

Ethan Allen Institute

Newsletter - March 2014 (Printer Edition)

Top Story

Bring Your Roll Call Profile to Town Meeting Day

EAI has created Roll Call Profiles for each of Vermont's 180 legislators, providing a detailed record of their voting history along with contact information.

If you haven't had a chance to check out these fantastic new tools, we encourage you to do so on the EAI website (<http://ethanallen.org/category/roll-call/>).

Print them out and bring a copy of your legislators' profile along to Town Meeting Day! Better yet, bring a whole bunch of copies!

How to Effectively Communicate with Your Representatives

Most legislators will confide that hearing personally from just five constituents on an issue can make a big difference in how they vote. Here are some tips about how to contact your legislator(s), and how make your communications most effective.

Leave a Message with Sgt. at Arms.

This is probably the most practical/effective way to connect with your legislator(s) when they are in the State House. A message left with the Sergeant at Arms will be, at your request, hand delivered by a page to your representative(s). A flurry of pink memo notes delivered by green-jacketed pages can have quite an effect.

By Phone. The Sergeant at Arms' phone number is **1-802-828-2228** or **1-800-322-5616**. Leave a clear and concise message, as it must fit on a post-it note. It is a good idea to write your message out before you call so you know exactly what you're going to say. Know the name(s) of the legislator(s) to whom you would like the message delivered. (Note: "All of them" will not fly.) If you do not know who your legislators are, the office can help you identify them.

By E-mail. You can also e-mail your legislator through the Sergeant at Arms at sgtatarms@leg.state.vt.us. In your message, be sure ask the staff to please print out your message and have it hand delivered to your legislator(s).

In all cases, if you desire a response to your message, be sure to specifically request one and provide a way to do so (email address, phone number, etc.).

Personal Notes & Letters

Hand-written letters are highly effective means of communicating. Many legislators will concede that this is the most persuasive means of communication as the time and effort it takes to write and post a letter conveys the seriousness with which the constituent regards the issue. If your handwriting is weak, it is best to type your letter, but always hand-address the envelope.

Direct emails to your legislators are good for registering a quick opinion and are most likely to get a personal response, if that's what you're looking for. On the downside, direct emails, for whatever reasons, are not always as reliably received/read as one would desire.

In all communications be polite and respectful. Consider how you would like to be addressed by someone trying to persuade you on an issue.

You can find all of your legislators' contact information – mailing address, phone numbers, emails, etc., (as well as who your legislators are) on the legislative website: <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/legdirMain.cfm>

Commentary: Article 16 - The Wise Decision of 1777

by John McClaughry

In June of 1777 the people of “New Connecticut”, the land between New Hampshire and New York, learned that Congress had refused to admit their little republic into the union of the 13 colonies recently declared independent.

So on July 2 a group of frontier settlers met at the Old Meeting House in Windsor to promulgate a Constitution for what was soon to become the independent republic of Vermont.

The first purpose of a constitution was to declare the rights of the people. For this they borrowed much of the elegant language of the Pennsylvania Constitution, including “that the people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves of and the state.” That right has remained there, self-evident and unaltered, for 237 years (Chapter I, Article 16).

There was little controversy over this right until the dawn of the 20th century. In 1903 the Rutland city council adopted an ordinance requiring a person wishing to carry a firearm within the city to obtain permission from the mayor or police chief. The Vermont Supreme Court, in a one page decision, unanimously and unequivocally struck down the ordinance, saying “the carrying of firearms for one's defense is a fundamental right of a citizen. The ordinance is repugnant to the Constitution.” (State v. Rosenthal, 1903).

Another eighty-five years went by before some momentum built for localities to pass their own gun control laws. Defenders of Article 16 countered with a measure now known as the Sportsmen's Bill of Rights. This law states that “Except as provided by law, no town, city or incorporated village, by ordinance, resolution or other enactment, shall directly regulate hunting, fishing and trapping or the possession, ownership, transportation, transfer, sale, purchase, carrying, licensing or registration of traps, firearms, ammunition or components of firearms or ammunition.”

This act was approved by the Senate on a voice vote, and by the House on a 128-5 roll call. Gov. Kunin signed it into law, and Howard Dean, then Lt. Governor, later made

the unlikely boast that “I got it passed.”

Since then the partisans of gun control have repeatedly tried to undermine the law. In 2000 Montpelier residents voted for a charter change to regulate carrying a loaded firearm, but the legislature declined to ratify it. Efforts in Barre and Rutland also failed.

A year ago Burlington City Council member Norm Blais proposed a city charter change to ban possession of certain (undefined) “semi-automatic assault weapons and multiple ammo clips in the City of Burlington”, with such ban to be enforced by substantial fines and civil forfeiture. After months of tumultuous hearings, the Charter Change committee offered three less sweeping measures for voter approval on town meeting day (March 4).

The first measure prohibits possession of firearms on the property of first class liquor license businesses, including restaurants. That fact may be of interest to would-be assailants.

The second allows the police to seize firearms without a warrant, where it is alleged that the owner might have been or might be engaged in domestic abuse.

The third requires citizens to place their firearms in a “safe storage depository”, to make them effectively unusable for defense against a home invasion.

Any resolutions that are approved would then have to be ratified by the General Assembly, which approval would in effect exempt the City of Burlington from the Sportsmens’ Bill of Rights.

It will be argued that what was a self-evident right to the inhabitants of the Vermont frontier of 1777 is no longer applicable in the 21st century. To that one should reply, self-defense is always and everywhere a human right. Law-abiding Vermonters cannot be deprived of their constitutionally protected right to self-defense, any more than they can be deprived of their constitutionally protected rights of speech, religion, assembly and press.

If the gun control advocates want to nullify the constitutional protection of self-defense, there is a way to do it: persuade the legislature and the voters to repeal Article 16 of the Constitution. Until that occurs, voters would do well to disapprove every ballot item designed to whittle away at any constitutionally-protected human right.

- John McClaughry is vice president of the Ethan Allen Institute

Commentary: Vermont Needs a Better Plan for Job Creation

By Rob Roper

The past year has been a hard one on Vermont employees. For example, IBM, Vermont’s long-time top private employer laid off 419 workers from its Essex facility last summer and just announced another 140 jobs will go. Up north, Energizer closed its St. Albans factory in September, costing us 165 jobs. Down south, just this past month Plasan Carbon Composites of Bennington announced it is moving to Michigan along with 143 more jobs. Vermont Yankee and its 600 plus jobs, which average over \$100,000 per year salaries, will close its doors at the end of 2014.

People can argue over why these companies left or downsized. Is it state policy, or other factors beyond the state’s control, or a combination of both? Each case is different, and in each case myriad factors certainly influenced the final decisions. Companies operating in free markets will always be opening, closing, and moving. But,

one thing is for certain: Vermont needs an effective strategy to attract new good-paying, tax-revenue-generating jobs to replace the one's we've lost at least as fast as we're losing them.

Other states are being very aggressive in this regard. One neighbor, New York, is advertising Governor Cuomo's plan to revitalize its economy by offering companies ten years of tax-free existence for starting, relocating or expanding businesses in specific enterprise zones. "Business will be able to locate in these zones and operate 100% tax-free for 10 years. No income tax. No business or corporate state or local taxes. No sales tax. No property tax. No franchise fees," boasts the program website.

Michigan, which poached Plasan out of Bennington, succeeded in doing so by offering the company nearly \$5 million in tax credits.

When Huber + Suhner left Vermont in October, 2013, taking 63 jobs to North Carolina and New Jersey, the company's president explained, "Obviously, the cost of doing business [in Vermont] and the tax perspective is a significant reason why we're moving." North Carolina had just instituted a series of tax reforms, including cuts to income tax rates, corporate tax rates, property taxes, capping the gasoline tax, and fully repealing the estate tax.

The common theme here is that employers are looking for favorable tax environments of one kind or another, and are rewarding the states that provide them. Given that fact, how should we expect employers to react to what's being discussed in the Vermont State House today?

Here, a prospective employer is looking at the potential for a 13% to 16% plus payroll tax to pay for single payer healthcare (S.252). An increase in the minimum wage to \$12.50 or as much as \$15/hour (H.433, H.552, H770, S.301). Government mandated paid sick leave for employees (H.208, S.255). A 0.25% increase in the Rooms & Meals tax (H.586). A 7¢ per \$100 of assessed value property tax increase to \$1.01 for residential properties and \$1.51 for commercial. And, all this would be on top of an existing reputation as a high-tax, business-unfriendly state.

We are surrounded by Boston, New York, Montreal — 80 million people in the surrounding metropolitan markets — with a plethora of high paying, fairly mobile jobs in finance, communications, arts and entertainment, high tech, software, law, etc. What would it take to entice folks in these kinds of high-wage, low-environmental-impact industries to move to Vermont and hang out their shingles?

I suspect the answer would have a lot to do with lower taxes: a message of "Come to Vermont, bring your business, keep more of what you earn, and spend it living in the greatest lifestyle experience New England has to offer." Such a pitch would require serious policies to back it up. This is what Vermont should be doing to grow the economic pie, but we're not making that offer. Quite the opposite.

A friend who is an entrepreneur and software engineer recently crunched the numbers on what a total tax burden for a family of five living in Burlington and earning \$90,000 a year would look like if the single payer payroll tax took effect. Of that \$90,000 salary, \$53,982.80 would go to pay one form of tax or another — \$16,222.80 for state and federal income tax, \$11,160 FICA tax, \$12,600 payroll tax, \$1000 for state and federal unemployment tax and workers comp, plus \$11,500 in property taxes and an estimated \$1500 for sales taxes.

Most people are going to look at that and say, you know, that's way more than my fair share, and head off Michigan or North Carolina, or across the boarder to New Hampshire. We've only ourselves to blame.

- Rob Roper is president of the Ethan Allen Institute

Commentary: Accountability Key to VT's Substance Abuse Problem

by Wendy Wilton

As a volunteer at a regional women's shelter I have seen the impacts of substance abuse up close as well as its impact on children and families. Substance abuse is now rife even among those on state assistance. We spend billions of dollars annually on benefits for those in need and millions on incarceration for a system that is a revolving door. My own volunteer work has helped me see firsthand that the state also has an unintended role in continuing poverty and enabling substance abuse simply because financial policies are not aligned with expectations.

Law enforcement officials pointed out last year that state-funded emergency shelter money was frequently being used to house individuals suspected of dealing drugs because we don't have adequate controls or monitoring in place. State resources intended to help homeless families may be diverted from landlord rent payments to the purchase of drugs, since rent money is paid to occupants rather than landlords. This leads to evictions, more homelessness and families camped out in motels on the state's tab in a vicious cycle, where the State loses millions of Agency of Human Services (AHS) dollars just in housing. Landlords who don't get paid raise rents to cover losses or fail to pay taxes which further complicates the problem.

AHS is failing because we are not tying safety net expenditures to desired policy outcomes. We must build into the system clear accountability for aid recipients.

Policymakers must articulate clear, measurable outcome objectives, costs, services provided and the number of individuals served. The legislature needs to hear personally from people on the front lines of this initiative and not try and build in their own assumptions – police officers, nurses, teachers, social workers, not just policy wonks and special-interest lobbyists who benefit from the flow of funds to certain programs. In the past, policymakers have sometimes confused enabling with empowerment. With clear objectives, data gathering and transparency, the legislature must then hold everyone accountable—the administration, employees, and recipients. Clear, across-the-board accountability can both make it more cost-efficient and more effective.

State employees generally know which clients are succeeding and which are not. But any drug treatment professional will tell you that substance abusers are a canny lot. They have to be to maintain a habit. Substance abuse monitoring (testing), unannounced visits, and tips from family or neighbors are effective ways a caseworker can ensure recipients are accountable. We must intervene sooner on behalf of vulnerable populations like children and the elderly.

Currently, there must be several incident reports or an arrest for a serious offense, such as child sexual abuse, before AHS takes action on a case. That's too late. We must involve AHS employees more on the front line so they can be proactive instead of reactive. The legislature must provide the right oversight tools and procedures to AHS employees and field workers so they can turn the tide of continued drug abuse, even

within the social safety net.

At our local women's shelter and methadone clinics we are holding people accountable: if residents in the shelter are found with drugs they cannot stay. Patients at the methadone clinic who do not comply with testing or counseling requirements cannot participate. People with substance abuse problems only seek help when they have bottomed out. Understanding that, we can impose accountability. Active users cannot manage their personal finances or money supplied by the State. EBT cards without photos mean that anyone can use the card if given the PIN. Reach Up funds and the non-food portion of the EBT card is often converted to cash then used to buy drugs or alcohol. The state ends up as an unwilling supplier and it is the children in these families who suffer.

Vermonters must demand that government spend our tax dollars effectively by providing assistance to those who need it, ensuring that those funds are spent for intended purposes, and that all participants are accountable to the agreed-upon outcomes.

If we do not demand this of ourselves this problem will continue to erode our way of life and consume more tax dollars. Our hospitals, schools, police departments and human services personnel cannot stem this tide alone. They are overworked, frustrated and ultimately become disillusioned. We can't let this problem worsen.

- Wendy Wilton is Treasurer of the City of Rutland and a board member of the Rutland County Women's Network and Shelter. She is a board member of the Ethan Allen Institute.

Events

March 1. EAI president, Rob Roper, speaks to the Green Mountain Patriots with a "Mid-Session" update. 9:00 am at the Essex VFW Hall.

March 9. A rally in support of Second Amendment rights will take place from 12-3 pm in Montpelier on the State House steps. EAI's John McClaughry will be one of the featured speakers.

March 13. Equinox Village in Manchester Vermont from 4:00 to 5:30 PM, EAI president Rob Roper will lead a discussion on education and politics, framed as the contrast between people and groups solving their own problems versus the government collecting taxes and trying to solve the problem.

March 29. "Vermont's Experiment." St. Johnsbury, Catamount Art Center, 115 Eastern Avenue, 4:00p.m.

Roll Call Reports

HOUSE PASSES BILL TO OUTLAW THE USE OF HANDHELD DEVICES WHILE DRIVING, 130-11, February 13, 2014.

SENATE PASSES CHILDCARE UNIONIZATION BILL, 22-8, February 27, 2014.

Bills To Watch

Raising the Rooms & Meals Tax. Legislators are considering a 0.25 percent increase in the state's 9 percent rooms and meals tax (10 percent on alcohol served in restaurants) to help fund clean up of Lake Champlain. H.586 would also assess \$10 and \$20 "per parcel" fees on residential and commercial development. Fees on wholesale fertilizer and rental cars are also under consideration.

<http://leg.state.vt.us/database/status/textonly.cfm?Bill=H.0586&Session=2014>

Attack on Towns & Independent Schools. The original text of S.91 was gutted and replaced with language placing a two year moratorium on towns closing their local public schools and reopening them as independent schools as North Bennington did. The "new" S.91 passed out of Senate Ed unanimously.

The Blitz Assault on Job Creators. Employers and prospective employers in Vermont are currently looking down the barrel of a a 13% to 16% plus payroll tax to pay for single payer healthcare (S.252). An increase in the minimum wage to \$12.50 or as much as \$15/hour (H.433, H.552, H770, S.301). Government mandated paid sick leave for employees (H.208, S.255). A 0.25% increase in the Rooms & Meals tax (H.586). A 7¢ per \$100 of assessed value property tax increase to \$1.01 for residential properties and \$1.51 for commercial. So who's in?!

Grocery Bag Tax. This idea just won't go away... two bills that will tax grocery bags. The House version H.491/ <http://leg.state.vt.us/docs/2014/bills/Intro/H-491.pdf> would just tax plastic carryout bags at 5¢ apiece. The Senate bill S.205 <http://leg.state.vt.us/docs/2014/bills/Intro/S-205.pdf> would tax all -- paper, plastic or other -- at 10¢ apiece. Could be time to start requesting the "box" option at Healthy Living -- which, by the way, can't be recycled for use in trash cans around the house like the grocery bags are.

An act relating to creating targeted economic development initiatives (H. 736 <http://leg.state.vt.us/database/status/textonly.cfm?Bill=H.0736&Session=2014>). This is, arguably, the only pro-economic development bill going under the Dome, modest as it is. The best aspect of the bill would establish the Agency of Commerce and Community Development as "a one-stop resource for new businesses to obtain a start-up checklist, contact information of relevant State administrators; formation, registration, and related requirements of State business regulations...."

News & Views

New Tool to Analyze School Budgets. Campaign for Vermont has put together two data

sets to create an easy to use Education Research Tool (ERT) allowing citizens to simultaneously examine their school district's budget and their district's latest student assessment results from the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). The ERT also allows voters to compare data among school districts. All data was obtained from Vermont's Department of Education and profiles budget data and assessment results for the current fiscal year. Check it out!

Vermont's Cost of Living: The Missouri Economic Research and Information Center has published a report listing the cost of living index in the fifty states, compared to the US average of 100. Vermont ranks 7th highest in the lower 48 states at 120.1 (20% above the national average). Even more costly are MA (121.9), RI (123.3), CA (124.3), NJ (127.9), CT (131.4), and NY (131.4).

Turns Out Wendy Wilton Was Right: After deriding Rutland City Treasurer and EAI board member Wendy Wilton as well as the independent Avelere Group for estimating the tax bill for single payer healthcare would be between \$1.9 and \$2.2 billion (not the Shumlin Administration's \$1.6 billion estimate), the Shumlin Administration is now admitting the plan will need to raise between \$1.77 billion and \$2.18 billion. Plus an apology.

Sticking it to Small Business: "The majority of small businesses in Vermont currently pay nothing for healthcare because they don't offer it...If you tell the majority of small businesses in Vermont that they're going to go from zero percent of payroll to 13 percent overnight [to pay for Green Mountain Care], I think there might be dramatic implications throughout the economy." – Sen. Tim Ashe, Democratic chair of the Senate Finance Committee, 1/24/14. Dramatic implications through the voting booth, too.

NEA Dumps \$80,000 into Pro-Single-Payer Organization. Vermont Leads, the nice people who protested in front of the home and trespassed on the porch of a Vermont woman declaring opposition to single payer "will not be tolerated," got an \$80,000 cash infusion from the NEA. Vermont Leads had shut down all but its Facebook page after burning through \$130,000 in SIEU money during the last election cycle. Is this really what union members want their dues money going toward?

IBM Announces Another 10% Reduction in Workforce. In was just last summer that IBM announced it would be laying off 419 workers. On Feb ??, Big Blue in Essex announced it will be laying off another 10% of its workforce.

143 More Vermont Jobs Gone. Plasan Carbon Composites of Bennington is closing up shop and moving to Michigan. In the past, Plasan Carbon Composites has been held up as an example by Governor Shumlin to illustrate Vermont's ability to attract good-paying high-tech, "green" manufacturing jobs. Not so much any more.

VPIRG said it, not us. "Even if the U.S. could literally start being run on 'fairy dust' tomorrow, emit absolutely no greenhouse gas emissions from today forward, and the fundamental physics and the fundamental problem with greenhouse gases in this planet would not change. It would buy the rest of the world a few years to get their act together, but it wouldn't actually change the basic trajectory that we're on." Ben Walsh of

VPRIG. Watch the video here.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KIUIDTOrXs&feature=youtu.be>

People Not So Worried About “Climate Change”. The WSJ/NBC survey released January 28 showed job-creation and deficit-reduction as the two highest priorities of a national sample of Americans. The lowest of the 13 was "addressing climate change." Curiously, Sen. Bernie Sanders, who for forty years has offered socialism as the way to job creation and happiness for all, has just formed a Senate group to “address climate change”.

A Lesson for Vermont: “It is clear from the German example, Vermont’s (i.e., Shumlin’s) 2011 Comprehensive Energy Plan goal of 90% of ALL energy from renewable energy by 2050 (not just electrical energy which is only about 1/3 of ALL energy), whereas a technical possibility, would not be economically tenable, even if other New England states had similar ambitions to handicap their economies, businesses and households.” – Electrical engineer Willem Post, 02/03/14.

Climate Change Retreat: “Unnoticed, the IPCC has slashed its global-warming predictions, implicitly rejecting the models on which it once so heavily and imprudently relied. In the second draft of the Fifth Assessment Report it had broadly agreed with the models that the world will warm by 0.4 to 1.0 C° from 2016-2035 against 1986-2005. But in the final draft it quietly cut the 30-year projection to 0.3-0.7 C°, saying the warming is more likely to be at the lower end of the range [equivalent to about 0.4 C° over 30 years].” (WUWT 1/1/14)

Your Tax Dollars at Work: “A drug intended to release addicts from the tyranny of heroin and painkillers is trafficked on the streets of Vermont alongside the very substances it was created to thwart. Taxpayer dollars are subsidizing the addiction habits of hundreds of Vermonters, and lawmakers are considering legislation to crack down on buprenorphine diversion. The state last year spent \$8.25 million in Medicaid money on buprenorphine, a narcotic prescribed to help Vermonters overcome dependency on opiates. (VT Digger, 2/11/14)

Most Liberal Congressman. No, it’s not Vermont’s Peter Welch. According to National Journal rankings, it’s Judy Chu (D-CA). Welch finished tied for 8th (out of 430).

Independence! The Congressional Quarterly “support for the President” rankings are out, and Vermont’s “Independent” Senator Bernie Sanders once again shows why he is not a Democrat. His support for the Obama position was a measly 94%.

One Vision of the Future. “The legislature, in their collective omnipotence, thinks anything and everything is their purview. Vermont is becoming a new Soviet Union. The state wants full control of healthcare. The state wants to control daycare. The state wants to do something about addiction. The state wants to control education and centralize the funding and control what’s taught. The state wants to control how cell phones are used. The state wants to control what one does with land. Every aspect of life has to be regulated, controlled, taxed and licensed. I heard the legislature wants to get involved with shopping bags too. Of course, that’s important work. By 2050 all teachers,

Doctors, daycare providers and people who work in energy, will be state employees.” – Dave Bellini, Vermont State Employees Union.

Poverty in a Free Market, Capitalist Society: "Today," Matt Ridley writes in his book *The Rational Optimist* [2010], "of Americans officially designated as 'poor,' 99 per cent have electricity, running water, flush toilets, and a refrigerator; 95 per cent have a television, 88 per cent a telephone, 71 per cent a car and 70 percent air conditioning. Cornelius Vanderbilt had none of these."

Words of Wisdom from Silent Cal. “To live under the American Constitution is the greatest political privilege that was ever accorded to the human race.” Calvin Coolidge, 12 December 1924

Book of the Month

The Story-Killers

A Common Sense Case Against the Common Core

By Terence Moore

292 Pages

Dr. Terence Moore’s *The Story-Killers* demystifies the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Adopted by 45 states and allegedly state-developed, the standards sound good in theory, but what exactly are they?

Terence Moore is a Hillsdale College Professor who has hands-on experience running and designing classical K-12 schools. He illuminates four key parts of the standards.

First is the actual *standards*. Full of educational jargon, they focus on abstract skills and tell us nothing of what will happen in the classroom. It is easy to conclude that they are innocuous.

The second part is *Appendix A*, which largely defines “*text complexity*.” Described by Moore as a “pseudo-science,” this computer generated program fails to distinguish between complexity of words and complexity of thoughts. Thus *The Grapes of Wrath* registers at a fourth grade reading level because the words are more basic than the thoughts behind them.

The third part is *Appendix B*, which offers a list of recommended books to read (“text exemplars”), which at first glance looks fine...until Moore points out some crucial missing literature and the fact that the approved textbooks include only scattered, short excerpts, rarely an entire work. Moore calls that “drive-by” treatment.

The fourth part is the *textbooks*. Common Core supporters assert that the actual in-class curriculum is still in the hands of local school boards and states. Purely voluntary, they say. But Common Core is already developing national testing to measure student learning and, thus, teacher competence. So in reality, Moore says, it won’t be

practical for school boards and teachers to use anything other than Common Core textbooks, if they want their schools and faculty to be rated highly.

Moore criticizes the textbooks particularly harshly. The CCSS approach “...ignores, chops up, misunderstands, trivializes, distorts and spoils our greatest stories.” He gives concrete example after concrete example. A seventeen page section of Prentice Hall’s *The British Tradition* on Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* contains introductory comments by Shelly but no excerpt from *Frankenstein* itself. But it does contain five pages of a Saturday Night Live parody of *Frankenstein*, which the students are asked to act out. Included is the following line: “Oh great—now it is a racial thing! You know what? You guys are a bunch of fascists!” And here is the prompt to teachers: “Point out the use of the term *fascist*. Explain its traditional political meaning and how it has been extended to refer to any right-wing extremist group.” (Remember this is a literature class, and no further context or discussion is offered.)

Similarly, in an American literature textbook in a section called, “A Nation is Born,” only 23 out of 107 pages contain actual writing from that time period.

Moore’s final chapter outlines with both logic and soul what a *real* Common Core curriculum should be. (He teaches it himself.) It is a list of great books, linked together in a logical and chronological order to give students an understanding of their heritage and a taste for the great questions. Literature, he says, is the study of “human conversations.”

This is an excellent book for anyone who wants to understand what children are being taught in today’s public school classrooms. As Moore points out, Common Core is not really new. It puts an official imprimatur on the educational direction that we have been moving in for the last several decades.

Review by Carol Frenier, who is a member of the Ethan Allen Institute Advisory Committee.

Final Thought

Polls Indicate Support for Single Payer Healthcare Is Collapsing

The National Education Association (NEA) just paid for a poll gauging support for single payer healthcare in Vermont. The results are being spun hard. One prominent headline touts, “Poll Shows Support for Single Payer.” However, no rational, honest person could come to this conclusion. What the data actually shows is a collapse in support for single payer.

Asked, “Are you inclined to favor or oppose a single payer system for Vermont, or do you feel you don’t know enough about it to have a firm opinion,” Vermonters in the February 2014 poll registered 24% approval for single payer, 25% were opposed, and 51% said they were not sure.

However, a year ago in February 2013, Castleton Polling Institute asked a similar question, “Do you favor or oppose a single-payer health care system for Vermont, where health care is publicly financed?” At that time, 52% of Vermonters supported single

payer, 30% were opposed, and 17% were not sure.

What the two data sets show is that over the past twelve months, support for single payer healthcare in Vermont has plummeted from 52% to 24%. That is a dramatic collapse.

Some of the shift from “support”/“opposition” to “not sure” can be attributed to additional language in the VTNEA question, “...or do you feel you don’t know enough about it to have a firm opinion,” which provides an easy off ramp. However, the shift from “support” to “not sure” (28 points or 54%) was far more dramatic than that of “oppose” to “not sure” (5 points or 16%).

It appears that the NEA’s decision to drop \$80,000 into Vermont to support single payer healthcare is one born of panic.