your dedication to our state. Through

every debate – no matter how contentious – I sought to uphold our tradition of dignified civil discourse, to bring people together around shared goals and, when differences could not be bridged, never faulted others for sincerely held convictions. In a time of searing political rhetoric on the national stage, the way we conduct our public business here in Vermont is something of which we can be very proud.

“To my cabinet and staff, my deep gratitude for answering my call to service and fulfilling your obligations with the highest degree of professionalism and dedication. Your hard work, ideas and counsel have been

indispensable.

“To Lt. Governor Dubie, your leadership in the areas of foreign trade, energy, economic development and so many others was critical to Vermont’s progress. Your friendship means so much to me and I am grateful to have had you at my side these last eight years. Thank you for your service to our state.

“To my family, this journey would not have been possible without your love and support. To Dorothy, in particular, you have been an unwavering partner and I couldn’t have asked for more. Thank you.

“For over thirty-eight years, I’ve focused all of my energies on a singular purpose – to make Vermont a better place. Across thousands of miles, through bright morning dawns and days that stretched to night, though sometimes weary, I never lost faith in the promise of Vermont. And as the long arc of my career draws close, I look back and know with all certainty that our state and her people have been most worthy of a life’s work.

“In the years to come, as I pass over the high gaps of the Green Mountains and take in the full breadth of Vermont – from its clear flowing waters up to its majestic crowns – I will be forever thankful for this land we call home.

“Thank you, my fellow Vermonters, for the unparalleled opportunity to serve as your governor. Public service is a privilege and the faith you have placed in me is humbling.

“May God bless you all and the great state of Vermont.”