

Newsletter for Sep 10, 2026 : Why Are We Doing This?

Today in History:

1776 George Washington asks for a spy, and Nathan Hale volunteers. Good news for George, not so much for Nathan.

I Need Your Help

I'm trying to get postcards sent out to Pownal and Bennington voters. They are printed, but I wanted them hand addressed to be more personal. If you'd like to help with the addressing, come to my Postcard Party at the new Bennington County Democratic Headquarters on Saturday morning at 10:00. The address is 332 Main Street. At the same time you can check out the new space, pick up yard signs for me and other candidates, and get some buttons and literature. You can sign up for the Postcard Party at <https://www.mobilize.us/vtdems/event/1031160/> but feel free to come by even if you can't stay. You can always take some cards with you to address at home. Let's work together to win on November 3rd!

Why Are We Doing This?

It's the question I get asked more often than any other: What made you decide to run for office? I'm guessing that many candidates are asked that question. There are two ways to look at it. The first, and the one that I typically answer, is "What event, goal, aspiration, etc., pushed you to decide to run?" I answer that question honestly: I had been so angry for so long about what was – and still is – going on in Washington, that I had to focus that anger and energy on something productive.

That's a fine answer from a mental health perspective: it surely wasn't healthy for me to be seething and unable to do anything about it. But I suspect that the folks who ask me that question really have something else in mind, a second question: What do you hope to accomplish if elected?

Since I feel like I didn't really address that second question, this week's newsletter is an attempt to do just that.

What Can a Freshman Legislator Really Accomplish?

The short answer to this question is: I am about to find out. I can't, on my own, pass a bill. I can add my vote to legislation that I support. I can have some input into the exact form and content of the bill. I can confer, counter, advocate, inform, cajole, compromise (and urge others to) and possibly influence how others vote. Exactly how all of that happens and, more importantly, how effective I will be throughout that process remains to be seen.

Since I began campaigning, I've had a little preview of my own ability to formulate a position and communicate it to others, including legislators and other candidates for office. For the most part, they have been receptive to my ideas, even if sometimes less than optimistic about turning them into law. It's one thing to have good ideas (which I believe I have) but another to turn them into concrete actions.

But What Do You Think?

We live under a representative democracy. In a true democracy, and our Vermont tradition of town meetings comes close to that, each person would have a chance to express their ideas, defend them to others, and then everyone would vote yea or nay. If your idea had the support of the majority, it would become one of the rules we live by.

In our system, we listen to candidates and they listen to us. Each person has the opportunity to decide which candidate will best represent them and votes accordingly. The candidate with the most votes becomes the legislator (or holder of some other office) and represents their constituents by participating in the legislative process. You don't get a direct vote in the legislative process, but your ideas, concerns, fears and desires inform the legislative process through your representative's votes. In an ideal world, you are well represented and the outcome is, if not exactly what you want, close enough.

And What Do You Want?

If you had a high school civics class, or if you are otherwise politically aware, you already know how the process works. Even if you didn't know how things got to

where they are, you've certainly experienced the results of the process. Maybe you haven't seen the sausage being made, but you've had to eat it, as they say. My question to you is: What do you think of the sausage so far? Asked another way, how happy are you with the representation you have been getting?

Here's how I see it working, and making it work in this way is one of the main reasons I am running. Here is my rule #1: I can't represent you if I don't listen to you. If I don't hear from my constituents once I'm elected, I can only guess about what you want and what you need. There are plenty of voices out there willing to fill me in on "what's needed". There are other legislators, lobbyists, advocates of all stripes, business leaders, would-be influencers, national figures, pundits, you name it. Any of them could be sources of information, good or bad, but none of them carry the weight of the people whose opinions really matter: you, the voters of the Bennington-5 district. You, being the people I need to represent, hold the opinions, needs and wants that I need to hear, and that will shape my actions in the legislature.

Is That the Whole Story?

Of course not. I can't forward every question on every issue and every bill to you, wait for an answer, then act solely on your will. Part of being your representative is being able to speak for you, and to act independently when I need to. I am not going to hear the same thing from every one of you. You'll have different priorities, different needs, and different opinions. You are a diverse group, and that's great! It's also my job to take all of the information I get by listening, and synthesize it into a frame of reference – an ethos, if you will – that guides me in your absence.

That's my rule #2: remember what you said (because I was listening!), build guidelines and values based on what you say, and judge every piece of legislation, every action that I take, by those values and guidelines.

But there is a third part: communication is a two-way street. I need to keep you informed. I need to explain not only what I am doing, but why. That's my rule #3: keep you informed. That can be through this newsletter, through town meetings, informal communication, email, even phone calls. When I am in Montpelier,

you'll get emails from me. I will submit letters and press releases to the Banner. I'll post on Front Porch Forum. When I am back here, you'll have opportunities to meet with me. I can update you on what is happening in Montpelier, and you can inform me about what's going on with you.

Did You Answer the Question, Tom?

Well, I'm about to. Just to jog your memory, the question was: What do you hope to accomplish if elected?

From the start, I realized what the big issues are: everything has gotten too expensive, including housing, energy, taxes, health care, insurance, food, you name it, and our incomes are not keeping pace. I hope to do something about that, to make some meaningful changes that actually improve the lives of people in Pownal and Bennington.

On top of that, we have a government that doesn't appear to be listening to the people. That's the case at both the national and state levels. I can't do much about the federal government, but I can make sure that you don't feel like your representatives in Montpelier aren't listening to you. Because I am, and I will be.

I am running because you need to be heard, and because I believe that I can effect meaningful change. Anger got me moving; hope keeps me going.

One More Thing...

You may have heard the saying: All politics are local. If you've read the newsletter from the start, you also heard me say that I can't change anything in Montpelier on my own. It will be a big help to have other, like-minded people serving with me in the legislature. So this is a plug for my fellow candidate for Bennington-5, Mike Nigro. Mike is a good guy who will support you in the legislature and work with me to bring about meaningful change. Please, when you vote for me, vote for Mike, too!