Ethan Allen Institute

Newsletter – January 2015 (Printer Edition)

Top Story: Here Comes the Tax Parade!

The legislature will be back in town on Tuesday, January 6th, and as Mark Twain warned, "No man's life, liberty, or property are safe while the congress is in session." We must be vigilant!

With plans to pay for a single payer healthcare system shelved (at least for the moment), Vermonters can breathe a sigh of relief – but not too deep and not for too long! Progressive activists are angry about Governor Shumlin's abandonment of single payer and will certainly compensate by putting extra vigor into pushing for other items on their wish list.

Add to this the fact that state revenues have failed to meet targets every month since April, resulting in an estimated structural deficit of over $100,000,000, and the temptation for legislators to raise taxes in 2015 will be significant. (And let's face it, how much temptation has this crowd ever really needed?) Here are some taxes to look out for:

Property Taxes: The Shumlin administration has already announced that property taxes must rise by 2 cents to $1.00 per $100 of assessed value for homeowners and $1.54 for non-residential properties in 2015.

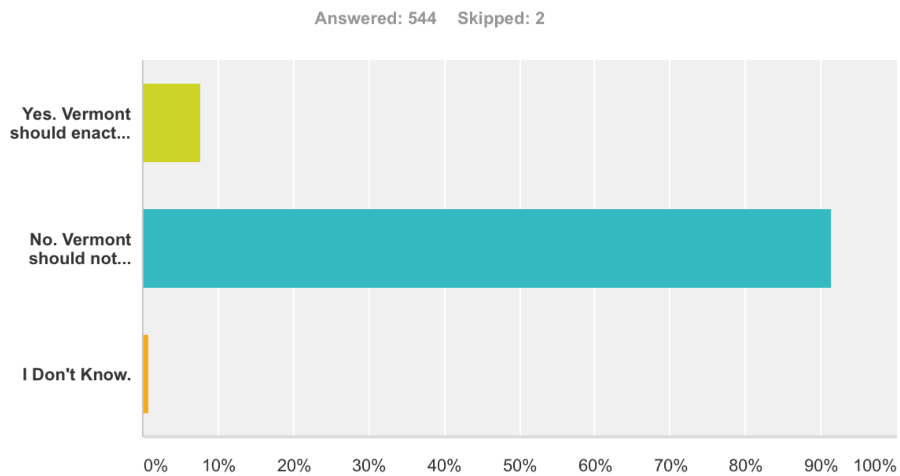
Income Taxes: Speaker of the House Shap Smith has indicated that he would like to shift more of the $1.5 billion education budget onto the income tax as part of education finance reform. Depending upon how big the shift is this could cause a major increase in the income tax. Current income tax revenues are estimated at roughly $750 million.

In addition, Progressive (cap and small "p") lawmakers pushed in the last legislative session to raise $20 million in revenue largely through income tax increases (along with increases in corporate taxes and capital gains taxes). With single payer off the table, look for them to revive this as a priority with no more regard for the governor's opposition.

Sugar Sweetened Beverage Tax. A group called Alliance for a Healthier Vermont is ready to wage a $200,000 campaign pushing for a 2¢ per ounce tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. (Is there no end to these liberal groups and the money that flows to them?) That's almost a quarter for every can of Coke, 40¢ for the average sports drink, or $1.28 for every 2-liter bottle, and would take an estimated total of over $30 million out of Vermonters' pockets. This tax died in the last legislative session, many felt because it would eventually turn up as part of a single payer healthcare funding package. With that need gone, look for this to be heralded as a partial "solution" to the state's spending problems. Peter Sterling of the single payer advocacy group Vermont Leads has also chimed in in favor of this tax.

Carbon Tax. Before Governor Shumlin scrapped single payer, some lawmakers expressed the opinion that now was not the time for a Carbon tax. With single payer off the table, VPIRG's $250 million carbon tax ($1.35/gallon of gasoline) has more room to gain support.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD! Take EAI's On-Line Carbon Tax Survey.
Results so far:



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes. Vermont should enact a Carbon Tax.	7.72%	42
No. Vermont should not enact a Carbon Tax.	91.54%	498
I Don't Know.	0.74%	4
Total		544

Please Renew Your Support for EAI in 2015!

Thanks to all who have already made a donation to our 2015 campaign! For those who haven't yet, please help us fight all the potential taxes mentioned above and other encroachments on our liberty. Be generous. We're only as strong as you make us. Thank you!

Make a contribution to EAI today.
P.O. Box 543
Montpelier, VT 05672

P.S. EAI is a 501c(3) nonprofit, educational organization that neither solicits nor accepts government funding. Contributions are TAX DEDUCTIBLE for businesses and individuals.

Commentary: Are You Ready for the Carbon Tax?

By John McClaughry

Single payer health care taxes are gone – for now – but there's another hot idea in Montpelier for a new tax – the carbon tax. It's being promoted by "Energy Independent Vermont", a coalition led by the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG), the Vermont Natural Resources Council, and the Conservation Law Foundation.

Why, you might ask, do already overtaxed Vermonters need a new tax on natural gas, heating oil, propane, gasoline and diesel fuel? The coalition spokespersons are unanimous on this. We must defeat "climate pollution – the biggest environmental challenge of our generation"! They profess to believe – and some may actually believe – that human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide are giving us "super storms and extreme weather events."

To such people the obvious remedy for "climate pollution" is to make carbon combustion illegal and put those evil polluters in jail. That presents some problems, so the coalition is pushing its fallback position: have the government tax carbon fuels so people can't afford to use them anymore.

Their argument: when the tax increases cause the price of natural gas, heating oil, propane, gasoline, and diesel fuel to rise enough, people will spend more on energy efficiency and conservation. They will replace home heating gas and oil with electric heat pumps. They will turn to electric vehicles to replace gasoline and diesel-fueled vehicles.

Here's the way the carbon tax will work. The state will tax all of these fuels at some convenient point in their supply chains. The proposal exempts electricity because the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative makes consumers in eight other Northeastern states send money to Vermont because they have carbon-based electricity generation and we don't.

The study commissioned by VPIRG assesses carbon tax rates of $50, $100, or $150 per ton, phased in over several years. At the lowest ($50) rate, VPIRG expects the new tax to produce $35 million in 2016 and $250 million in year 2030. At the $150 rate, the take would be $700 million a year by 2030. The model promises increases in jobs, disposable incomes, and Gross State Product.

What will become of these enormous tax revenues – assuming desperate legislatures refrain from grabbing them to bail out the state's recurring general fund deficits, its $3 billion underfunded retirement funds, and the costs of a successor program to Gov. Shumlin's failed state takeover of health care?

The advocates say the state will redistribute the carbon tax revenues through tax cuts and rebates to people, governments, organizations and corporations to compensate them for the higher energy costs caused by the carbon tax. An extra share will go to the lower income quintiles ("the poor"). This redistribution feature, plus millions more in weatherization subsidies, doubtless accounts for the support of the five low-income organizations in the coalition.

The carbon tax will be a net tax increase,/ Ninety percent 90% of the carbon tax revenues will (hopefully) be returned to the lucky recipients. Ten percent of the revenues will be skimmed off to pay for "investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other clean alternatives to fossil fuels".

In plain English, the renewable industrial complex will cash in to the tune of $3.5

million the first year (at the $50 rate) to as much as an astounding $70 million fifteen years out (at the $150 rate).

This should come as no surprise, since the two leading figures of the renewable industrial complex underwrote the VPIRG report: David Blittersdorf (All Earth Renewables) and Matthew Rubin (Renewable Energy Vermont).

The era of nickel and dime funding for the Clean Energy Development (Subsidy) Fund, from which Blittersdorf was excused as a director in 2011 for blatant conflict of interest, will be over. The carbon tax will dramatically refill that renewable energy subsidy trough.

Vermonters can look forward to today's $3/gallon gasoline costing as much as $4.35, and paying a third more for natural gas, propane, heating fuel, and diesel. This will happen if the people snooze while VPIRG, VNRC, CLF, Blittersdorf, Rubin and the other conspirators bulldoze this measure through a legislature whose majorities have been sufficiently terrified by "climate pollution" propaganda to lay another major new tax on their constituents.

On the other hand, the designated victims might have an unlikely ally - Peter Shumlin, not long ago known as "the Senator from VPIRG". He recently observed "that "if you have a high carbon tax in a gas station on this side of the [Connecticut River] bridge and you have no carbon tax on the other side of the bridge, it's pretty clear where you're going to fill up your tank." (Of course you wouldn't have that option with natural gas home service or a heating oil delivery.)

A week ago the governor abandoned his cherished single payer health care plan because it could not be financed by "tax rates that I can responsibly support or urge the Legislature to pass." He needs to add the carbon tax to that list.

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

Commentary: Universal School Choice Is the Answer to the Property Tax Crisis

By Rob Roper

Here's the puzzle the Legislature must solve regarding education finance reform:

How do you lower the cost of educating our kids so we can cut taxes, while maintaining or improving high student outcomes? How do you stay within the lines of the Brigham Supreme Court decision that guarantees all students equal access to a tax base while respecting local control, yet also dealing with the reality that that Vermont's K-12 system has lost 25,000 students since passage of Act 60?

The answer has been under Vermonters' noses for nearly a century and a half. It's parent-driven school choice. Currently, 93 Vermont towns (about 5 percent of the K-12 population) take part in a program called "town tuitioning" that allows them to send their kids to any public or approved, nonreligious independent school with the publicly financed tuition dollars following the child.

This system has been tested. We know it works. It is rooted in Vermont history and Vermont values. And, it is wildly popular in the communities that have it.

Here's one example of why. In the Northeast Kingdom, where a predominant number of towns are "tuitioning," parents of high school-aged students can choose between the independent town academies, St. Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon Institute, smaller independent schools such as the East Burke School, Burke Mountain Academy (specializing in educating and training winter athletes), the Cornerstone School (focusing on kids with special needs), or from roughly eight public schools in Vermont and New Hampshire, all within reasonable driving distance. Similar choices exist for middle and elementary students.

Of course, these parents can choose any approved independent or public school regardless of geography, and some have used their tuition dollars to educate children out of state or even internationally. This kind of competition spurs diversity and excellence, and every Vermont child should be able to benefit from these kinds of options.

Any major change in how we pay for and deliver education will be complicated, and moving to a school choice system will certainly be so as well.

So, how does this apply to our current education financing puzzle?

Lowering the cost. Vermont's independent schools operate using more efficient, creative business models than their public school counterparts. As such, they are successfully educating students for roughly 15 percent to 30 percent less than the public schools. Just one year after the public elementary school in North Bennington "went independent" and adopted tuitioning-based choice for the district, principal Tom Martin commented, "We have two more kids than last year, two less staff members, better programs, and an overall savings of right around $200,000."

Better outcomes. The communities that enjoy tuitioning have given rise to some of Vermont's most dynamic education opportunities. Before the public school in Winhall "went independent" in 1998 and became a tuitioning town, the school had some of the lowest test scores in Vermont (as well as the state's highest per pupil cost). But after a decade and a half of steady improvement (FY13), the independent Mountain School at Winhall eighth-graders scored 13 points above the state average in reading, 16 points above state average in math, and 19 points above the state average in writing. And the school is achieving these results for significantly less than the public school average per-pupil cost.

Compatible with Brigham. Almost any other funding mechanism imaginable will run into problems with the Brigham court decision that spawned Act 60. However, a statewide education tax that funds tuition scholarships to every individual child would comply with Brigham. In fact, it would go beyond the fairness of Brigham's requirement that every kid have equal access to the tax base, and ensure every kid gets equal funding for their education (with allowances made for children with special needs).

Greater local control. After Act 60, the idea of "local control" of education has become more of an illusion than a reality. Moving to a choice-based system should return power to the most local of levels – families and schools. Principals and local school boards need to be granted the freedom to innovate. Raising the money to fund tuitions will be a state responsibility, but how to spend it will be entirely local.

Consolidation. It is a sad fact that Vermont's K-12 system has lost roughly 25,000 students (over 20 percent of the population) since the passage of Act 60. As a result, some level of consolidation is necessary. By empowering parents to vote with their feet in the best interests of their kids, we will better ensure that A) consolidation is an organic, people-driven process, and B) the best schools will be rewarded and supported.

Any major change in how we pay for and deliver education will be complicated, and moving to a school choice system will certainly be so as well. Many details will need to be worked out. But it is the simplest, most transparent, fairest option available, and the one most likely to provide the most satisfying rewards.

- Rob Roper is president of the Ethan Allen Institute.

Commentary: EAI Board Member Wendy Wilton Nailed Single Payer Costs/Problems in 2011 - *For Free*

by Rob Roper

On December 15, Governor Peter Shumlin announced that he was pulling the plug on a Single Payer Healthcare system for Vermont. His reasoning, “The cost of that plan turned out to be enormous…. These are tax rates [11.5 percent payroll tax on all Vermont businesses, and a public premium assessment of up to 9.5 percent of individual Vermonters' income] that I cannot responsibly support or urge the Legislature to pass. In my judgment, the potential economic disruption and risks would be too great to small businesses, working families and the state's economy."

It took him nearly four year to reach this conclusion, and to calculate the fact that taking over 20% of the state’s economy would cost $2.6 billion in new taxes, not $1.6 billion. Four years of great stress and uncertainty for Vermont businesses. Four years of slow economic growth and dismal job creation as we all waited for this bomb to go off. Here is a partial breakdown of how much taxpayers spent for the Governor’s epiphany: Hsiao Report, $250,000. UMass Report, $317,000. Jonathan Gruber, $280,000. Wakely Consulting $155,000.

Mark Larson, the Commissioner of Health Access, earned $85,848 in 2012, $105,114 in 2013, and $107,183 in 2014. (Now there’s a guy who deserves a 20% raise!) Robin Lunge, Director of Health Reform, earned $90,873 (2012), $98,585 (2013), $96,246 (2014), and Michael Costa, the Administration’s Tax Policy Director brought in specifically to figure out a single payer solution, earned $86,598 (2014).

This, of course, doesn’t consider the salaries of legislators and the Green Mountain Care Board dedicated to this debacle , the damage to (and by) Vermont Health Connect caused by designing it to be “the foundation” for single payer rather than just an insurance exchange, or the opportunity cost. Just think of how all this time and resource could have been better spent! It doesn’t consider the cost to the economy as businesses refused to hire new employees to avoid potential payroll taxes, or moved out of the state entirely.

This is especially unfortunate since the costs and irreconcilable policy conflicts were obvious to anyone who cared to look right from the beginning. One person who cared to look was EAI board member and Rutland City Treasurer, Wendy Wilton, who back in 2011 came up with similar numbers to Shumlin/Lunge/Gruber/Costa’s 2015 revelations on her own, in her free time, with Microsoft Excel and a few pots of coffee -- at zero cost to the taxpayers.

At the time, Wilton was maligned by single payer advocates and elected officials. We don't expect any apologies to Wendy, but do want to recognize and thank her for her efforts. Hindsight is 20/20, but her foresight was pretty darn near that, too. Maybe we ought to listen to her the next time the folks in Montpelier come up with some mathematically impossible, hair-brained, ideological scheme. Because, unfortunately, there always seems to be a next time…

- *Rob Roper is president of the Ethan Allen Institute (www.ethanallen.org). Matthew Strong contributed to this story.*

Events

Happy New Year!

January 9: The 24th annual Vermont Economic Outlook Conference is set for 8:30-2 at the Sheraton Burlington. The theme is "Vermont and the U.S.: Divergent Paths?" and Jonathan Rauch of the Brookings Institution is the keynoter. For more info conact Dick Heaps at rheaps@vteconomy.com.

January 17 American Majority New Leadership Training Session will take place in Burlington at UVM's Davis Center. Mark you calendar and look for more information in future emails.

News & Views

Why Single Payer Failed… Obviously. "The cost of that plan turned out to be enormous…. These are tax rates [11.5 percent payroll tax on all Vermont businesses, and a public premium assessment of up to 9.5 percent of individual Vermonters' income] that I cannot responsibly support or urge the Legislature to pass. In my judgment, the potential economic disruption and risks would be too great to small businesses, working families and the state's economy." – Gov. Peter Shumlin

Explosion in the Left Wing Lab. "Mr. Shumlin has succeeded in making Vermont a national model: By admitting that single layer will make healthcare both more expensive and less efficient, he has shown other states what not to do." – Wall Street Journal Editorial, 12/23/14

The Next Brilliant Idea. "Shumlin, in the [Dec. 17] speech that struck the single-payer colors, described what might emerge as a new theme for reform. The Legislature should beef up an existing state panel, he said, so that it could be 'a central regulator of health care so it can treat health care like the public utility it is.' A spokesman for the governor did not respond Friday to a message seeking elaboration about that passage." –Rick Jurgens, Valley News 12/21/14).

Single Payer Advocates Move to Sugar Tax. "One Band-Aid solution is for the state to further subsidize low- and middle-income Vermonters insurance costs incurred under Vermont Health Connect.... One possible source of financing for this subsidy that has been widely discussed is a tax on sugary beverages such as soda, sports drinks and energy drinks. This tax would raise close to $30 million a year…." – Peter Sterling, Vermont Leads.

Some Good News on the Jobs Front. The unemployment rate ticked down from 4.4% to 4.3%. The labor force increased by just under 1000 workers. Total employment ticked up about 1000, and total unemployment ticked down. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Our Fiscal Future. "The concept of sustainable spending followed by Governors Snelling, Dean and Douglas is a simple concept, but since the override of Gov. Douglas's 2010 budget veto the fiscal course charted by our statehouse leaders has been reckless… Patching together annual budgets that grow at 4 to 6 percent with one-time funds, cost shifts and other budgetary gimmicks when the underlying economy is growing at less than two percent is not OK. The consequences are inevitable." – Former finance commissioner Tom Pelham (CfV 11/14/14)

The Beatings Will Continue Until Morale Improves. The Shumlin Administration is proposing an end to the state's voluntary SPEED program with a mandatory renewable energy standard that would require utilities to sell a certain percentage of their renewable (read expensive) power to customers in Vermont. This decision comes as the state finds itself behind schedule for its impossible goal of deriving 90% of all our energy use from renewable sources by 2050. How often is it that we see government put in a "voluntary" program only to make it mandatory when it becomes apparent the people want no part of it? This is how Pre-K started out, here's the plan for renewable energy, and house is already moving voluntary to mandatory school district consolidation laws…. As George Will recently observed,

GM uh-O. Members of the U.S. House Commerce Committee are considering legislation that would ban states (like Vermont) from requiring labels on food made with genetically modified organisms, unless the FDA finds that the GMOs are indeed unsafe. So much for the one accomplishment Gov. Shumlin was able to tout during the last campaign.

Fracking Awesome! "Guess what? We just had a free-market tax cut that will boost middle-class incomes and just about everything else. The American energy revolution, combined with the market forces of supply and demand, is delivering something on the order of a $125 billion tax cut. Not only have wholesale oil prices dropped from about $100 a barrel to $66, but gasoline prices have fallen from near $4 a gallon to $2.78 at the week's close. That's a tax cut. With no big-government spending hikes…. As energy prices are falling, GDP is being revised higher. Real economic growth in the third quarter shifted up from 3.5 percent to 3.9 percent, led by an increase in business fixed investment. The last two quarters averaged 4.2 percent at an annual rate." – Larry

Kudlow, Lower Oil Prices Are A Free Market Victory.

A Climate Change of Perspective. "Climate is no longer a major cause of deaths, thanks in large part to fossil fuels. … Not only are we ignoring the big picture by making the fight against climate danger the fixation of our culture, we are "fighting" climate change by opposing the weapon that has made it dozens of times less dangerous. The popular climate discussion has the issue backward. It looks at man as a destructive force for climate livability, one who makes the climate dangerous because we use fossil fuels. In fact, the truth is the exact opposite; we don't take a safe climate and make it dangerous; we take a dangerous climate and make it safe. High-energy civilization, not climate, is the driver of climate livability." – *Source: Alex Epstien.*

The Cost of Combating Global Warming. According to Forbes columnist Larry Bell, the ripple effect of global warming initiatives actually costs Americans $1.75 trillion . . . every year. *That's three times larger than the entire U.S. federal budget deficit. – Source: Federal Climate Change Expenditure Report To Congress*

Give 'em Hell, Sony (Et Al). "When even one American - who has done nothing wrong - is forced by fear to shut his mind and close his mouth - then all Americans are in peril." - Harry S. Truman

McClaughry Responds to Gruber. The name of MIT economist Jonathan Gruber dominated the airwaves in November when the media unearthed seven videos showing him mocking transparency and "stupid voters", and candidly explaining how he helped mask the true impact of ObamaCare to get it through Congress in 2010.

One video, from 2011, was recorded by True North Reports in the State House. House Health Care Chairman Mark Larson read from John McClaughry's commentary (without naming him) predicting that Green Mountain Care would lead to "coercive mandates, ballooning costs, increasing taxes, bureaucratic outrages, shabby facilities, disgruntled providers, long waiting lines, lower quality care, special interest nest-feathering, and destructive wage and price controls."

Gruber, presenting the Hsiao-Gruber Report advocating Green Mountain Care, replied "was that written by my adolescent children?" The whole room of single payer supporters broke out in raucous laughter. Now the video has gone viral, adding to the charge that Gruber is an arrogant political manipulator engaged (at considerable profit) in deceiving the American people.

On November 18 Fox44/ABC 22 reporter David Hodges interviewed EAI VP John McClaughry about the incident.

Book of the Month

The Beautiful Tree
A Personal Journey Into How the World's Poorest People are Educating Themsleves
By James Tooley
Cato Institute, 2013 (302 pgs.)

For some people, the quest to bring a high quality, affordable education to less advantaged children is like the Holy Grail. Finding such a prize often is not what you expected it to be. Such was case with James Tooley, who went to Zimbabwe to be a public school teacher, fresh out of college, in the early 1980's. In his quest, Tooley's assumptions were challenged and his worldview turned upside down. He chronicled his experience in his book: "The Beautiful Tree."

Now an award winning scholar, Dr. Tooley's odyssey began with an offer of a commission from the World Bank's International Finance Corporation to help private schools in developing countries. He was intrigued by the chance to travel abroad, but troubled by the assignment. After all, as everyone knows, private schools are for the rich. The poor needed universal public schooling subsidized by government and held accountable to professional educators.

However, what Tooley found is that the most effective means of offering the poorest of the poor around the world with a low cost and high quality education is being provided by private "for profit" schools in rural villages from India, to Africa to South America, China, etc. His revelation was not received well by the international establishment. In fact, his work was attacked and ridiculed even when he backed it up with a large amount of data that his critics rarely answered.

When Tooley's critics could not refute the reality that these schools provide a much higher quality education than the majority of public schools, they fell back on the accountability argument. These for profit private schools were only accountable to the profit motive, so this could not be the answer to educating the world's poor.

That got Dr. Tooley to thinking. He could not deny the better results and higher motivation among the teachers in these private schools, but how could that happen with public accountability. The answer he came up with was the very picture of simplicity. The schools were accountable to the parents, who were the customers. He realized that accountability was built into what some libertarians call the "fee for service" model.

The people running these schools often were capable of making more money elsewhere, but wanted to give something back to their community. They often waived fees to make school more affordable. The biggest surprise, which Dr. Tooley discovered, was that this was not some capitalist plot imposed upon the developing countries by rich capitalist nations. On the contrary, it is rooted in local native traditions.

During his time in India, the owner of an old book store showed him a green book with quotes from Mahatma Gandhi on October 20, 1931 at the Chatham House in London:

> I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully, that today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago, and so is Burma, because the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the root, and left the root like that, and the ***beautiful tree*** perished.

This quote is where Dr. Tooley got the name for the book. What was he talking about? What "beautiful tree?" Dr.Tooley read on and found his answer: *"The village schools were not good enough for the British administrator, so he came out with his own programme. Every school must have so much paraphernalia, building, and so forth."*

What Gandhi experienced was exactly the attitude that Dr. Tooley was bumping into among international development experts when presented with the reality of the high performance of local for profit private schools. Gandhi concluded that:

> And the schools established after the European pattern were too expensive for the people. . . . I defy anybody to fulfill a programme of compulsory primary education of these masses inside of a century. This very poor country of mine is ill able to sustain such an expensive method of education. Our state would revive the old village schoolmaster and dot every village with a school both for boys and girls.

Dr. Tooley is now an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute is the co-founder and chairman of Omega Schools, a chain of low cost private schools in Ghana. He is involved in other such efforts, with the help of the Cato Institute and other advocates of educational freedom, to promote choice, competition and entrepreneurship in education.

The model of free, compulsory education has failed the word's poor and a network is being put into place to replace that failed model with one that puts parents back in charge of their own children's education by making education accountable to the parents. As the old saying goes, “he who pays the piper, calls the tune.” In other words, if we are to make education truly accountable to parents, and for choice to mean anything, parents must have some “skin in the game.”

– Review by Robert Maynard, a member of the Ethan Allen Institute advisory board and editor of True North Reports.

The Final Word

Thank you to the Caledonian Record for this…

Editorial: Credit Where It's Due

Single payer health care is dead – at least until Gov. Peter Shumlin and his allies can find some more believable way of producing over $2 billion to make it “work.”

Following his surrender, the mainstream media sympathetically reported the governor’s terrible disappointment. They wrote about all the wasted time and money in the context of the governor’s herculean effort and deeply noble beliefs.

They interviewed the single payer advocates, who were variously heartbroken and angry. In the latter category was the Vermont Workers Center, that held a comical rally at the state house to demand Single Payer now; Dr. Deb Richter of Vermont Health Care for All; and Peter Sterling of the union-funded Vermont Leads.
But what of those who, for years, battled thanklessly to warn Vermonters of the certain disaster that single-payer would have been? They were largely absent from reports.

Since we’ve been among the latter bellwethers, we know who deserves recognition for their hard work opposing Shumlin's socialist agenda.

The state Republican party should have led detractors but it was a non-factor in debates. But it was, at best, wishy-washy and weak.
All the credit is owed to a dedicated, heavily outspent, few.

Among them the Ethan Allen Institute. For 20 years we've relied on incisive criticisms of single-payer schemes from EAI founder and Vice President John McClaughry. We've published at least 43 of his commentaries on health care policy, plus five detailed reports. Most of those efforts exposed various follies of collectivized health care and spelled out the advantages of "consumer driven health care."

Current EAI President Rob Roper has done the same over the past two years. And board member, Rutland City Treasurer Wendy Wilton, published a spread sheet on financing Green Mountain Care in 2012 that proved to be remarkably accurate.

The only other public voice against single payer has been Vermonters for Health Care Freedom, led by the indefatigable Darcie Johnston. VHCF was all over every development in this three year saga, shining light into some dark corners. Johnston has yet to be wrong about anything she said.

There were also individual voices, including a few doctors, politicians and writers. But the aforementioned organizations carried the battle. As Vermont moves into a new phase of health care "reform," the people who were right all along need to be at the center of the debate. We think the losers have earned themselves a seat in the audience.