Tom's Newsletter for June 4, 2026: Issues Overview

On This Date in History:

On this date in 1919, the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote, was passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification. With support from both Republicans and Democrats, it was quickly ratified.

Greetings from Elm Street!

After some uneven and unpredictable weather (Welcome to Vermont!), it looks like we may be enjoying warm weather for a while! The plants in my garden are doing well and it's time to get back to the business of the day.

Tom is now officially the Democratic Candidate for the Bennington-5 District, along with Mike Nigro. We hope to fill both Bennington-5 seats and provide a solid voice in the legislature for Pownal and Bennington. You'll be hearing a lot more from me from here on.

Challenges Facing Vermont

Here are the top 4 issues on my list. Each of them will require a serious investment of time and capital if we are going to reach our goal of making Vermont the welcoming, affordable place we need it to be. I selected these based on my own observations and conversations I have had with people in Bennington and Pownal. I encourage you to send me your thoughts on these and other issues. I can't represent you if I don't know what you think and what you want.

In future newsletters I'll have more to say about each of these, and your input will influence what I say both here, on the campaign trail, and in Montpelier once I am elected.

1. **Healthcare Cost and Availability:** Vermont has some of the most expensive healthcare in the United States. Those costs are across the board, from the cost of Health Insurance to the costs of all aspects of health care. The cost of health insurance is in part related to two factors: the small population of our State, and the large number of uninsured. Both of these mean that the risk for insurers

relative to the pool of insured is high. High risk equals high cost: fewer people paying into health insurance means larger insurance premiums are required to pay the medical bills incurred by those covered. The Cost of Health Care stems in part from the shortage of health-care providers, especially in Primary Care. Without a primary care provider, many people are forced to use emergency services when they become ill, and those services have a much higher cost than the preventive care from a primary care provider. That care may have prevented their illness in the first place. All of this, of course, is in addition to the increasingly high cost of prescription drugs and specialist procedures.

Worse still, the high cost of medical care and health insurance contributes to the cost of goods and services in general. That's because our system of employer-provided health insurance means that those employers, whether they are companies or State and local governments, must pay for employee health insurance in order to attract workers. If health care costs continue to rise, both our costs and our taxes will go up to cover those increased costs.

2. Energy Costs: This is another cost that contributes to increased costs on goods and services, as well as direct increases in the form of higher electric bills, increased heating costs, and the high cost of filling the gas tank in your car. The causes of high energy costs are clear: disruptions in energy supply lines can spike prices with lasting consequences. Lack of investment in energy infrastructure will lead to both increased costs as demand rises and interruptions in service. The price of everything we buy increases in lockstep with energy prices, since providing goods and services involves transportation, heating and cooling stores and factories and power to run all of the machinery necessary for a functioning economy.

3. Education: Education spending is a major factor in the high property tax rates in Vermont. As we have seen, healthcare and health insurance costs are a major driver of that cost. Teachers and staff share this burden, as increases in health insurance costs more than offset any wage increases they might receive. We all suffer when there aren't sufficient staff or adequate facilities to educate the next generation of Vermont citizens. Once again, our decreasing population is a factor here: the cost of staff and infrastructure doesn't go down just because we have fewer students in classes. We need to explore solutions, but those decisions need to be driven by local citizens, not by mandates from the State. We need the State to provide leadership, ideas and solutions that can then be implemented to meet local needs.

I Need Your Help:

I can't represent you without knowing what your priorities are. I want this newsletter to be one of the ways we communicate, where you learn what I am thinking and where I learn what you expect from me. Following newsletters will be more in-depth explorations of these and other topics. Let me know which of these issues resonates most with you, and let me know what you think about them. I invite you to contact me at any time with questions, comments or suggestions. I truly believe that we are stronger working together, and that we can have a real impact on the quality of life here in our Great Little State!