

Vermont Libertarian Platform of 2008

Vermont Libertarians believe in individual liberty, strong and responsible local communities, limited government under the watchful eye of local citizens, accountability of public officials to the electorate, restraint in taxing and spending, the protection of the human right of private property ownership, economic vitality and growth through competitive free enterprise, the importance of a strong educational system, protection of our environment, the preservation of agriculture, compassionate and dignified assistance for those unable to provide for their own needs, equal protection of the laws, mutual aid, and voluntary service to the community; and that, in the words of the Vermont Constitution, "a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles, and a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality are absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty, and keep government free."

We take our stand on the following platform, upon which we appeal for the support of the free men and women of the state in the 2008 legislative and gubernatorial election:

1. ECONOMY: We believe in competitive free enterprise as the source of wealth for our people, jobs for our labor force, and the tax base necessary to support the legitimate demands of government. Confusing regulations and prolonged and often arbitrary enforcement has weakened the economic competitiveness of Vermont businesses. We will identify regulations that are outdated and unnecessary, and secure their repeal. We will identify regulations that ought to be rewritten, and we will rewrite them so they are strict in protecting consumers, business, our communities, and our environment, but certain in their requirements, reasonable in their demands, and swift and fair in their application. We will adopt a regulator accountability act, by which one fifth of House or Senate can require that the legislature vote up or down on agency regulations on the record. We will reform worker's compensation to be more competitive for employers and employees to form a mutual, fair contract between the employer and employee. We will remove local and state barriers slowing deployment of rural high-speed Internet.

2. TAXATION: We will stop the growth of state government and permanently cap the income tax rate at 2008 levels, rollback the sales tax rate to 5 percent, and cap rooms and meals tax at 9 percent. We will work to reduce the state income tax rate as state spending is controlled. We will oppose local income taxes or the inclusion of services in the sales tax. We will replace general taxes with user fees where possible so users of services are paying for those services. We will cap the statewide property tax at 2008 levels for taxpayers without children in the government run schools. We will adopt a Taxpayer's Bill of Rights to limit the growth of government to the rate of inflation, and to require a voter referendum to raise any tax.

3. STATE GOVERNMENT: We will reduce the number of state employees and improve the sensitivities of those remaining so that service to the public comes first. We should pay our public servants a competitive wage, but expect solid performance. We will begin the process of privatizing appropriate state government services, with clear standards for performance and with opportunity for state employees to compete for contracts. We will give the Governor a line item veto.

4. PROPERTY RIGHTS: We will protect the human right of private property ownership against government regulation, confiscation and eminent domain. We will enact an inverse condemnation law allowing landowners to require government to take their property and pay them its fair market value when that government has significantly diminished its value through regulation. We support the property rights of farmers to grow any crop they wish. We support the use of safe, clean, non-soil based and alternative waste disposal systems for property owners.

5. EDUCATION: Educating our children ought to be the primary concern of the family and the local community. We will diminish the control of the state department of education and restore authority over our public schools to parents and local school boards. We will enact legislation to free local school boards to run their schools as they see fit, so long as they remain effectively accountable to parents for the results. We will eliminate costly and unproductive state mandates that have driven up the cost of local schools. We will oppose federal mandates such as "No Child Left Behind". We will enact legislation giving the voters a greater chance to control public school expenditures through budget votes. We will protect independent schools, religious schools, home schooling, and the right of parents in tuition towns to send their children to the approved schools of their choice. We will move toward greater parental choice in education, including the choice of non-public schools. We will enact legislation to give parents greater financial responsibility for their children's

education. We will loosen regulations to allow new, smaller, and more cost-effective schools to be created. We will make teacher certification optional.

6. LEGISLATURE: We will adopt a constitutional amendment to terminate annual legislative sessions on or before April 30. We will oppose any efforts to provide taxpayer-financed health benefits, retirement benefits, or expense accounts to legislators. We will require an open roll call vote for election of the Speaker of the House and all floor votes on spending, taxing, and regulating. We will enact a citizen initiative law, proportional representation, and instant runoff voting to give all voters more voice. We support a permanent statute review committee to recommend changes to the legislature to bring statutes in conformance with plain language.

7. CRIME: We will repeal all consensual crime laws to focus police resources on crimes to property and persons. To ease the strain on our overcrowded prison and law enforcement systems, we support greater use of restorative justice and diversion programs, and we propose amnesty for all convicted non-violent drug offenders.

8. HEALTH CARE: We believe health care should be affordable and available to all Vermonters. We believe health care decisions are between patient and doctor, not patient, doctor and legislature. We will enact a comprehensive health care reform including reductions of costly state-imposed insurance mandates, reduction of underpayment to providers for Medicaid patients, tax fairness for the self employed and those not covered by employer plans, elimination of mandated cost-shifting from young to old, allowance of presently forbidden healthy lifestyle insurance discounts, and conversion of Medicaid to Health Savings Account based insurance plan. We will oppose government-run single payer health care, price controls, global budgeting, mandates on employers to pay for coverage, and forced membership in purchasing alliances. We support allowing Vermonters to buy Rx drugs from other countries, and health insurance from other states. We will expand the medical marijuana law. We support passage of the Death with Dignity Act to give terminally ill patients control over their end of life decisions.

9. ACT 250: We will eliminate the subjective criteria of Act 250. We will change the requirement of conformance with local and regional plans to conformance with adopted zoning bylaws. We will create a statutory presumption that a local government permit is binding on district commissions.

10. ENERGY: We will support the erecting of windmills and other alternative energy sources on private land. We will enact legislation to let electrical suppliers give consumers choices in what type of energy (wind, hydro, nuclear) they want to purchase. We will make funding of Efficiency Vermont an opt-in charge on the electric bill instead of a mandatory charge. We will return the proceeds of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative sale of carbon dioxide emissions tickets to Vermont's electric ratepayers.

11. WELFARE: We will make greater use of community groups in assisting welfare-eligible people to become self-sufficient. We will enact legislation requiring all able-bodied welfare recipients, other than mothers of children under two, to accept public or private work within one month of eligibility. We will conduct a thorough investigation of the practices and policies of the Department of Children and Families (SRS).

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT: We will refuse to enact any additional unfunded state mandates on the towns, and will begin a process to reduce existing mandates.

13. TRANSPORTATION: Vermont's highways and bridges are in serious need of maintenance and improvement. We will refuse to rob the Transportation Fund to support unrelated General Fund expenditures.

14. ENVIRONMENT: Vermont's environment is one of our greatest resources. We will instruct the courts to apply trespass law to those who directly harm others with pollution, providing remedies to harmed individuals who are currently without recourse personally. We will seek a federal exemption so individuals can plant hemp as a barrier crop to reduce the amount of pollution reaching streams and rivers, to support agricultural diversity, and greater economic opportunities.

15. LIBERTY: We will protect and defend the rights confirmed for all Vermonters in the Vermont Bill of Rights. We affirm the right of Vermont to secede. We will resolutely oppose any infringement on the constitutional right to bear arms. We will pass up every opportunity to tell peaceable, independent Vermonters how to live their lives.