

## **RCPBC on Democrat's Answers to RCPBC Questionnaire**

The Rutland County Pro-Business Coalition is dedicated to promoting and protecting a competitive business climate in Rutland County. RCPBC is a non-partisan organization made up of Democratic, Republican and independent members. Our goal will be met through active participation by our membership. Our members include business owners and like minded individuals that are invested in Rutland County and need to protect their investment through education and political activism.

We recognize the need to improve the business climate in Vermont in order to create employment opportunities. Taxes and regulations have increased to such an extent that Vermont is now recognized as one of the most heavily taxed states. Permitting has become an unpredictable maze that discourages growth in Vermont. It is imperative in order to create and sustain job growth that these issues be continually addressed.

We seek to promote election of candidates that support, based not on which political party they represent, but on their understanding of how legislative action affects the ability of business owners to survive and create jobs for Vermonters. As we all know, small business is the backbone of Vermont's economy.

The response did not address a single question from the questionnaire. In fact, it was indicated in the response that, "many of the questions are based on hypothetical scenarios and not necessarily based on actual issues or decisions immediately or soon to be before us". The fact that the questions were dismissed in this fashion shows how out of contact the candidates are with the real issues facing business.

How is it not important to discuss how to reduce the skyrocketing cost of property taxes in Vermont (4 of the 11 questions addressed this issue)? How is the issue of closing Vermont Yankee not an issue that is immediate in all of our futures? How is asking if you would vote against tax increases over the next two years a hypothetical scenario? How is reforming parts of Act 250 to make it more predictable not an actual issue?

In addition to answering questions about where a candidate stands on current issues, another measure of a candidate is to look at their actual voting record over the past legislative seasons and see how they voted on issues important to business. The Coalition relies on the score card for legislative votes of the NFIB (National Federation of Independent Businesses). In addition to NFIB, there is another group that tallies votes known as Vermont Business for Social Responsibility (VBSR), with membership including the Vermont Democratic House Campaign, Vermont Democratic Party, environmental groups, non-profits, schools, labor unions, churches, and numerous in-state and out-of-state non-business entities. While we support the efforts of VBSR such as "Local First Vermont", we do not feel that with such a diverse membership that it represents only the interest of small business.

As part of the Democrats' collective response it was noted that many of the incumbent legislators scored 100% on the VBSR score card. Of the four votes tallied by both groups, the results were polar opposites:

1. H.446 – Vermont Energy Act 45, mandates that Vermont utilities pay above market prices for energy from renewable energy projects and pass the cost through to ratepayers for the next 25 years. A “No” vote supported NFIB’s position. A “Yes” vote supported VBSR’s position.

*This increased expense has a direct impact on business in Vermont and sends a negative message that business in Vermont will be more expensive than in other states.*

2. H.436 – Decommissioning Vermont Yankee required that \$400-\$600 million in cash or financial guarantees would be put up to ensure decommissioning of the plant. Costs would be passed on to Vermont ratepayers. A “No” vote supported NFIB’s position. A “Yes” vote supported VBSR’s position.

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3. S.289 – Vermont Yankee Relicensing supported letting the experts on the Vermont Public Service Board decide, based on reliable information and safety studies, whether to renew the license for Vermont Yankee. A “Yes” vote supported NFIB’s position. (NFIB noted that their support was based on the plant being safe and reliable and noted the many jobs associated with the plant) A “No” vote supported VBSR’s position (VBSR noted that it was not a safe or cost-effective solution to our long-term energy needs)

*The loss of VY will have a significantly negative impact on jobs, on taxes, and on the electric rates that affect all Vermonters including the business community. The decision to close VY was based on politics not science. The decision should be made by regulators based on the facts.*

4. S.88 – Health Care Reform had as one of its core issues, appropriating money to hire consultants to do a \$300,000 study of three options for the future of health care in Vermont. A “No” vote supports NFIB’s position. A “Yes” vote supports VBSR’s position. (VBSR noted that they have advocated for 16 years for universal access to health care that is publicly financed)

*This study appears to be window-dressing for a preconceived outcome. The cost of a government run, publicly funded, universal access plan will have a dramatic impact to Vermont small business owners.*

Thus, of the four votes tallied by VBSR and NFIB that were the same, the 100% earned on the VBSR score card earned a 0% on NFIB’s score card. NFIB has no agenda other than to promote the wellbeing of small business.

It was wrongly noted in the collective response that RCPBC, “represents the interest of Republicans running for state legislative seats in Rutland County and not necessarily the business community”. What? A group of 125+ Rutland County business owners, whose goal is to promote a healthy business climate in order to keep current jobs and create new jobs in Vermont does not represent the business community. We would support any candidate, regardless of party affiliation, who supports our positions and recognizes the needs of small business owners in their effort to maintain and grow their businesses and keep and create jobs in Vermont. As well as attract new businesses to Vermont.

We hoped for honest answers to the questionnaire from all candidates that would allow us to support them on their individual merits regardless of party affiliation

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