

## Town Meeting Update

Representative Kevin C. Winter (R- Ludlow, Mount Holly & Shrewsbury)

As Pattie McCoy, our Minority Leader stated “Vermonters deserve to be able to live, work, raise a family, and retire here without facing an affordability crisis. I am committed to working with Governor Scott and my colleagues on both sides of the isle to make Vermont more affordable and the best place to live.”

Overview: The first half of the 2026 legislative session has been busy, with roughly 400 bills filed in the House of Representatives alone. Governor Scott delivered his state of the state address and budget recommendations. He focused on the need for education reform to stop property taxes from skyrocketing and a general fund budget that lives within our means. I am supportive of the Governor's efforts! As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback on any issues we are grappling with but can make NO promises because the issues are very complex and compromises is hard to find as we are in the minority.

### Legislative Priorities:

**Education Reform:** Since the 1990s, Vermont has lost roughly 30,000 students, yet our education structure remains unchanged – with massive overhead, redundant bureaucracy, and inequities across towns. The latest report card from the Agency of Education shows that student performance in Vermont is declining even though our costs are amongst the highest in USA. Our students deserve an education system built for their future – one that puts outcomes first, not the goals of special interests or status quo. I remain committed to working with Governor Scott to put our kids first.

**Property Taxes:** In 2023 and 2024, the average Vermonter faced back-to-back double-digit property tax increases. This is unaffordable, unsustainable, and unacceptable – which is why many Vermonters went to the polls in 2024 to help restore balance in Montpelier. Rest assured that your trust is paying off. Last year, the average property tax increase approved by the Legislature was just 1%, compared to 13.8% the year prior. We also passed a bipartisan education finance reform package that requires the Legislature to continue to work this year on finding a long-term solutions to pay for education in Vermont. I realize that savings have yet to show up in our property tax bills, but our work has just begun.

**Affordability:** This year, numerous piece of legislation have been introduced to lower cost of living in Vermont, including: stabilizing our health insurance market to lower premiums easing red tape for housing to lower cost; further reducing taxes for all vulnerable populations like retirees living on fixed incomes; and much more. I am supportive of any and all efforts too make Vermont a more affordable place to live, work, raise a family and retire. A root cause challenge is to find substantive ways to attract and retain productive tax paying families. There are a handful of bills I would like to see brought to the floor to be debated and hopefully passed :

H.585 lower health care cost by offering low-cost insurance coverage options

H.602 Ease housing “red tape” by simplifying housing rules to increase supply

H.721 increase public safety by changing court system (e.g. to restricting sentence reductions for repeat felony offender and probation violators)

H.754 establish a repeat offender statute permitting state to seek stricter penalties

H.759 repeal several tax types and replace with a flat income tax

H.767 “pause” multiple climate-change related laws for 8 years

*H.769 reduce legal risks for parents that allow their children to engage in safe activities without supervision*

*H.774 cap education property tax rates for 2027 thru 2029, at 2026 levels*

*H.778 require the Division Of Emergency Mgt. to develop a plan for each dam that puts 100+ people in significant harms way*

*H.780 establish minimum sentences of incarceration for retail theft and drug trafficking*

*H.842 improve the composition of members of the Commission on Public School Employee Health Board*

*H.900 exempt all social security benefits from Vermont personal income tax*

*S.300 require hospital screenings for fentanyl as part of drug screening for diagnosing patient’s condition*

*S.303 amend requirements on the three-acre stormwater discharge permit*

*S.304 declare public policy to encourage sharing of parental rights for the good of the children*

*Most, probably none, of these bills will even get to the floor for debate or a vote because the GOP is still not in the majority. So if you want MORE balance in our legislative activities we need to elect more common sense conservatives to serve in Montpelier this coming November.*

*It’s an honor to serve you in Montpelier and I will continue to look for ways to work with any one willing to to make Vermont safer and more affordable so that we can attract productive families who want to enjoy and keep Vermont beautiful.*

*May God bless you and may God bless America,*

*Regards,*

*Kevin C. Winter*

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*802-245-4190 ( calls or texts are welcome/preferred)*