

March 02, 2014

Hello all,

I'm home for Town Meeting week and looking forward to seeing many of you at Town Meetings Monday evening and at the polls Tuesday. Here's when and where.

**Pownal's** school meeting is March 3 at 7pm, the town meeting at 7:30 at the Pownal Elementary School with voting on March 4 from 7am to 7pm at the Pownal Center Firehouse.

**Woodford's** school and town meeting is March 3 at 7:30pm at the Woodford Town Building with balloting on March 4 from 8am to 7pm at the Woodford Town Building.

I plan to start at Pownal's meeting then drive to Woodford for the opening of that meeting then return to Pownal for the end of the evening. On Tuesday I will be in Pownal at the polls in the morning with some time in Woodford around 1PM before returning to Pownal. I hope to see you. I'm sure town officials, school board members and candidates would greatly appreciate your voting.

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I received the following announcement from Wendy Hopkins on behalf of the Pownal Historical Society. I hope you will participate.

**Call for Pownal Art, Artists and Artisans – PRESENT AND PAST**

The Pownal Historical Society (PHS) is searching for artists, artisans, and craftspeople who have fine art, photography, weaving, tapestry, pottery, folk art, or other works produced in, or depicting Pownal Vermont. This includes the works of all artists and artisans, both living and deceased.

The artwork, along with artist bios, is to be included in a special project this year documenting Pownal art. With permission of the artists, their work, shown digitally, will also be part of PHS's program at the Vermont History Expo in Tunbridge, Vermont, this June. The theme is **Artists & Artisans: *Vermont's Creative Heritage***.

In addition, all local artists are requested to join us to display their work, or photographic or digital images of their work, at the Society's Annual Meeting on Sunday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2014, at 2 pm, at the Solomon Wright Library, 97 Main St.

**Please respond by March 21<sup>st</sup> to let us know your interest.**

Contact: W.A. Klinger 802-823-5197, or Wendy Hopkins [whopkins1@gmail.com](mailto:whopkins1@gmail.com) to reserve space for your art.

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Here's my list of bills with a short description that we voted through the House this week.

#### **H.275 An act relating to unemployment insurance benefits for military spouses**

This bill would allow a spouse of military personnel to receive unemployment insurance benefits if they had to leave their job to follow the spouse to another location. The impacts to the unemployment trust fund are expected to be negligible and Vermont will join 45 other states in offering this benefit.

#### **H. 589 An act relating to hunting, fishing, and trapping**

This bill makes a number of noncontroversial changes to hunting laws such as permitting for captive hunt facilities, qualifying veterans with 60% instead of 100% disability for a free hunting license, letting the fish and wildlife board set migratory game limits, clarifying the shooting across highways provision on class 4 roads, authorizing three new conservation plates to support Vermont's conservation camps, permitting certain bird feather collection for scientific and cultural purposes, and declaring that "The State Fly-Fishing Fly shall be the Governor Aiken bucktail streamer."

#### **H. 863 An act relating to a Public Records Act exemption for the identity of whistleblowers**

Currently state whistleblowers are not offered anonymity. This bill would allow their names to be exempt from public records. This is a best practice in auditing procedures.

**S. 317 An act relating to repealing the unconstitutional Vermont statutes related to the performance of abortions**

This bill repeals some old and unconstitutional laws and was non-controversial.

**H.R. 14 House resolution relating to federal regulation of the propane market**

The House passed the following resolution in response to this year's large and rapid increases in propane pricing.

Whereas, propane serves a critical role in fulfilling Vermont's energy and heating needs, and

Whereas, 15 percent of Vermonters depend on propane as the primary heating fuel for their homes, and

Whereas, the propane market is largely unregulated by the federal government which allows for rapid and extreme fluctuations in the market-regulated propane prices and unbridled exports because propane exports are not subject to federal oversight in the same fashion as oil and natural gas exports; this has greatly driven up domestic propane prices because domestic users of propane must now compete with the highest bidders in the global market, and

Whereas, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's Heating Oil and Propane Update dated February 12, 2014, the price of residential propane has increased by more than \$1.40 per gallon, an increase of 62 percent in the time between October 2013 and February 2014, and

Whereas, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's Heating Oil and Propane Update dated February 12, 2014, the price of residential propane is \$1.45 per gallon higher, or an increase of 63 percent from what it was in February 2013, and

Whereas, the TEPPCO pipeline, which until 2013 provided the Northeast United States with up to 44 percent of its propane needs from a propane source in Texas, is no longer available for this purpose. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission granted permission to the owner of the pipeline to reverse the flow of this pipeline to transfer natural gas from North to South for export from the Gulf of Mexico. Some of the resulting shortage is being made up by sea shipments of expensive propane from Norway and Algeria. Further, more supply and pricing pressure is likely as Kinder Morgan, Inc. implements its plans to reverse the flow of the Cochin pipeline in July

2014, cutting off Canadian supplies of propane to the Midwest so natural gas can be exported by pipeline to Canada, and

Whereas, the market is not effectively managing wholesale pricing of propane, which has increased by 112 percent from October 2013 to February 2014. This leads to decreased profit margins for propane retailers and to much higher prices for end consumers, and

Whereas, the United States now exports much more propane than it imports according to EIA report dated February 12, 2014. In January 2014, the United States exported 366,000 bbls/day compared with 138,000 bbls/day in January 2013. This is being accomplished using infrastructure historically available to the domestic market and represents an increase of 228,000 bbls/day or 165 percent. In January 2014, the United States imported 140,000 bbls/day compared with 150,000 bbls/day in January 2013, now therefore be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives: That this legislative body finds the market of propane to be unsuited to market-based regulation and requests that federal regulation of propane exports and distribution be instituted such that the propane shipment infrastructure, including the TEPPCO and Cochin pipelines and other supporting infrastructure, is restructured to resemble the configuration existing before the modifications beginning in May 2013. Federal control of the propane market should be implemented regardless of the impact it may have on exports. If it can be shown to the satisfaction of the Secretary of Commerce and the Commissioner of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that unbridled exports can be resumed without negatively impacting supply or pricing to the domestic market, exports of propane should be permitted to resume, and be it further

Resolved: That this legislative body respectfully requests the President of the United States, the U.S. Congress, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to enact laws to control pricing and force transparency of the propane industry, and be it further

Resolved: That the Clerk of the House be directed to send a copy of this resolution to President Barack Obama, the Vermont Congressional Delegation, Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker, and Acting Chairman Cheryl LaFleur of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

H.R. 15 House resolution commemorating the Battle of the Wilderness

We also passed the following resolution commemorating one of the most significant battles of the Civil War where Vermont's actions were critical to success.

Whereas, the Battle of the Wilderness, the first battle of Ulysses Grant's Overland Campaign, was fought 150 years ago, May 5–7, 1864, in an area of northern Virginia known locally as the Wilderness, and

Whereas, the First Vermont Brigade was part of George Washington Getty's Sixth Corps Division of the Army of the Potomac, and

Whereas, Getty's Division at midday on May 5, 1864, was ordered to defend the strategically vital intersection of Brock and Orange Plank roads, and

Whereas, the Vermont Brigade held the left flank of the Division's line which was ordered to advance at 4:00 p.m., and

Whereas, on entering the densely wooded Wilderness, the Brigade, although ripped by heavy Confederate volleys, held its position until darkness, suffering 1,000 casualties, and

Whereas, the Vermont Brigade attacked again on May 6, bringing its two-day casualty total to 1,234, and

Whereas, the intersection of Brock and Orange Plank roads was held, and the Army of the Potomac was able to continue the Overland Campaign that would place a death grip on Petersburg and lead ultimately to a Union Victory in the Civil War, and

Whereas, at the Battle of the Wilderness, Vermont suffered, by far, its greatest number of casualties in a single Civil War battle, and

Whereas, a monument stands on the hallowed ground where the Vermonters fought, a site now preserved as part of The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, now therefore be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives That this legislative body commemorates the Battle of the Wilderness and the bravery of the Vermonters who fought to defend the Union and defeat slavery, and be it further

Resolved: That this legislative body requests that on May 5, 2014, at 4:00 p.m., bells throughout Vermont be tolled for ten minutes in honor of the First Vermont Brigade's heroic stand at the Wilderness, and be it further

Resolved: That this legislative body requests that a wreath bearing the Freedom and Unity Seal of the State of Vermont be placed at the Vermont Brigade Monument on the Wilderness Battlefield at 4:00 p.m. on May 5, 2014, and be it further

Resolved: That this legislative body requests that its members inform their assembled town meetings of this resolution, and be it further

Resolved : That the Clerk of the House be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission and the Vermont Historical Society.

#### **H. 217 An act relating to smoking in partially enclosed structures, lodging establishments, and state lands**

This bill makes it clear that it is inappropriate and unlawful to smoke in a number of places where second hand smoke can injury others such as hospitals, lodging facilities, child care facilities, in cars with children present, and close to state buildings. The bill passed on a 100 to 35 roll call vote and I voted yes.

#### **H. 497 An act relating to the open meeting law**

The bill clarifies several aspects of open meeting law including electronic meetings and the appropriate use of executive session.

#### **H. 602 An act relating to municipal budget committees**

A number of communities have enlisted citizens with interest and expertise in preparing municipal budgets. This bill clarifies their appointment as unelected or as elected officials.

#### **H. 864 An act relating to capital construction and State bonding budget adjustment**

The annual capital budget bill is now on a two year cycle. In the second year modest adjustments are proposed. This year's proposal was non-controversial and included the regular payment of the state's interest on the Pownal Waste Water project. The bill also authorized construction of a state lab combining The Agency of Agriculture and the Agency of Natural Resources labs. Both were compromised in Irene flooding.

#### **H. 227 An act relating to licensing and regulating property inspectors**

This bill makes sure that those who inspect buildings for health and safety are properly credentialed. It defines the "Practice of property inspecting" as performing or offering to perform services involving the physical inspection of real property structures and other improvements for a fee or other compensation in order to evaluate the condition of the property, including any safety issues or material defects.

#### **H. 631 An act relating to lottery commissions**

This bill would allow a store that sold a winning lottery ticket to keep the commission even if no one claimed the prize.

**H. 683 An act relating to the income tax checkoff for Vermont Green Up**

This bill which I co-sponsored will help make the Vermont institution of Green Up sustainable by allowing supporters to make a dollar contribution through an income tax form check off.

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In another email I will send you my Town Meeting summary of the session so far. Look forward to seeing you at Town Meeting!

Stay in touch,

Bill

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