

House Democratic Caucus Messaging Framework and Talking Points

VISION STATEMENT:

We want a Vermont that works for all of us, not just the wealthy. A Vermont where our families and communities can thrive and where the Vermont dream is accessible to everyone - not just a select few. When we rewrite the rules so that families can care for and support themselves, we boost the economy and build stronger, healthier communities. Every Vermonter should have the opportunity to earn a livable wage, receive high-quality affordable health care, get a great education, and retire with security. Every Vermonter should get a fair shot, contribute their fair share, and play by the same set of rules.

Core Value: An Economy that Works for All Vermonters, not just the wealthy few.

Today, too many Vermonters struggle to care for and support themselves and their families. Making paid family leave part of every job, gradually raising the minimum wage and ensuring equal pay for women improves the lives of Vermont's working families, puts more money into Vermont's small businesses and helps our communities to thrive.

Examples of Legislation:

- **Paid Family & Medical Leave** – Working Vermonters should have the security of being able to welcome a new child or care for a sick family member without fear of losing income or being fired. No family in Vermont should have to choose between a paycheck and the health of their child or the well-being of an elderly parent.
- **Gradually increasing the minimum wage** –By gradually raising the minimum wage in Vermont to \$15 an hour, so families can meet the basics, their spending will boost Main Street, create jobs and help Vermont communities to thrive.
- **Equal Pay**- We are breaking down barriers to ensure that women get paid the same as men for equal work.
- **Workforce Development**-We continue to increase access to training, career and tech education so every Vermonter has a fair shot.

Core Value: Strong Schools Strong Future

Our public schools are the bedrock of our Vermont communities and provide our children the opportunity to reach their potential and succeed in life. With the additional demands placed on our schools from addiction, mental illness, and poverty, great public schools in our communities are more important than ever in giving all children a fair shot at a bright future.

Examples of Legislation:

- **Education funding** – It's been nearly two decades since Vermont rethought how we fund our schools. It's time to find a new solution upholds our support for great public schools, with local accountability and with all Vermonters contributing their fair share, including the wealthiest.
- **Special education** – It's time we create a Special Education system that is more effective and uses our resources wisely. By giving schools more flexibility they can focus on student needs without having to worry if a service is eligible for reimbursement.
- **Early Childhood education**- We're increasing access to high quality and affordable child care and expanding access to pre-kindergarten for every child

- **Addressing Child Trauma** - We can take action now to prevent the stress and trauma in children's lives that too often leads to drug use and mental health issues.

Core Value: Healthy Families, Healthy Communities

The cost of health insurance and housing are the biggest challenges faced by many Vermonters. Republicans in Washington are dismantling the Affordable Care Act and cutting funding for Medicare and Medicaid. Making health insurance more affordable and ensuring Vermonters have access to treatment without barriers for drug addiction and mental health is critical. All Vermonters should be able to afford to rent, buy, and own a home.

Examples of Legislation:

- **Resources for opiate addiction and mental health** – We will prioritize funding to ensure that every Vermonter suffering from addiction or mental illness gets timely treatment.
- **Defending the Affordable Care Act** – As Republicans in Washington try to dismantle the ACA and disrupt health insurance markets driving premiums up, we will fight to make health insurance affordable for working families and children.
- **Health care based on our health** – We will insist on getting value for our health care dollars, with common sense measures that pay hospitals and doctors for how well they take care of patients, instead of for performing more procedures and tests.
- **Access to safe and affordable housing**-We'll fight to fund programs that protect and create safe and affordable housing for working families and vulnerable seniors.

Core Value: Healthy Environment

Vermont is one of the cleanest, most environmentally pristine states in our country. Our environment, and the health and economic benefits it provides, is under threat from long ignored pollution to our streams and lakes and from climate change. Clean, renewable energy will safeguard the health and futures of our families and communities. Weaning our economy off fossil fuels and generating more of Vermont's energy locally not only addresses climate change, it strengthens our economy by keeping our energy dollars in-state.

Examples of Legislation:

- **Support for Weatherization**-We will prioritize funding to make our homes and buildings more energy efficient.
- **Cleaning up our water**- We can't kick the can down the road, especially when it comes to cleaning up our lakes and streams. We will take action to secure a long term plan because our drinking water, tourist economy, property values, and quality of life depend on it.
- **Strengthen Vermont's Energy Efficiency Standards**-While federal legislation is moving backwards on efficiency we will strengthen and expand standards so that our appliances and homes save electricity and money.