

Ethan Allen Institute

Newsletter – September 2019 (Printer Edition)

Top Story: Are You Ready for the “Climate Strike and Week of Action”?

The week of September 20-27 has been designated by a handful of activist and lobbyist groups as a “Global Climate Strike and Week of Actions.” The objective is to encourage people to skip work and, for students, skip school, go out and block traffic, picket offices and businesses, and generally disrupt people’s ability to function in their daily lives. It is a massive temper tantrum orchestrated to intimidate legislators and citizens into supporting a radical climate change agenda.

While we fully respect every citizen’s right to speak out, peaceably assemble, and petition government of redress of grievances, this thing (for lack of an adequately descriptive term) raises some questions.

First and foremost, many public schools are actively encouraging and enabling students to participate, even though similar but smaller demonstrations at the Strolling of the Heifers parade and the blocking of traffic in Montpelier earlier this year involved illegal activity by school aged children and young adults.

The organizations pushing the Climate Strike have a clear political agenda and, in the case of VPIRG, for example, lobby on behalf of special interests with a substantial financial stake in the legislation this mob will ostensibly be demanding. So, is this a legitimate educational mission, or is it the systematic political indoctrination and exploitation of young people at the expense of their genuine education? We think the latter.

We also think it adds insult to injury when Vermonters pay some of the highest property taxes in the country, and by some estimates as much as \$23,000 per student to attend our public schools, and the schools are using that money to send our kids out on the streets for the express purpose of creating mayhem in our daily lives.

If you as parents and/or taxpayers agree, now is the time to press your local school boards as to what their role and policy is regarding students and the “Climate Strike.” Are your schools encouraging participation? Are they making special allowances for participation? Are teachers involved and in what way? Is taxpayer money being used to facilitate participation? Are students being exposed to arguments on all sides of the issue or just one?

Second, although the strike is being billed as “peaceful” protest, actively blocking traffic and people’s access to buildings and services is not peaceful. Physically stopping someone from going from point A to point B is by its nature an act of force backed by the threat of violence. It is not peaceful.

As noted above, the stopping of traffic in Brattleboro and Montpelier were illegal acts, as was the disruption of State House business back in May. We can expect more illegal acts to take place during the week of the 20th-27th. The Ethan Allen Institute sent a

formal letter to Governor Scott, Attorney General T.J. Donovan and every mayor in the state asking if they have plans in place for preventing or minimizing the impact of these actions on the lawful activities of non-participants, and if they are fully prepared to support the arrest and prosecution of persons who break the law.

As of this writing (August 30), we have received no responses after ten days. Maybe they need to hear from you as well.

Read the full letter to Governor Scott, et al here:

Dear Governor Scott,

As you are certainly aware, during the week of September 20-27 climate change activists around the world will participate in a “Global Climate Strike and Week of Actions.” The objective is to promote acts of civil disobedience in order to intimidate governments into adopting more militant climate change agenda.

Here in Vermont, climate activists are currently holding training sessions to teach people how to disrupt and/or shut down events, block roadways, close off buildings, and to skip school and work in order to impact policy decisions. Here is the email sent out by “Sonia” of 350.org, Bill McKibben’s activist group, on July 18:

One of the ways you can start preparing is to join us for a Nonviolent Direct Action training - a powerful tool for social change! If you’re looking to be part of impactful actions in September and beyond, or want to take your activism to the next level, then these trainings are for you.

These workshops will be hands-on and interactive. Through role plays and experiential activities, we will learn the importance of collective action and its connection to collective liberation, the basics of NVDA (nonviolent direct action) theory, creative tactics for shutting things down to spotlight injustice, and legal factors to consider, all with a focus on how to use NVDA strategically within a campaign.

Please join us:

Wednesday, July 31, 6-8pm, Grace Church, Rutland. [Click here](#) to register. Co-sponsored by Climate Disobedience Center.

Sunday, August 18, 10am-4pm, Bugbee Center, White River Junction. [Click here](#) to register. Co-sponsored by Climate Disobedience Center and Extinction Rebellion.

Saturday, September 7, 10am-4pm, Burlington. [Click here](#) to register. Co-sponsored by Climate Disobedience Center.

Click [here](#) to pledge to join youth and adults around the world in striking on Sept. 20! If you’d like to get involved in organizing strikes and actions in Vermont, contact Leif: mobilize@350vt.org.

See you in the streets! Sonia and the 350Vermont Team

As you know, the climate change activists have already successfully – and illegally -- disrupted a session of the Vermont House, stopped the Strolling of the Heifers parade in Brattleboro, and shut down traffic in downtown Montpelier. Sometime very soon 350.org will bus activists to Bow, New Hampshire in an attempt to surround and shut down the coal-burning Merrimack Station, that supplies 440 Mw of reliable electricity to the New England grid.

While we strongly support the First Amendment rights of concerned citizens in a free society to speak their piece and to associate to advance their interests, we also understand the need for rule of law as well as the protection of the rights of citizens going about their business who want no part of this kind of mob action.

To this end, we would like your assurance that:

- a. you and your public safety officials are well aware of what's coming.
- b. you have plans in place for preventing or minimizing the impact of these actions on the lawful activities of non-participants.
- c. you are fully prepared to support the arrest and prosecution of persons who break the law, and
- d. you will insist that persons convicted of organizing and fomenting these disruptions actually serve time in the appropriate correctional institution, during which they can reflect on how their wrongful behavior seriously inconvenienced and harmed police departments, businesses, schools, utility managers, and their fellow citizens.

Thank you for your urgent consideration.

As a public policy organization, we would also like to know what changes in Vermont's criminal statutes might be necessary and desirable to enable law enforcement and prosecutors to more effectively deter and punish similar actions in the future.

Respectfully,
Robert Roper
President
Ethan Allen Institute

Commentary: A Renewed Attack on the First Amendment

By John McLaughry

The 2010 Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* unleashed a rhetorically violent attack from the Left, notably including Gov. Peter Shumlin and Vermont's three members of Congress.

In that case the Court overturned part of a 2002 campaign finance law known as BCRA. The Court held that "the government may not suppress political speech based on

the speaker's corporate identity". That is, whether the citizens spoke as individuals or through a corporation, nonprofit advocacy group or labor union.

Interestingly, had the BCRA restrictions been upheld, the free speech losers would have included, along with business corporations, advocacy groups such as VPIRG, Planned Parenthood, the Sierra Club, the Vermont-NEA, and the Vermont Workers Center, all stalwarts of the political left.

Nonetheless the Left shouted that with the campaign finance restrictions struck down, Big Money would come flooding in to further corrupt the political arena. "Overturn Citizens United!" became a demagogic plank in every left wing platform. Only the American Civil Liberties Union, usually on the Left, balked on principle, declaring "the ACLU will firmly oppose any constitutional amendment that would limit the free speech clause of the First Amendment."

As it turned out over the next nine years, striking down BCRA's offensive provisions has made little difference in the volume of money flowing into influencing elections, the great bulk of which does not come from corporations. Both the libertarian billionaire Koch brothers (who did not support the election of Donald Trump) and left wing billionaires George Soros, Michael Bloomberg and Tom Steyer have spent and are spending billions to influence national politics and elections – billions that they could legally have spent before the Court's decision.

The only sure way to overturn Citizens United was and is to enact a supervening constitutional amendment. That was attempted in 2014, but the measure fell far short of the required 2/3 vote in the Senate. Now, in the run up to the 2020 elections, the Democrats in the Senate – all of them – are peddling the 2014 proposal yet again. Section 1 of their "Democracy for All" Amendment authorizes Congress and the states to "regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections." This would allow a future left wing Congress to revive and strengthen BCRA, thus vitiating the Citizens United case and putting politicians in charge of the First Amendment.

It would however go further. It would overturn *Buckley v. Valeo*, the 1976 case in which the Court held that governments cannot limit how much of their own money individual citizens can independently spend to advance their political beliefs, including their own candidacies, "restrictions that the First Amendment cannot tolerate."

Section 2 adds that legislators "may distinguish between natural persons and corporations or other artificial entities created by law, including by prohibiting such entities from spending money to influence elections." Thus a right wing legislature in say Alabama could bar efforts to influence elections by the NAACP, and a left wing legislature in Oregon could bar similar efforts by the free market Americans for Prosperity. Unlike section 1, there is no requirement that such prohibitions be "reasonable", whatever a court might find that word to mean.

Section 3 contradicts the first two. It reads "nothing in this article shall be construed to grant Congress or the states the power to abridge the freedom of the press." But for this section, restrictive laws could be passed to silence political opinion from corporation-owned CNN and Fox News, or the Wall Street Journal or New York Times.

Jacob Sullum of Reason.com writes of this shameful and dangerous political stunt that it would "restore the health and integrity of our campaign finance system...only if 'health and integrity' require muting some voices so that others may be heard. But that goal is plainly at odds with freedom of speech and freedom of the press."

Of course, the Democracy for All (sic) Amendment cannot pass either House or Senate any time in the foreseeable future, because every Republican is commendably against it. But it's a disgrace to every (Democratic) sponsor who, solely for crass political purposes, put his or her name to destroying the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

- John McClaughry is vice president of the Ethan Allen Institute

Commentary: Two Prominent Young People Leave VT

By Rob Roper

This past spring the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce surveyed 500 young professionals, primarily Burlington area residents between the ages of 22 and 34, and learned that over 40% intend to leave Vermont. Now we can put some faces on those statistics. Taylor Dobbs, 29, a prominent reporter who worked for VPR and most recently Seven Days, has decamped with his wife, an educator, for North Carolina. Ben Jickling, 25, a two-term independent Representative from Brookfield, is leaving to take a job with a medical software company in Wisconsin. Both were life-long Vermonters.

North Carolina and Wisconsin have something in common beyond new, young residents from the Green Mountain State. Over the past decade, both dramatically rejected their historical progressive economic policy paths and fully embraced lower taxes and limited, smaller government.

A little history....

In 2010, Republicans took control of North Carolina's legislature for the first time in 140 years. Two years later, they established supermajorities in both chambers of the legislature and elected a Republican Governor, Pat McCrory. These Republicans then enacted a dramatic package of tax and regulatory reform in 2013, including (but not limited to) lowering and flattening the income tax from 7.75% to 5.75%, fully exempting Social Security from the state income tax, fully repealing the estate tax, capping the gasoline tax, and reducing the corporate income tax from 6.9% to 3% over three years.

In 2010 Wisconsin, Republicans also took both chambers of their legislature from the Democrats and elected Governor Scott Walker. They too set out on a bold course of economic reforms, most notably making Wisconsin a "Right to Work" state (NC has been a Right to Work state since 1947), but also instituting roughly \$8.5 billion in tax cuts, including \$3.56 billion in property tax cuts, as well as shrinking and restructuring state government.

The results speak for themselves. A recent study of North Carolina measuring six areas of economic growth (growth in real GDP, employment, real GDP per capita, real personal income per capita, employment per capita, and worker productivity) showed that between 2014-17, the period after the NCGOP tax cuts and economic reforms kicked in, North Carolina's economy outperformed the nation and the Southeast in all six categories.

In Wisconsin, after Walker left office due to an election loss in 2018, the state was taking in record revenues, running a budget surplus of over \$660 million, unemployment was at record lows, and more people were working in Wisconsin than ever before.

Important to note: This is what the states Vermont's young people are leaving us for have to offer.

It's also important to note what these states do not have. Neither Wisconsin nor North Carolina has a universal, publicly funded preschool program. Neither has a paid family leave law (though both state's legislatures have recently debated the policy). Both states have a minimum wage of not \$15 an hour, but the federally allowed minimum of \$7.25. Neither state is bribing young people to move there with \$10,000 checks.

Yes, it's ironic that Ben Jickling voted to stick Vermont with a \$15 minimum wage just before bolting for a better, more lucrative career opportunity in a state with a minimum wage of less than half that. And who would have guessed after reading Taylor Dobbs' work for the past six or seven years that he'd blow off our progressive utopia for a state with over 140 official Confederate monuments. But, even for these most politically conscious citizens, career and affordable housing are apparently what's really important.

Anyone's decision to leave one state for another must be deeply personal and the reasons for doing so multiple and varied, so I won't presume motives beyond what Jickling and Dobbs revealed publicly. But here's what we do know about these two examples: Vermont's high minimum wage, universal pre-k program, green energy policies, etc. did not keep these young people here, and the complete and utter lack of these policies in their newly adopted states was not a deterrent to their moving in. So, if these are the ideas our lawmakers are working on to keep young people here and attract more, perhaps they should seriously rethink that strategy.

Few people in Vermont were in a better position to know what our politicians are doing and not doing to stop our demographic slide than these two young men. They took that knowledge, gauged their future, and left for states that are doing things very differently. It turns out a good job in Jickling's case and affordable housing/cost of living in Dobbs' case are more attractive than any bouquet of government programs and handouts.

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

Events

September 14. Come join the 802 VT alliance! Saturday September 14th 10 am until 4pm at the Otter Creek Fun Center, 1800 Rt 7 in Danby VT. This is a family friendly fun and informative event!

Come meet other liberty loving Vermonters in having a great time getting to know one another while we plan to save our state from the failed social engineering experiments of the progressive left!

The line up of speakers is as follows:

11:00- John McClaughry – Act 250

11:30- Kate Bowen – Vermont Farmer's Plight

12:15- Chris Bradley, Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

12:45- JT Dodge – No Carbon Tax

1:15- Lawrence Zupan – Civic History
2:15- Rob Roper – Conservative Shift
3:00- Mary Beerworth -Respecting Life

There Is a \$10.00 "PLAY ALL Day " per person special for Mini Golf, Arcade, and Bouncy House activities!! Food and drinks will be available for purchase.

Please RSVP to John at info802vtallince@gmail.com! It will help with our planning.

To Schedule an EAI presentation in your community, please email rob@ethanallen.org.

News & Views

Vermont Healthcare Spending Ranks High. “A [new study\(link is external\)](#) shows Vermont ranks Number 12 spending the most money spent on healthcare annually in the US. Vermont residents spend an average of \$6,103 per year on healthcare, this is above the national average of \$5,640.78. The average person with private health insurance spent more than \$5,640.78 on healthcare in 2017, including procedures, medication and hospitalization, according to the Health Care Cost Institute, which analyzes healthcare spending across the US Costs are on the upswing, as the average amount spent per person has gone up nearly 17% since 2013. The biggest chunk of that spending was for professional services, such as anesthesia, specialist visits and surgical services. All of those categories saw double-digit increases between 2013 and 2017, but prescription drug spending led the way with an increase of well over a quarter. ([VBM, 8/27/19](#))

Double Digit Health Insurance Increases on the Way. The Green Mountain Care Board approved premium increases for Blue Cross Blue Shield of, on average, 12.4%, and of 10.1% for MVP. The higher premiums impact 2020 policies sold through Vermont Health Connect, affecting 75,000 Vermonters who get their health insurance through Vermont Health Connect.

Vermont’s Latest Business Ranking. CNBC ranked America's Top States for Business, based on more than 60 measures of competitiveness in 10 broad categories. Despite ranking #2 in quality of life, Vermont ranked 40th overall. Strangely Hawaii, which ranked first in quality of life, came in 50th overall. New Hampshire ranked 25th overall, and 5th in quality of life.

Vermont Credit Card Debt. “In a [new financial report](#) released last week by the online personal website WalletHub, Vermont was in third place with one of the nation’s worst credit card debt pictures; it came in first, overall, with the least sustainable credit card debt record among the 50 states. Neighboring New Hampshire had less credit card debt and was ranked at 23 with New York being ranked at 34.” (Lou Varicchio, TNR 8/6/19)

Latest Middlebury Disgrace. Middlebury College recently withdrew a speaking invitation to Ryszard Legutko, a professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, on his book “The Demon in Democracy”. The reason: the college couldn’t guarantee that the speaker wouldn’t be mobbed by its left wing students. Professors smuggled him in and out a back door to meet with a small class. Writes Prof. Legutko in *First Things* (August 2019): “The communist system generated thought crimes, but liberal democracy has generated far more, and it generates still more every year. The result is that the space in which the human mind may safely roam gets smaller and smaller. One is constantly in danger of crossing the red line. More and more topics are dangerous territory. A reflection, an insight, a clarification, or an argument may be taken for a criticism—which is not allowed. One cannot express even the mildest doubts about, say, feminism or homosexuality, without being accused of grave transgressions against political morality, so grave that the most humiliating apologies will not atone for them.”

Groovy UVM! In its annual, book-length study published this month, Princeton Review said it asked 140,000 students at 385 selected American colleges and universities 80 questions, including “How widely is marijuana used at your school?” UVM ranked first. (State House Headliners, 8/12/19).

Gov. Scott on Parental School Choice. “On the broader issue of school choice, I believe parents should not be forced to keep their children in a school that is not meeting their child’s needs. School choice should be afforded to every parent and student in every school in every corner of Vermont. I will vigorously support legislation that would clarify Act 46 and, further, make school choice an option for all Vermont families. (CfV candidate interview, 7/26/16). When will we see this bold plan?”

Fossil Fuel Price Drop. According to 2017 data, the average Vermont homeowner uses about 700 gallons of heating oil. The average driver drives 12,500 miles, which at @25MPG requires 500 gallons of gasoline. At the decreased [2019] rates cited above, consuming the same amount of fuel will mean annual savings of \$175 for heating oil and \$80 for gasoline. (State House Headliner 8/27/19). But don’t worry, the climate change warriors will find some way to push those prices back up, and beyond.

Sea Level Panic. The climate change warriors foresee disastrous sea level rises by 2100. At the current rate, stable over fifty or more years, warming should increase sea levels by eleven inches per century. Compare: Lake Champlain’s level dropped five feet between April and August 2019.

Firearms for Defense. “A South Carolina man shot a drunken attacker. A disabled Florida senior was wounded by four armed men who broke into his home, but he used an AR-15 to kill two of them while sending the two others fleeing. A San Diego man killed an assailant who was stabbing his father. A North Carolina woman killed an ax-wielding attacker. A Tennessee Uber driver shot a man who had fired on his vehicle, defending himself and his passenger. A Louisiana man shot an attacker attempting a carjacking. Others in Kentucky, New Hampshire, Arizona, and elsewhere merely brandished their guns or held would-be burglars at gunpoint and awaited police. (PP 8/19/19)

Solar Increases NOx. Nitrogen oxides have long been a Clean Air Act regulated pollutant. Now Duke Power Co., with 4,491 MW of nameplate solar, explains that when natural gas backup plants come on and off line to balance intermittent solar, more NOx is emitted than if there were no solar contribution at all. (NorthState Journal 8/19).

Biomass Folly. “Europe’s Drax coal-fueled power plants converted to burning biomass to generate electricity. To have sufficient fuel to operate profitably, Drax has been forced to import wood pellets primarily from southern forests in the United States. The result has been Drax has released 183.5 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which any newly replanted trees will take decades to reabsorb. (GWPF 8/17/19)

Health Reform Facts. “The best estimates are that Medicare and Medicaid pay hospitals on average about 87% to 90% of the actual cost of care, often lower in high-cost areas like New York City. Hospitals then shift costs onto private insurers, which tend to pay more than 140% of costs, according to data from the American Hospital Association.” (WSJ 8/15/19) From the EAI health care reform platform of 1994: “The state should pay the full cost of the health care it tells people they can have for free. In 1992 the state government underpaid hospitals by \$11 million for Medicaid patients (and the federal government underpaid them by \$28 million for Medicare patients). Those unpaid government bills were simply tacked on to the costs paid by privately insured patients, making their insurance that much more expensive.”

Planned Parenthood vs NRA Spending. “Pull up OpenSecrets, the website of the Center for Responsive Politics, which tracks money in U.S. politics. What you will find is that in 2018, the NRA made political contributions of \$873,071. Planned Parenthood made political contributions totaling \$7,183,139, more than eight times greater than those of the NRA, 99.5 percent of which went to Democratic candidates or to organizations supporting them. The Center for Responsive Politics ranks Planned Parenthood No. 54 out of 19,225 making political contributions, and the NRA No. 543.” - Star Parker (Patriot Post 8/15/19)

The Green New Deal in Perspective. “We are faced with the tyranny of the socially self-righteous. The only difference between such righteous ideologues is the content and purpose the imposed economic dictatorship is to serve. They may fiercely fight each other for control of the government apparatus of coercion, but there is one common characteristic of all of them: they oppose and detest free market liberalism. Nothing is worse than the opponent of all forms of collectivism, because if such a liberalism were to win, the means to politically compel other people in act otherwise than they would peacefully agree to would be taken away. And nothing is worse for all collectivists than having the power to use force on others in society taken out of their hands. – Richard Ebeling, [American Institute of Economic Research, 8/6/19](#)

Book of the Month

The Great Divide

The Conflict Between Washington and Jefferson that Defined a Nation

by Thomas Fleming

Da Capo Press; Reprint edition (March 8, 2016) 448 pages.

<https://www.amazon.com/Great-Divide-Conflict-Washington-Jefferson/dp/0306824515>

This month will feature Constitution Day on September 17th, so a history of the founding seemed like a good theme for our book of the month.

Thomas Fleming's *The Great Divide* is a deep dive into the raw politics that followed the establishment of the Constitution focusing on the divergent philosophies on the presidency and their implications by Washington and Jefferson. Many of the friendships and partnerships that were forged in revolution shattered when it came time to govern.

Fleming takes us through the gory details of the personal conflicts and political rifts between George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Patrick Henry and many more icons of our past as they navigate new constitutional questions, like the boundaries and responsibilities of the presidency, the concept of an independent judiciary... to political questions about whether or not to establish a national bank, build a navy, and how to raise revenue... and international debates over the French Revolution and how to handle our peculiar relationship with England.

For those who look at today's rough and tumble politics, attacks of personal destruction, and fake news and wish for the good old days, you may want to think again. The backbiting, rumor mongering, and dirty politics at the turn of the nineteenth century was in a class by itself. Alexander Hamilton had to fight off stories about blackmail related to his womanizing, Thomas Jefferson about his relationships with his slaves, Washington about losing his mental capacities to old age. Newspaper editors like James Callender and Benjamin Franklin Bache make Fox News' and MSNBC's harshest partisan commentators look like kids engaging in a pillow fight.

Unfortunately, Fleming picks up where these muckrakers left off with his flagrant bias against Jefferson and hero worship of Washington. The author's objective is to trash Thomas Jefferson and his legacy, portraying him as an unrealistic, somewhat whacky ideologue who was more lucky than smart politically. Washington, on the other hand, was a brilliant leader, master politician, and practical executive. Had Jefferson not followed him and screwed up Washington's vision for the presidency and the country, we would be much better off. (My good friend John McClaughry may be tempted to review and post a rebuttal book next month!)

If you're looking for an unbiased appraisal of Jefferson and Washington, this book falls way short. Still, Fleming does provide a vivid picture of U.S. politics in the late 1700's and early 1800's that is truly fascinating. We are so used to seeing our founding fathers through the prism of paintings where they are "hanging together", as Benjamin Franklin put it, it is useful to see and understand the real conflict, both personal and political, that went into the making of our nation. Two hundred and forty years later, we turned out okay. So, despite (or maybe because of) the strife we see amongst our leaders today, this gives hope that we'll be okay a couple more centuries down the line.

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

The Final Word

September Survey: Are our public schools educating or indoctrinating our kids?

The week of September 20-27 has been designated as a time of “Global Climate Strike and Week of Actions” by activist/lobbyist organizations. The objective is to get students to walk out of school in order to disrupt traffic, block access to buildings, and otherwise bring things to a standstill in order to force action on a climate change agenda. Schools are actively encouraging/enabling students to participate on school time. Is this a case of education or the political indoctrination of students?

- This is a legitimate, educational use of tax dollars.
- This is political indoctrination, not education.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ClimateStrike>

August Survey Results: Taxpayer Bill of Rights.

Vermont just announced a \$60 million budget surplus (which amounts to roughly \$100 for every Vermonter, man, woman, and child. Do we need a Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) which would mandate that the money be returned to the taxpayers, or should the state keep and spend it as it sees fit?

- Yes. Vermont needs a TABOR; it's the taxpayers' money and we should get it back.
95.16% (59)
- No. The state should keep and spend the money. They know best.
4.84% (3)