

# Representative Robin Chesnut-Tangerman

October 2016

## To the voters of Pawlet, Wells, Middletown Springs, Rupert, and Tinmouth,

*I have been proud to serve as your Representative in Montpelier for the last two years, and I am excited about continuing our work there. Many of you express appreciation for the information and updates I send through town newsletters and Front Porch Forum. This update is an overview of some of my work in the legislature and my positions on a few important issues. I hope you find this useful.*

Robin



*Discussing issues at the Larson Farm Steer Roast and Barn Dance*

### Standing up For Farms:

I grew up on a farm and I know that farms are the backbone of the Vermont identity. But if we want farming to be viable in the future, we need to rethink how we farm. Milk prices are below the cost of production and the commodity dairy system is built to favor huge farms with industrial practices. The new federal "crop insurance" is a numbers game rigged against us.

We need to capitalize on the Vermont brand. **There are 20 million consumers within 200 miles**, many of whom would happily pay extra for the Vermont brand of milk, yogurt, cheese, gelato, and ice cream, for grass-fed beef, pasture-raised pork, antibiotic-free chicken. In Montpelier I helped win changes to existing laws making it easier to slaughter and process

on the farm, and to sell raw milk (that many of us have been drinking all our lives). I have proposed that we assume "regenerative farms" are already exceeding the new water quality standards and thus should cut another layer of regulation and compliance. **This is the kind of forward thinking we need.**

***I WILL:** Keep advocating practical solutions for farm issues.*

Some votes, like the water quality bill (Act 64), are difficult. The bill and its reforms are vital to the wellbeing of our state and waters, but mostly we are voting on how to best share the pain. Long-range bills like water quality promise difficulty and expense in the short run, with measurable water quality improvements being at least ten years away - IF we act now. No one relishes that prospect, but we need to do it.

### Standing Up For Local Schools:

Act 46 is an attempt at education reform that shoots wide of the mark - very wide, in our district. **In the legislature I opposed Act 46;** I supported revisions and amendments that failed, and I voted against Act 46 on the House floor because I could see how difficult it would be for small rural communities to comply. Unfortunately, I was right. Act 46 is unlikely to be repealed because too many communities have already invested time, money, civic discourse, and their futures in the process; but we can improve the process.

***I WILL:** Work to extend the timelines. Reduce the target number of students per consolidated district. Allow communities to participate in more than one study committee at a time. Move to income tax-based funding of our schools.*

Continued

Re-Elect

**Robin  
Chesnut-  
Tangerman**  
Representative

Election Day:  
November 8!

*Listening to you...Working for you.*

*Paid for by Chesnut-Tangerman Campaign • Steven Letendre, Treasurer*

**Continued**

**Standing Up for Good Jobs:**

Times are hard, no doubt about it. This recovery from the 2008 recession doesn't feel much like a recovery - Bernie Sanders is right that 90% of the economic gain since 2008 has gone to the top 1%. Rural America is hurting, losing population, jobs, and hope. It is tempting to blame it on those in state office, but it's more complicated than that. Much of the economic policy that affects us is national, even international. Vermont is weathering this recession better than many. Let's look at what we have. We are one of a few states with a AAA credit rating. We have 3.3% unemployment vs. the U.S. rate of 4.9%. **And we have jobs. Vermont employers are begging for skilled workers.** But we have too few ready workers and little affordable housing for people wanting to move here.

To make Vermont more worker-friendly, in Montpelier I advocated for earned sick leave, for workers to earn a livable wage in state contracts, to ensure that employees aren't reclassified as subcontractors (which would cost them salary and benefits). I have fought to keep jobs here by bringing home prisoners from private for-profit prisons in Michigan, and to prevent outsourcing Office of Risk Management jobs to other states.

***I WILL:** Keep fighting for fair pay and fair taxes.*

**Standing Up for Clean and Affordable Energy:**

The way we generate, use and pay for energy is changing, as is the historical model of energy generated far away and shipped long distances over high voltage transmission lines. Externalized costs of pollution, of mined or fracked landscapes also happen far away: we don't see the true costs of the conventional energy.

The transition to renewable energy sources is not just about climate change or ending strip mining of coal. It is also about creating jobs here in Vermont (more than 17,000 so far). It is about creating distributed generation and micro-grids which protect against large scale power failures, from weather, terrorists, or cyber attacks. It is about responsibly dealing with the externalized costs of power generation.

***“A good legislator solves today's problems while thinking ten years ahead, then builds partnerships to get there. I believe I have already proven to be that legislator.”***  
— Robin

**Over the last decade, renewable energy has become an economic driver in Vermont.** There are valid concerns about inappropriate siting and I worked hard in our committee to refine the process of siting and permitting. We have acted this year to give towns a greater voice in the process and to incentivize locating projects on buildings, parking lots, gravel pits, and quarries.

I am proud of the role I have played in creating this clean energy future, which means not just using renewable energy, but using less energy. We are saving energy through efficiencies in weatherizing buildings, in more efficient heating, lighting, and transportation, and more efficient business practices. **A Vermonter's monthly electric bill is already 40% lower than the national average,** and in 4 out of the last 5 years, GMP's rates have gone DOWN.

***I WILL:** Keep building towards an affordable, clean energy future.*

**Standing Up for Responsible Gun Ownership:**

I am a gun owner, and I believe that the great majority of gun owners use them safely and responsibly. **And like 89% of Vermonters\*, I support expanding background checks** to cover all “arms-length” purchases. I think it is self-defeating that we have a system that requires background checks for purchases from a dealer, but if you want to bypass that check for any reason you can simply buy one from an individual - no questions asked.

My opponent says that he opposes any new gun laws, but that he wants to keep guns out of the hands of those with mental health issues. So I ask, “How do you do that?” The logical answer is:

***I WILL:** Support expanded background checks with reasonable exceptions for gifts, within-the-family transfers, and inheritances.*

*\* Castleton Polling Institute, 2/2016*

**Standing Up for Healthcare:**

Rising healthcare prices drive ever-growing costs for employers, workers, and school budgets. We usually talk about health insurance as though it were the same as health care. It's not. Vermont has excellent health insurance coverage - **97% of us are insured, but many can't afford to use it** because of high deductibles and co-pays. The previous system of all private insurance providers was unsustainable, while this current mix of public/private options has done nothing to control costs. We are committed to exploring all options to control costs - doing nothing is not an option.

***I WILL:** Continue to advocate for health care we can afford.*

**Proud to be endorsed by:**







### Watch the Debate!

Compare the candidates for yourself by viewing the September 29 Pawlet debate here:

<http://gnat-tv.org/robin-chesnut-tangerman-jonas-rosenthal-debate-09-29-16/>

### Keeping It Clean

The Supreme Court decision on **Citizens United** allows anonymous and unlimited money to flood into political races. **I have pledged not to accept any PAC or corporate contributions - I am running this campaign with the grassroots support of constituents and friends.** PAC money is not just invading Presidential races but also our own Governor's race and even this House race. A Washington D.C. PAC has been running attack ads against twenty Vermont legislators, including me, in an attempt to sway your vote.

## What I've Done:

**I am proud of many accomplishments in my first term.**

- ✓ The Natural Resources and Energy Committee passed groundbreaking legislation, including Act 56 which sets renewable energy goals and mandates greenhouse gas reductions from not just electric generation but also from heating and transportation, which account for 75% of emissions.
- ✓ This year, Act 174 responded to the needs of municipalities by laying out a pathway for towns to gain "substantial deference" in hearings on siting energy generation projects.
- ✓ We also approved a streamlined process for the Department of Environmental Conservation issuing water permits, standardizing from 84 different applications to just 5.
- ✓ The Government Accountability Committee is different from most: rather than working toward an end product of a specific bill, it aims to advance the process of Results-Based Accountability. RBA is one tool to determine whether what government is doing is working and how to do it better. It is not just the work of this committee, but needs to be embedded in every agency and committee in the state in order to be more efficient and effective.
- ✓ Outside of my committees, I authored bills on topics ranging from the electrical code to landlord/tenant rights and government efficiency.
- ✓ In addition to my own bills, I co-sponsored dozens of others; many were geared toward increasing farm viability, ensuring worker's rights, and protecting the environment. A sampling includes bills affecting:
  - education taxes adjusted for all taxpayers
  - fair employment practices
  - easing restrictions on on-farm slaughter and meat sales
  - easing restrictions on raw milk sales
  - establishing "starter" education savings account for all Vermont babies
  - weatherization and thermal efficiency
  - clamping down on "revenge porn" and internet stalking
  - historic preservation and energy efficiency
  - banning plastic "microbeads" in cosmetic products

✓ In recognition of my ability, temperament, and skills, Speaker of the House Shap Smith nominated me to attend the **Emerging Leaders Program** – a national gathering of legislators to discuss issues, ethics, cooperation and leadership – in Charlottesville, Virginia.

### I Serve on Three Key Committees:

- **Natural Resources and Energy**
- **Joint Energy Committee**
- **Government Accountability Committee**

I am also a member of the Working Vermonters Caucus, the Climate Caucus, and the Small Schools Caucus.

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THE UNION OF VERMONT EDUCATORS

