

# Ethan Allen Institute

Newsletter - August 2017 (Printer Edition)

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## Top Story: House Roll Call Profiles (2107) Are Out!

EAI's Legislator "Roll Call Profiles," (arguably our most popular service) have been updated for the House to reflect the 2017 legislative session. This year's featured key votes include the \$5.82 billion budget, the showdown between Governor Scott and the legislature over \$26 million in property tax savings, paid family leave, gun rights, "gender neutral" bathrooms, legalizing marijuana and more.

Click here to see how your representative(s) voted! <http://ethanallen.org/vt-house-roll-call-profiles/>.

Beyond providing a picture of how your elected officials voted, each legislator's page includes detailed contact information, including email addresses, links to Facebook pages and websites, and, increasingly (we're still completing this feature), links to email the editors of local papers serving their districts. Our goal is to make this a "one stop" platform for you to learn about, interact with, and hold your legislator accountable.

## EAI Welcomes David Flemming

The Ethan Allen Institute is pleased to announce that David Flemming will be joining our team as a Policy Analyst. David is a 2016 Hillsdale College graduate with a B.A. in Economics, and a graduate of Essex High School. He is also an alumni of the Koch Internship Program and Koch Summer Fellow Program, and has researched and written about public policy during his time with Economic and Policy Resources, the Independent Institute, Campaign for Vermont and the American Legislative Exchange Council. David's public policy experience will be an asset in expanding EAI's efforts to give everyday Vermonters a louder voice in their government."

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## Commentary: Freedom and Community Revisited

*By John McClaughry*

Over the holiday weekend, rummaging through old file boxes in the barn, I came across a folder of my five-minute commentaries aired on WDEV radio thirty years ago. Most of them dealt with issues now long forgotten, but the final one in 1988, entitled "Vermont's Future", got my attention. So here it is, slightly updated.

"Last year's debate on school centralization and this year's battle over growth

control have brought to center stage the question: what kind of future can we expect for Vermont? Two very different pictures have emerged. One is Vermont as Land of Freedom. The other is Vermont as Land of Community. These twin themes, freedom and community, have swirled back and forth throughout Vermont history, and indeed, through American history.

The Land of Freedom is the land of individual rights. It is the land of private property ownership, a competitive economic system, and the opportunity to grow and become. In the Land of Freedom, independent citizens, their property and their rights secured by a limited government, will be happy, productive, and compassionate toward the less fortunate. They will come together, not as subjects, but as free and independent citizens, to meet great crises and govern themselves.

The Land of Community is the land of working together, of shared values, of cooperation. It is the land of "we", as in "we don't want Vermont to turn into New Jersey." In the Land of Community citizens are expected to yield to the will of the majority rather than pursue their personal interests and private rights.

The Land of Freedom can be any scale, but the Land of Community has definite limits. For some purposes all of Vermont is a community. We were a community when as one we spoke out for halting the spread of slavery and sent our soldiers to save the Union. We were a community with all Americans when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

But in most things we do, Vermont is not a true statewide community, a fact long recognized in the old Mountain Rule, which alternated the governorship between the east and west sides of the Green Mountains. Bennington and Newport have very little in common, in any practical sense. The real battle for the soul of Vermont is over the extent to which the people in control of state government will force their idea of community on people who rarely have much in common.

The backers of the Land of Community idea seem always eager to homogenize our society. They want to equalize, standardize, and unify what they conceive to be the various diverse parts of a statewide community. In doing so they give short shrift to the advocates of freedom, for they see freedom and individual rights as bothersome obstructions to their goal of creating a Land of Community in all things, regulated and enforced by the central power in Montpelier.

It is the Land of Community people who think up school regionalization schemes, so that all communities will be efficiently managed from Montpelier to produce the same thing for all of our children. It is the Land of Community people who want growth managed from the center, for the benefit of everybody. It is the Land of Community people who deplore the private ownership of property, for they are convinced that with freedom and property, individuals will undermine their vision of the common good.

To the Land of Freedom people, individual liberty comes first. They believe that only independent men and women can govern themselves in a republic, and they believe that centralized control over the things that are locally different signals the beginning of a tyranny which aims to strip them of their rights. Thus they want to keep control of their children's schools, and they oppose every attempt to strip them of their rights in land and, for that matter, their right to own guns.

The freedom advocates are today on the defensive, as the centralizers and standardizers and controllers have the upper hand in our state government. But the time

may come when the pendulum swings back - and I for one hope it does.”

My signoff for that 1988 commentary was: “this will be my last broadcast with you, for today I am becoming a candidate for the State Senate. I've enjoyed doing these shows, and I hope you have enjoyed listening - or if you have hated every minute of them, I hope I've at least made you think.”

- *John McClaughry is the founder and vice president of the Ethan Allen Institute*

## Commentary: Allowing Illegal Votes Is Voter Suppression

*By Rob Roper*

We can all agree that barring someone who is eligible to vote from doing so is a grave injustice. It robs a citizen in our representative republic of their voice in the process of governance. This is unacceptable.

However, allowing somebody to vote who is not a legally eligible voter has the exact same effect, and is equally unjust. Allowing an ineligible voter to cast a ballot cancels out the vote of a legal voter, effectually erasing that legal voter's vote. The outcome is the same as if the legal voter had been physically blocked from entering the polling place. This is also unacceptable.

The right to vote is not absolute. It is constrained by certain eligibility requirements, such as residency. I, as a resident of Stowe, have no right to vote in an election deciding who will represent Waterbury in the State House. As a Vermont resident, I have no right to vote on who will represent Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate. Etcetera and vice versa. Doing so would be a crime: voter fraud.

Two principles our electoral system is based upon are “one person, one vote” and the secret ballot. When we go into the voting booth, we are all equal, and we should be free from any outside pressure. Each eligible voter gets one vote, and it is his or her vote. It cannot be sold or transferred. If person A chooses not to cast a vote, person B does not have the right to cast it for him. Person B does not get to stand over the shoulder of person A and intimidate her into voting the way person B wants. That would mean person B gets two votes.” That's voter fraud.

As such, our election officials have to be able to verify that every voter who casts a ballot is who they say they are, lives where they say they live, and marks their ballot of their own volition. Please read that last sentence again. Now, how can you possibly do this without requiring some form of ID?

Right now, it is impossible to determine whether or not voter fraud is or isn't occurring or on what if any scale because practically no mechanisms are in place to look for, let alone catch, would be fraudsters.

Asked in [an interview](#) following the last election what would happen if one person requested an absentee ballot for someone else, had it sent to an address where it could be captured, then filled it out and sent it in, Will Senning, the director of elections in the Secretary of State's office, admitted the fraudster would “not necessarily” be caught. He was hedging. There's almost no way they would be caught.

Vermont's Secretary of State, Jim Condos, said in a [recent interview](#), “The only way a person other than the person the ballot is intended for could return the voted ballot

is if they perjure themselves on the certificate envelope by recording the name of a registered voter and forging the signature of that voter.”

Yeah! And how hard is that?

Does Condos actually believe someone (say a political operative, an occupation we all know embodies the highest ethical standards) willing to commit voter fraud is going to be worried about perjuring himself? And if someone did do this, how would Condos track down and prosecute the criminal? What if someone did this on a larger scale by identifying a meaningful number of people on the voter roles who don't regularly vote, and would likely never know their votes were stolen?

This is particularly worrisome because in the last election 95,203 ballots in Vermont were absentee, and, as Williston Town Clerk Deborah Beckett admitted, “Once a ballot leaves the office, you don't know that it reaches the right person.” If that's the case, then how can we honestly say we know for sure our election results are valid?

Secretary Condos and Attorney General T.J. Donovan are now looking for every legal maneuver possible to obstruct the president's federal inquiry into voter fraud. What they really should be doing is asking themselves is how can we verify that A) the person we send an absentee ballot to is the person who actually requested it, B) that the absentee ballot was received by the person who was supposed to receive it, C) that the ballot was filled out and returned by the voter authorized to do so, and D) that the vote was cast without pressure from a third party.

If our election officials can't do these things, or worse are unwilling to do them, we have a real problem.

Yes, we want every eligible voter to cast a ballot. We should do what we can to make it easy to vote. But we also have an equal responsibility to make it difficult -- better impossible -- to cheat. If we don't do this, we undermine the principles of “one person, one vote” and the secret ballot, and with them our representative democracy.

*- Rob Roper is president of the Ethan Allen Institute. He lives in Stowe.*

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## Events

**August 8-10.** “Liberty Camp”

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## News & Views

**Vermont Ranks “Below Average” for Fiscal Condition.** The Mercatus Center released its annual study, “Ranking the States by Fiscal Condition.” Vermont landed in the “Below Average” category with an overall ranking of 40. You can read the study summary [HERE](#), the Vermont one pager [HERE](#), and the full study [HERE](#).

**CNBC Ranks VT 35th for Business Friendliness.** The financially focused cable channel just released its annual ranking of states' business friendliness, and they put

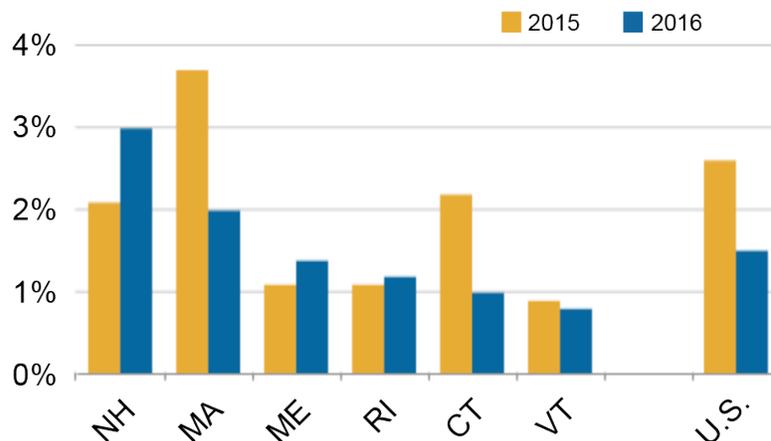
Vermont at 35. The rankings take into account ten categories, each weighted differently. Vermont does well on Quality of Life (2) and Education (7), but we fail badly in Workforce (45), Cost of Doing Business (41), Access to Capital (46), and Cost of Living (43). ([CNBC, 7/11/17](#))

**On Vermont's \$28 Million Revenue Shortfall.** "The tax base is not growing as quickly as the state needs revenue, [the Legislature's economist Tom Kavet] said." (VTDigger 7/21/17). Well, if the state's policies continue to be designed to suppress growth of the tax base, just maybe the alternative to reduce the state's need for revenue.

**Sucking Economic Wind.** "For the second year in a row, Vermont's economy has grown the slowest in New England. After adjusting for inflation, the state's gross domestic product grew just 0.8 percent in 2016; the year before saw 0.9 percent growth. Meanwhile Massachusetts' GDP increased more than twice as fast as Vermont's last year. New Hampshire more than tripled Vermont's growth rate." Public Assets Institute

## Another year of slow economic growth

Change in real annual domestic product, 2015 and 2016



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Governor Scott Wants To Grow The State Population. So...** "In the decade from 2005-2015, the nine states with zero income tax saw population increase by an average of 12.9%, while population in all 50 states rose by 8.8%. During that same period, the nine states with the highest income tax rates saw population grow by only 6.6%. [Vermont's population growth is totally stagnant.] The nine states with zero income tax also had economic, personal income, and payroll growth that outpaced all states on average, and outperformed the high income tax states to an even greater extent." (Forbes, 6/28/17)

**Vermont Has Third Most Expensive Hospital Care In Nation.** VT Digger reports that from 2000 to 2014, "Vermonters' per-capita spending in hospitals roughly tripled from \$1,570 to \$4,670, and per-capita spending on overall personal health care more than doubled from \$4,342 to \$10,190," and "spending in hospitals also tripled from \$957

million in 2000 to \$2.9 billion in 2014.” This is the third highest in the nation and highest in New England. ([Vt Digger, 7/10/17](#)) Thanks, decades of progressive healthcare reform!

**This Would Be An Interesting End To Act 46.** The Rutland Herald reports, “A statewide group of school board members, led by the former chairman of the Missisquoi Valley Union High School Board, have filed a criminal complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice, alleging Vermont’s Act 46, the school consolidation law, violates the Voting Rights Act of 1965,” the gist being that the financial incentives and penalties in Act 46 amount to “threats, coercion, bribery and intimidation” of voters and are unlawful. Good luck and Godspeed. ([Rutland Herald, 6/29/17](#))

**The Opioid Crisis, Disability & Medicaid:** “Almost 60 percent of men in the 25-54 age group had obtained at least one disability program benefit; 14 percent had attained two or more. Disability insurance establishes your eligibility for Medicaid; Medicaid can establish your eligibility for OxyContin. If they find the right pain doctor, patients can get a month’s supply of OxyContin – 90 pills – for just a \$3 copay.” – Nicholas Eberstadt, [Men Without Work](#), AEI, 2017.

**Work Works: A Lesson From Maine.** "In 2014, Maine implemented work requirements on Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents in the state's food stamp program. Recipients were not cut off the rolls but were required to undertake training or engage in SIX hours of community service per week in exchange for their benefits. Within three months the Maine food stamp ABAWD caseload dropped 80 percent. Recipients simply chose to forgo benefits rather than to perform the small amount of community service. Maine has shown that an ABAWD work requirement in food stamps is easy to implement, causes an immediate dramatic drop in caseloads, and is politically attractive." - Robert Rector, [Heritage Foundation 3/19/17](#).

**UK Poll: Wind Turbines Drive Away Tourists.** A recent British poll conducted by YouGov for the environmental conservation organization, John Muir Trust, revealed that 55% of Scottish adults were “less likely” to visit a scenic tourist location if it contained industrial development, such wind turbines. Only 3% said they would be more likely to visit. Another reason to doubt claims that subsidizing more of these things will be good for our economy here in Vermont.

**To Help the Poor, Missouri Will CUT Its Minimum Wage.** Looks like the Show Me State was shown! Missouri raised its minimum wage to \$10 to put more money in the pockets of the poor. The opposite happened. Now Missouri is, according to news reports, lowering its state minimum wage from \$10/hr. to \$7.70. This follows evidence from places like Seattle, where a recent study showed low income earners losing \$1500 a year due mostly to cut hours after the minimum wage increased from \$9.40 to \$13.

**This Is Who’s Teaching Our Kids.** Teachers Union Head Analyzes School Choice: "Sounding like Hillary Clinton in full deplorable mode, [President of the American Federation of Teachers Randi] Weingarten says the movement to give parents more say over where their kids go to school has its roots in 'racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia and homophobia.'" (WSJ 7/23/17). Who knew?

**The Unjust Nature of Teachers' Salaries.** “With respect to teachers’ salaries, the major problem is not that they are too low on the average—they may well be too high on the average—but they are too uniform and rigid. Poor teachers are grossly overpaid and good teachers grossly underpaid. Salary schedules tend to be uniform and determined far more by seniority, degrees received, and teaching certificates acquired than by merit. – Milton Freidman

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## Book of the Month

### Why Nations Fail

*The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*

By Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson

Crown (2012), 529 pages

<https://www.amazon.com/Why-Nations-Fail-Origins-Prosperity/dp/0307719227>

This is a “must read” book: interesting, entertaining, and important.

The authors, a political science professor from MIT ( ) and an economist from Harvard ( ) take a deep look at the roots of poverty and prosperity throughout history, particularly the last two to three hundred years in which the gap between rich and poor countries exploded. Their conclusion is, in a nutshell, that it all comes down to “inclusive” versus “extractive” political and economic policies, the former breeding prosperity and the latter destined for societal failure.

“Extractive” governments, as the name suggests, are those designed to extract wealth from the society for the benefit of an elite ruling class, and to perpetuate the status quo power structure. These societies forcefully oppose potentially disruptive innovations in technology or institutions that might allow new economic (and then following political) power bases to form, grow, and challenge the ruling elite.

“Inclusive” societies embrace new technologies, innovation and the “creative destruction” that accompanies them. Inclusive societies are centralized enough to enforce individual property rights and maintain rule of law, but not powerful enough to become an agent of plunder and/or operate above the law itself. They allow individuals to sell their labor freely as they wish so that each person can best utilize his or her talents.

Put another way, inclusive societies create and protect incentives for their citizens to be creative, productive, and both economically and politically successful, and extractive societies do the opposite.

The most prosperous countries in the world today – most notably the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan – all adopted more than less inclusive policies around the time of the Industrial Revolution, and still do so today. The poor nations did not and, mostly, still do not.

Geography, culture/ethnicity, and other factors don’t matter much, if at all. The book opens with a comparison of two towns on the Texas/Mexico border. These twin cities were once one community. They share the same language, same culture, same diets, and same family genetics. The community on the U.S. side of the boarder is ten times more prosperous than the one in Mexico.

There are other similar “experiments” that demonstrate the same results. Korea was a perfectly equal and homogeneous society before it was divided at the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel

after World War II into North (extractive) and South (inclusive). Less than a human lifetime later, the inclusive South is one of the most prosperous countries in the world and the extractive North is one of the poorest. Same story goes for East and West Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the Northern free labor states versus the Confederate slave states in the U.S. before the Civil War.

There are many cautionary tales. The tale of Venice Italy's fall from a wealthy, industrial, trading powerhouse to nothing more than a poor tourist destination as extractive policies displaced inclusive ones hit particularly home for this Vermonter. We also see that successful, inclusive societies can turn into severely extractive societies almost overnight, as was the case with Japan and Germany before World War II.

We know the recipe for societal success. So do our leaders – but too often they do not care because a successful, prosperous society might disrupt their own wealth and power. As Benjamin Franklin warned, we have a republic... if we can keep it.

- Reviewed by Rob Roper, president of the Ethan Allen Institute.

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## The Final Word

### August Survey: Vote Fraud

#### Which statement most accurately reflects your opinion?

- Meaningful levels of voter fraud are a myth and investigating fraud is a form of voter suppression.
- Meaningful vote fraud is a real possibility, and we have a responsibility to make sure our election results are valid.

#### Voter ID laws are...

- common sense.
- discriminatory.

#### Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos and Attorney General T.J. Donovan are...

- right to obstruct the Commission on Election Integrity's vote fraud investigation.
- Wrong to obstruct the Commission on Election Integrity's vote fraud investigation.

Take the Survey at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BFK9D2V>

### July Survey Results

Are you optimistic about Vermont's future?

Yes, things will get better. 7.14%  
No, things will get worse. 80.95%  
Things won't change at all. 11.9%