

# EDITORIAL EDITORIAL

## Yes, Let's Renovate 58 Barre Street!

At a capital-campaign kick-off at the T. W. Wood Art Gallery on Friday evening, October 15, those who spoke made a strong, indeed a compelling, case for pulling together the money and resources to renovate the 58 Barre Street building (formerly St. Michael's School) to create a newly redeveloped Montpelier Senior Activity Center.

Here in Montpelier, across Vermont, and in many other parts of the Northeast as well, populations are growing older. Already, here in Montpelier, more than 50 percent of our population is over 55 and that's a trend that's likely to continue.

Instead of seeing this population trend as a negative we ought to be taking a fresh look at people who are 50, 55, 60, 70 and 80 or more years of age with their years, skills, experience, hard-work ethic and increasing vitality. We ought to see the 50-plus people as a distinct asset.

Here's how the 58 Barre Street project will work. The entire building will be broken into two condominiums. The City of Montpelier will own the 10,000 square feet on the ground floor and second floor—to be occupied by the Montpelier Senior Activity Center.

A for-profit arm of the Montpelier Housing authority called Capital City Housing, Inc. will own the remaining 15,000 square feet of the building on floor two and floor three. This space will be devoted to 14 apartments for seniors and people with disabilities.

According to community-development specialist Garth Genge in the Montpelier Planning & Development department, the apartments that are developed and owned by Capital City Housing will contribute taxes to the city. As Genge told *The Bridge*: "The capital benefits of this project for the city are huge. Part of the building will be returning taxes to the city. And that portion of the building that the city retains for the senior center will save up to 80 percent of its current operating costs because of energy-efficiency upgrades."

Then there's the playground behind 58 Barre Street. That playground will be retained and maintained and the presence of children at play will support the multi-generational nature of the project.

Since it was founded in 1967, the Montpelier Senior Activity Center has over and over again proved its usefulness. It provides a meeting place; it serves nutritious meals; it provides exercise and recreational activity programs; it sponsors learning and travel opportunities. Increasingly, the activity center has advocated for seniors in need. It has also helped seniors with housing, food stamps, Social Security advice, health and nutrition, tax preparation and legal aid.

The Capital City Housing part of the project is to be financed entirely with grants and loans at an estimated cost of \$3,612,700.

The senior center part of the project will cost an estimated \$1,612,200, and friends and members of the senior center are reaching out to the general public to contribute to a capital campaign with a goal of \$200,000.

We hope the Montpelier community sees the logic of supporting the Montpelier Senior Activity Center. In giving money to this project, we will be making a statement of support for Montpelier seniors. This support will be noted, as other players, including government agencies and foundations and individuals, see that the activity center project enjoys strong community and local support.

One more point. An improved space for the Montpelier Senior Activity Center is only one benefit of the anticipated renovations of 58 Barre Street. Here are some other benefits. A handsome building that has fallen into disrepair will be restored to a modern use. This building, with its large windows and wooden floors, can be renovated for a fraction of the cost that it would take to build a new building from scratch. Once the apartments are in place and the activity center is humming with life, we will see positive impacts both on Barre Street and on downtown Montpelier as well.

## Oh, the Economic News

According to a October 20 report in the *Huffington Post*, 46 states are currently facing budget shortfall and states such as Arizona, Illinois, New Jersey and New York are in dire straights.

Across Europe, millions of people are filling the streets of Athens, Madrid, Paris and other capitals to protest the current and proposed deep cuts in government spending.

News this morning from the venerable BBC radio mentioned that half a million government workers in Britain will soon lose their jobs in the newest round of British government cuts.

Within the week, a front-page story in the *New York Times* reported that Angelo R. Mozilla, former chief executive of the giant mortgage corporation Countrywide Financial, had been investigated for fraud by the federal Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). To quote the *Times*, "Mr. Mozilla agreed to repay \$45 million in ill-gotten profits and \$22.5 million in civil penalties as part of a settlement with the SEC in which he admits no wrongdoing."

Now, comes the cruelest irony of all.

According to an October 12 press release from Sen. Bernie Sanders, "Wall Street banks, investment banks, hedge funds and other financial firms are set to pay \$144 billion in compensation and benefits this year, a 4-percent increase from the record-breaking \$139 billion paid out in 2009 . . ." Sanders said he was quoting from the *Wall Street Journal*.

Banks are an easy target these days and nothing is black or white.

There are good banks, indeed there are some excellent banks, that deserve our trust by the way they serve their customers and their communities.

Let's also remember that not every government program or benefit is delivered without waste, avoiding corruption.

# LETTERS LETTERS

## Newspaper Provides Real Service

To the Editor:

I was about to wad up a page of the September 16 edition of *The Bridge* and toss it into the woodstove when Michael Jermyn's outstanding "Walk Into Bliss" article caught my eye. As a former neighbor, I've watched Michael mature and evolve into an excellent writer. "Walk Into Bliss" was a fine piece of creative writing. Michael also is an excellent photographer.

Also catching my eye was Sylvia Fagin's vivid profile of gardener Miriam Hansen. As an avid gardener, I appreciated Fagin's craft in depicting Hansen's work ethic and love of gardening. Also, I know that once my wife reads this piece we probably will be expanding our garden yet again (groan).

These articles made me appreciate the real service *The Bridge* provides to the local community. Therefore, I am going to sit right down and write a long-overdue check to *The Bridge* as a token of my appreciation. *The Bridge* is one of those local institutions that won't be missed until it's gone, so let's all pitch in and help ensure that it stays around a bit longer (but no more expanding garden articles, please).

Strat Douthat, Plainfield

## More Storytelling in Montpelier

To the Editor:

In reference to the editorial "Storytelling at the College Hall Chapel" in the October 7 issue, I hasten to point out that of course the "magic" of a live storytelling event will happen again . . . just as it has happened before: every other month at The Black Door, to be exact. For nearly a year, a local event called Extempo (short for extemporaneous storytelling) has been taking place at The Black Door Bar and Bistro at 44 Main Street in Montpelier. November 1 will mark our fourth event! [See the listing in the Calendar of Events in this issue of *The Bridge* or visit [www.extempoVT.com](http://www.extempoVT.com) for more information.]

Extempo is not an "experiment." It is a tried-and-true, beloved, 100-percent local event at which amateur storytellers—your friends, neighbors, coworkers, even you—tell original, true, five-minute, first-person stories live and without the use of notes (which means the stories must be practiced in advance). The audience is quiet, respectful and appreciative, and the intimate setting of the third floor lounge is the perfect venue for this type of event.

Live storytelling is widely experienced as transformational for the storyteller and the listener both. So come tell your story, serve on the jury, or just listen at the next extemporaneous storytelling at The Black Door on Monday, November 1 at 8 p.m.!

Jen Dole, Montpelier

P.S. Creating, producing and emceeding events is partly how I make my living in Central Vermont, so here's a plea to all people who like storytelling. Cardinal rule number 1: It is incumbent upon you to make certain there's not a live storytelling event already happening in your immediate area before you think about starting your own. Storytelling is popular, because the audience pool for this type of entertainment is infinite, and that's great. However, the number of Central Vermonters who are actually willing to stand up in front of that infinitely large audience and BE the entertainment is not. So if you're keen on storytelling, I would ask that you patronize Extempo . . . and please participate! In small communities, epigones never go unnoticed and are not suffered lightly by small business.

## Senatorial Arrogance

To the Editor:

October 15 was the deadline for the latest campaign filing, and as I pulled into one of several open "visitor" parking spaces at the Secretary of State's office, I couldn't help but notice a car with "Senate 1" as its plate, parked squarely in one of the marked handicap parking spaces.

The plate had no handicap indicator, and no temporary handicap sign. As a member of the disability community, it's something I'm sensitive to.

Yes, it happens. We can all be careless. But we in the legislature have an obligation to set higher standards for ourselves as elected leaders, and an identifiable car becomes a symbol of the legislature as a whole.

I went in and asked who "Senate 1" was, and Sen. Susan Bartlett identified herself. She was signing in to deliver a finance report on behalf of Senator Peter Shumlin's gubernatorial campaign.

I said found her parking inappropriate.

I expected a bit of embarrassment and an apology along the lines we all make when we err: "I knew I was only going to be there a moment and wasn't really paying attention, but you are right, it was a bad example to set."

Instead, she defended it and, clearly annoyed, attempted to make light of it. There were lots of open [handicapped] spaces, she said.

When I persisted, she tried to shush me. "Oh, cut it out," she repeated several times. In effect, "stop trying to make a big deal out of nothing."

She turned her back to me to walk out, still brushing it off. "Cut it out."

I responded: "I'm damn serious about this."

She half turned her head. "Go to hell," she said, and walked out the door.

Since when are state senators above the law?

The term for this kind of response is arrogance.

It is the kind of arrogance that has dominated senate leadership over the past several years, so it should not have surprised me, coming from that leadership and that campaign.

I told Senator Bartlett that her response tempted me to write a letter to share her attitude publicly.

"Go right ahead," she snapped.

So here it is.

Rep. Anne Donabue, R-Northfield

## Help Out with Coat Drive

To the Editor:

The 21st-annual Karen Kitzmiller Memorial Coat Drive is scheduled for Saturday, October 23 at city hall. I'm writing with a special request for volunteers to help me run things. Can you help?

My good friend and loyal volunteer, Theresa Giffin, is filling in a chart of volunteers, and she tells me she's having a hard time finding folks who could work for a couple of hours on Saturday.

The job is simple: just be at city hall to help arrange coats on the racks, help people find a suitable winter coat in their size, hang things back up that fall, pick up empty coat hangers . . . that's about it. I'm asking folks to work two-hour shifts.

We will open to the public at 9 a.m., and run until things wind down, which is usually around 2 or 3 p.m.

Please, if you can spare a couple of hours, call Theresa at 229-4625 and leave a message if she's not home.

This is a very soul-satisfying event. Direct,

**LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!**

Send your letters and opinions to [mpbridge@sover.net](mailto:mpbridge@sover.net).

# LETTERS LETTERS

one-on-one help for folks who need it. Over the years, I cannot count the number of times that people have said to me, "Thank you *so much!* I don't know what my kids/my husband/I would have worn to stay warm!" Those comments feel good, let me tell you! It's frantic, it's fun, it's well worth a couple hours, so please give Theresa a call, won't you?

*Rep. Warren Kitzmiller, Montpelier*

P.S. Check your closet! If you have a spare coat that you're not going to need, drop it off at Community National Bank anytime between now and October 22.

## Replacing Yankee

To the Editor:

As we progress through October to even colder months, Vermont must talk heat.

As shown in Vermont Public Radio's recent discussion on the morning of October 12 and 13, last winter's senate vote on Vermont Yankee has a simple message: shut it down. Claims by gubernatorial candidate Brian Dubie that the vote was just a decision regarding whether or not to send the question on to the Public Service Board is inaccurate. The very presenter of the bill, Ann Cummings, asserted in the VPR report that "the bill as it came out of the Finance Committee called for the re-licensing of Vermont Yankee. That bill was defeated 26 to 4. There was no reference to sending it to the Public Service Board." The message could not be clearer.

Once we are done arguing semantics, however, the more frightening question demands the attention of Vermont policymakers: what will replace Yankee? As a co-founder of the Vermont Sustainable Heating Initiative as well as a freshman at Middlebury College, I am one of many who would like to see biomass fill that gap. It is uncertain that a state relying on nuclear energy for 35 percent of its total energy needs even has the capacity to give Yankee the old heave-ho. According to last winter's monumental vote, however, we'll need to address this issue. It is even more unsettling that neither Brian Dubie nor Peter Shumlin have stated how each will replace such a fundamental source of power as Vermont Yankee if elected. We

need the next governor to be decisive on energy issues; Vermont winters won't stand for anything less.

*Lucia Bragg, Montpelier*

## Honor, Integrity and Injustice

To the Editor:

Last year I wrote a letter to the (Washington) *World* newspaper about a staff employee of Senator Leahy's who made racial comments to me and another individual at the Montpelier federal building. Well, now I know what it must have been like to live in the days of Al Capone. I guess I was just given an offer I couldn't refuse. What these people did was wrong, unethical and unprofessional. I no longer work at the Montpelier federal building. The people of Vermont deserve better, Senator Leahy. I deserved better. When there is an injustice, it is our right—no, it is our duty as Americans to stand up or speak up for what is right. When I vote for a United States senator, I expect him or her to have integrity, honor and professionalism. These people have forgotten that they work for us (Vermonters); we do not work for them. Vermonters need to remind them of this. Here is contact information for Senator Leahy's office: (802) 229-0569. The e-mail address is senator\_leahy@leahy.senate.gov

*Gary McLander, Montpelier*

## Republicans Will Restore Balance

To the Editor:

Our experience in the legislature has convinced us that the legislature produces its best work when all sides are well represented and no one side has overwhelming control. We believe that the present 23 to 7 makeup of the Vermont senate—where Democrats can pass any bill, override any veto, and suspend any rule—is not in the best interests of Vermonters.

Washington County can help to restore balance to the senate by electing Bill Doyle, David Harrington, and Ed Larson to the Senate.

Bill Doyle has ably represented this county for many years, and his experience and wisdom are still needed. It is said that whenever

20 people are gathered together in Washington County, Bill will certainly be among them. That's not because he just looking for votes; it's because he's genuinely interested in the lives and affairs of the people he represents!

David Harrington, a retired state police captain, has demonstrated his abilities as chair of the Barre Town school board, establishing budgets and policies such as our class size policy that have saved taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. More recently, David has worked for the Central Vermont Community Land Trust and will bring a depth of experience and a broad perspective that the legislature badly needs.

Ed Larson has served in numerous civic positions in the Montpelier community, including in the Montpelier Housing Authority, as president of Washington County Field Days, and in the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, and has effectively represented agricultural and forestry interests in the halls of the State House for many years. He has a common-sense, plain-spoken approach to issues that people will find refreshing.

With Phil Scott leaving the senate (to become lieutenant governor, we hope!), Washington County voters need to select a successor who is as able and hard-working as Phil has been. We strongly urge Washington County voters to elect the team of Bill Doyle, David Harrington and Ed Larson to the Vermont State Senate.

*Rep. Thomas F. "Tom" Koch and Rep. Francis "Topper" McFaun, Barre Town*

## Support Kitzmiller With a Sign

To the Editor:

With election day just over two weeks away, I think the time has come to put some Kitzmiller lawn signs up to remind everyone that I am, in fact, running for re-election!

Some of you may already have one of my signs hidden in the back of your garage, awaiting this day. If so, would you dig it out and put it up where folks can see it?

If you do not have a sign and would like one, there are two options. First, I will put a number of my signs on my driveway side porch at 138 North Street. Please feel free to stop by and take one. Second, I would be

happy to bring one to you. Just reply to this message, and include your name and street address, and I'll come by within a day or two and put one on your lawn.

It is not necessary that all signs be on heavily traveled streets. I enjoy the thought that people who only see a few cars a day also care enough to have a sign of support. That doesn't mean that the main roads should be ignored, however!

Thank you very, very much for your support. I do hope each and every one of you will take the time to cast your vote in this important election! You can vote right now by stopping by City Hall. Or call them at 223-9500 and they will mail a ballot to you . . . just be sure to fill it out and send it back right away!

I'll close by saying, once again, how much I enjoy the job of representing you in the legislature. The work I do is important and I take it very seriously. I deeply appreciate your support!

*Rep. Warren Kitzmiller, Montpelier*

## Gaelan Brown for Senate

To the Editor:

Greetings, neighbors! I write in enthusiastic support of Fayston resident Gaelan Brown for Washington County state senate.

Gaelan has led the way on local energy issues, cofounding the "Carbon Shredders" organization to educate folks on how to save energy and money through personal and residential energy-efficiency initiatives. Gaelan has also designed a Jean Pain biomass heating mound in his front yard, and plans to heat his entire home with recycled wood chips, sharing his knowledge with neighbors. In his day job, Gaelan's work with GroSolar renewable energy company is vital as we look towards a more renewable energy future for Vermont.

Gaelan's pragmatic, thoughtful, inclusive and visionary approach to Vermont's future is vital. I urge you to visit Gaelan's campaign website at [www.gaelanbrown.com](http://www.gaelanbrown.com) and vote with confidence for Gaelan Brown for Washington County State Senator on November 2.

*Dr. Rob Williams, Waitsfield*

## Start Your Own Business Workshop on November 1

The Vermont Small Business Development Center is offering a three-hour workshop on how to start your own business and write a business plan. The workshop will be offered on Monday, November 1 in the second-floor meeting space of the Community National Bank in Barre. The workshop will begin at 10 a.m. and will run until 1 p.m.

The workshop is designed for individuals who are thinking about going into business but need assistance with the procedures involved and applicable government regulations.

To register for the workshop, please sign up online at [www.vtsbdc.org](http://www.vtsbdc.org) or e-mail Heather Gonyaw at [hgonyaw@vtsbdc.org](mailto:hgonyaw@vtsbdc.org). The registration fee is \$40 (or \$45 for two participants.)

The Vermont Small Business Development Center is a nonprofit partnership of government, education and business, organized to help Vermont small businesses succeed. Free advice is provided to existing business owners and new entrepreneurs through a network of advisors around the state. The advisor serving Washington County has an office on the first floor of the National Life Building. For more information, call 223-4654.

*Vermont Small Business Development Center is a partnership program with the U.S. Small Business Administration. The support given by the U.S. Small Business Administration through its funding does not constitute an expressed or implied endorsement of any of the co-sponsors' or participants' opinions, products or services.*

## Give the gift of *The Bridge*!

Do you have an out-of-town friend or relative who enjoys keeping up with events in central Vermont? Perhaps someone who used to live here, and has moved away?

Why not give a subscription to *The Bridge*? It's a gift they will enjoy for the entire year, and the proceeds help support this community enterprise.

For only \$50, we will mail a full year's worth of great news and stories to anywhere in the United States. Just fill in the recipient's name and address below and send this form and a check to *The Bridge*, P.O. Box 1143, Montpelier VT 05601.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a check, payable to *The Bridge*, for:

- \$50 for a one-year subscription  
 \$50 plus an additional \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support *The Bridge*.  
(Contributions are not tax-deductible.)

## Opinion

# Tongue-Tied or Not? Dubie Targets the Vulnerable

by Christopher J. Curtis

Brian Dubie says he misspoke in stating he would balance Vermont's budget by cutting taxes for the very wealthy and by targeting the most vulnerable. But there's a lot of truth to his statement. He may not realize it, but his policies—past and future—not only target the most vulnerable, they also target Vermont's middle class working families and small-business owners in order to help a few very wealthy people.

For example, Dubie has said certain programs need "reform," and he points to so-called "Tiger Team" recommendations—reports generated by the Douglas administration—as a place to start. Those recommendations advocated cutting up to \$22 million from Medicaid benefits and limiting services for those in need. In addition, the Tiger Teams advocated raising premiums, deductibles and copays for low-income and working Vermonters to the tune of \$6 million, among other suggestions. The legislature did not act on most of those recommendations precisely because they would have disproportionately "targeted the most vulnerable": low-income and working Vermonters, the elderly and children.

Governor James Douglas' 2010 alternative

budget proposed just before his veto of the legislature's budget on June 1, 2009 cut programs for seniors, the homeless and the mentally ill, as well as health care for poor and middle-income families, by more than \$25 million. Specifically the administration's May 19, 2009 spreadsheet would have targeted the most vulnerable as follows:

- Nursing Homes and Long Term Care: 1,981,549
- Health Care, Dental, Chiropractic and Hospital Care: 15,332,942
- Health and Treatment Programs: 910,000
- Benefits for Children and Families: 1,726,632
- Aging and Independent Living: 320,000
- Vermont Housing and Conservation: 5,000,000

This is a budget approach that Brian Dubie staunchly defended in a September 15 VPR debate between the two candidates. Peter Shumlin rejected that approach and helped lead the fight, with House Speaker Shap Smith, to override the governor's veto in order to ensure essential programs and services remained intact.

Equally troubling is Dubie's willingness to shift \$40 million in teacher's retirement lia-

bilities from broad-based state taxes to local property taxes—for not just one year, but far into the future. Who pays when Montpelier shifts the burden to the local level? Small-business owners pay. Working families pay. Couple that with Dubie's support for eliminating income sensitivity for the middle class, and his claims of concern about property taxes ring hollow. Dubie's plans would increase property tax burdens for already overburdened property-tax payers.

But most troubling of all is Dubie's signature proposal to cut taxes for Vermont's 1,300 wealthiest filers with incomes above \$273,000 while imposing a 2 percent cut across state government. Dubie's plan is irresponsible and a stark reminder of George W. Bush's failed policies that led to the recent recession. "Dubienomics" will explode the deficit and usher in an era of near-permanent budget crisis.

By contrast, Peter Shumlin has a plan to solve the health-care puzzle and stop spiraling costs that are crushing Vermont businesses and families. He'll provide early education to all Vermont children and spur affordable housing as facets of his larger vision to create good jobs and grow the economy. Shumlin is a businessman who recognizes the short-term imperative to solve the

budget deficit and stabilize the economy while making the right public investments to ensure we are poised for recovery and long-term prosperity and to provide opportunities for all Vermonters.

Every voter must ask themselves: am I better off now than I was eight years ago? For most Vermonters the answer to that question is no. Jim Douglas and Brian Dubie have had their opportunity to make a mark on the economy. Unfortunately, they did. The Douglas-Dubie administration leaves behind a bruising record of joblessness, deficits and budget crises. Brian Dubie now says he won't target the most vulnerable, but his policies say otherwise. As someone once infamously said: "Fool me once . . . won't get fooled again."

Vermonters can do better. Peter Shumlin offers a balanced approach that makes the tough decisions when necessary but protects the middle class, working Vermonters, the elderly and children. The difference between the two candidates for governor is that Shumlin doesn't just say he'll stand with the middle class while protecting the safety net . . . he's done it.

*Christopher J. Curtis is an attorney living in Northfield.*

## Health-Care Costs Are Already a Tax

by Dr. Deb Richter

To understand why the Democratic candidate for governor, Peter Shumlin, makes health-care reform a central policy in his campaign, let's make a list:

State taxes, property taxes, payroll deductions, Medicaid deficits, Medicare payments, school budgets, town budgets, state deficit, consumer spending, household budgets, personal bankruptcies, business startups, infrastructure repairs, home liens . . .

Everything on that list is affected by health-care costs. That's not even the whole list. Health care, taken as a whole, is the state's largest industry. This year it will cost more than \$5 billion. That's much larger than anything else around, including the state's own budget. In business terms, health care is central to the Vermont economy.

Nearly everything talked about on the campaign trail and when the rest of us talk and complain about taxes, costs, services, jobs, and so on, is entangled in one way or another with the costs of the health-care industry.

And yet for more than 30 years no one and nothing has been able to manage these costs within acceptable margins. The rate of rise in these costs is damaging. The damage is re-

flected in everything on that list, and more. The problem for us of course is that health care is not like other businesses. It can't pack up and move out of the state. It is a necessary business, in other words a public good.

Peter Shumlin wants to bring some cost management to this necessary business. He claims the best way to do this is to establish a system of fiscal management, one kind being single-payer. He claims this will work. Does he have any proof? Yes, he does.

Nearly every other nation in the world has a fiscal management system, some of them being single-payer, some being variations on the theme. All deliver equal or better health care to their citizens for far less cost, often half as much, than we do. So Shumlin's policy is not theoretical, pie-in-the-sky, hoping-for-the-best outcome. It exists, it works, and it could work here in Vermont.

Reforming health care into a system is an economic issue. It is the largest economic issue Vermont faces. A minimum projection for savings under fiscal management is \$250 million, which is considerably more than the current state deficit. Cutting services and getting in a tizzy about taxes is not the first sane step to putting our economy back on track.

One of the world's experts on health care systems is in Vermont right now. Dr. William Hsiao of Harvard designed, for example, the very successful Taiwan system. He is here designing three systems, one of them single-payer. His work will show how these could apply to Vermont and show how each one might, a) save Vermonters money and, b) fit into the federal health care reform law under the Obama Administration.

It was on Peter Shumlin's initiative that he was invited here.

Vermont has what is rated the best health care in the country. But like every other state's health care—and the nation as a whole—it is at the mercy of a business that is a fiscal disaster. It is a conglomeration of competing managers and predatory outliers. This, not the medical care, is what has to change and be brought under rational management.

And what about medical care? Would fiscal management change our private delivery of medical care? No. Would it deny our choice of doctor? No. Would it require more taxes on top of what we already pay? No.

What stumps most people is the very idea of managing a \$5 billion industry. How would we possibly come up with that kind of money. But we already do. That \$5 billion

is from the pockets—the total pockets—of Vermonters. The figure is too big to easily get our heads around. It's disconnected from our personal lives. But that's because most of it is an invisible drain on our pockets.

Please, refer to the list above. Every single thing on that list, and more, is affected by the lack of coherent management of our \$5 billion circulating in health care this year. Every year this figure rises by about \$300 million.

That's roughly \$500 for every Vermonter every year. That's a tax—a health-care tax—in every sense of the word. The Douglas administration and the Republican candidate spend a lot of time and energy scaring voters about taxes, yet under their administration the "health-care tax" for a family of four in Vermont has gone up about \$16,000.

What we ought to want, and Peter Shumlin wants, is an end to this irresponsible dumping of costs under any name whatsoever on Vermonters. He wants this practice replaced by a responsible system of fiscal management of our money.

*Deb Richter lives in Montpelier and practices in Cambridge, Vermont.*

### Editor's Note

Here at *The Bridge*, in publishing opinion pieces we encourage the widest possible diversity without regard to political party affiliation or point of view. In this, our election issue of the paper, you will see letters and opinions that support the full range of political parties: Democratic, Republican, Independent. But if you are looking for strict mathematical equality, you won't find it because we can only print what we receive.

### Flu Shot Advisory

Vermont Health Commissioner Wendy Davis, M.D., has been encouraging Vermonters to get their annual flu shot.

The Vermont Health Department says that nearly everybody could benefit from a flu shot. The department also lists groups of people who are particularly vulnerable to flu.

These include pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, all adults 50 years of age and older, residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, health-care workers, travelers, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, people who have immunosuppression, anyone with a condition that can compromise respiratory function, and people at risk for severe complications from influenza.

For further information on flu shots, please go online to [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov) or call 863-7200 or 800-464-4343 (toll free in Vermont)

## Opinion

# Giving Indie Publishing Its Due

by Robbie Harold

Last month, nine years after I began writing it, I published a historical mystery called *Heron Island*. An initially reluctant recruit to the “indie publishing revolution,” I’d always thought of authors who used “vanity presses”—which charged the writer lots of money to produce generally tacky-looking books—as foolish, delusional and short on literary talent.

If that was ever true, it’s changing fast. The lines between mainstream and independent publishing are blurring. Powered by sophisticated online publishing services like iUniverse and e-readers like the Kindle, and led by the example of indie musicians, who rebelled against the constraints of major record labels, independent writers are finding a collective foothold on the steep cliff of the literary market.

*Heron Island* germinated in late spring of 2001, when my husband and I made a farewell visit to a friend’s private island in Lake Champlain. She was about to sell it, including the gem of a fully furnished Adirondack lodge built there in 1902 by the heir to the International Paper fortune.

Trying to hold onto something of a magical place we’d never visit again, Wayne took pictures and I took notes. In a curio cabinet sat an 1895 Mauser rifle—the service weapon of the Spanish troops in the Spanish-American War.

“Oh, that,” our friend said. “They say one of the early owners was married to a Rough Rider.” Teddy Roosevelt apparently visited the island for the wedding.

A few weeks later, my detective Dade Wyatt rowed an Adirondack boat into the story. A melancholy widower, former Shakespearean actor, Pinkerton agent and Rough Rider, he’s providing security for the island’s owner, who’s trying to lure Roosevelt there for a summer visit in 1903. On a dry run for the event, somebody ends up dead. Suspicion falls on an Italian anarchist musician—perhaps from Barre, that radical hotbed? Wyatt sets off to track down a killer.

I finished the first longhand draft in August 2002 and a second computer draft in early 2003. I sent the manuscript off to a published novelist, another writer, a journalist, an English Ph.D. and two savvy readers,



asking for ruthless critiques. I got them and revised accordingly.

Knowing that few publishers look at manuscripts without a literary agent, I sent out rafts of query letters to agents while continuing to revise the story as I discovered more historical nuggets, like the fact that the leading Italian anarchist of his day, Luigi Galleani, hid out in Barre from 1903 to 1912.

The rejection letters said things like, “It’s too long. A mystery shouldn’t be more than 100,000 words,” and variations on, “I like the writing, but there aren’t enough bodies.”

P.D. James and other eminences of the genre ignore those rules, and so did I. But I trimmed 20,000 words from the story, taking it down to 127,000.

At the “Muse and the Marketplace” conference in Boston in May 2005, I met the woman who became my agent. We signed a contract in October. Kit, a former editor at Little, Brown, gave me another round of valuable critique and set about sending the final revision—draft seven by this time—out to publishing houses. To my eternal embarrassment, I took a bottle of champagne to my book group and sat back to await offers.

Among the “not for us” and “good writing, but historicals aren’t selling” rejections that ensued was a rave from an editor at a major company—which shall remain nameless, but its offices are in the Flatiron Building:

“I love this—when can I see the sequel?”  
Sequel??

“They want to know you can sustain a character through a series,” my agent explained. So in mid-2006 I set about writing “Wyatt 2,” which by October 2008 and four drafts later became *Mortal Knowledge*, and which I will publish some day if no one else does. The Flatiron editor vanished from the face of the earth, and with the tanking economy went the last of the publishing firms’ desire to take a chance on a yet-unpublished writer in a wobbly subgenre.

This past April, my agent regretfully admitted defeat and suggested I look into e-publishing both novels. “Your work deserves an audience,” she said. She suggested Smashwords.com as a starting point.

Here’s how that works: the writer supplies the manuscript, carefully proofed and formatted, with a cover image. Smashwords supplies an ISBN, that little barcode you see on the backs of books, and formats your e-manuscript for all the major e-readers: Kindle, iPad and so on. They catalog your e-book online, and most likely it’s never heard from again (except by my Uncle John in Scotland, a 75-year-old early adopter, who downloaded it for his Sony E-reader).

People I knew said, “Great, you’ve got an

e-book, but I don’t do e-readers. When will it be in print?” I enlisted Wordclay, the Smashwords print affiliate, to help me turn the electrons into paper and ink. They were great to work with. I wanted to send them flowers. When the books arrived and I took the first one out of the box, I felt like a new mother: this is my creation, and to me it’s beautiful.

I’ve been dropping off copies like Johnny Appleseed at Vermont’s indie bookstores. They’re being very supportive, taking the book on consignment and giving it favorable placement (thank you, Bear Pond, who just called to say they need more copies!) Amazon’s now carrying the print version as well as the e-book. Will I profit by this? In experience, certainly; financially, probably not, though I may recoup the costs. But it’s OK. The book is real, and people are reading it.

There are two terribly sad things about this story. The Adirondack lodge on the real-life island where the story started burned to the ground in 2007. Our friend who had owned the island died last year of cancer, much too young. I think she’d be pleased that the place lives on in fictional form. For that thought alone, it’s been worth it.

## A Book-Publishing Celebration

Here’s something to celebrate. Montpelier writer Roberta Harold has just published a new mystery novel, *Heron Island*. As part of our Opinion pages, Harold tells the story of how her novel came to be published at a time when book publishing is dramatically changing.

A few nights ago, I started reading her novel and soon found myself drawn into its enchantments.

Here is a short conversational exchange from chapter one between Milly Van Dorn and Dade Wyatt. It is summer. Both Milly and Wyatt are in a small boat. Wyatt is rowing from Heron Island to the Vermont shore and Milly speaks.

*“Do let us be friends, Mr. Wyatt!” She let a dimpled smile lighten the intensity of the plea.*

*Wyatt took a breath, returned the smile and plunged in his turn, “I should like that—naturally.”*

*“I could tell you when we met that you were—a sympathetic person. How wonderful that we shall have a few more days on the island—to get to know each other better. And pray don’t worry about Gerald!” she waved a dismissive hand. They were closing in on the shore, where their voices could almost reach. “He’s not the jealous sort.”*

—Nat Frothingham

# What Do Our Tax Dollars Buy?

by Terry Doran

Republican candidate for governor Brian Dubie and his mentor, Governor James Douglas, have been running around scaring voters with the idea that Vermont is the most highly taxed state in the country. Is this true? It is not. Let’s look at some figures (all data is from the National Tax Foundation in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Census Bureau, the United Health Foundation, and “Education State Rankings, 2006-2007,” a publication of Morgan Quitno Press).

When the Douglas/Dubie administration assumed charge in 2002, Vermont was ranked 20th among 50 states for tax burden (the higher the number the less the tax burden, the lower the number the more burden). For 27 years it had never fallen into single digits when in 2005 it fell to eighth under Douglas/Dubie and stayed in single digits through 2008, the latest year for figures. The good years were under Howard Dean’s ad-

ministration.

Was the sudden increase in our tax burden in 2005-2008 the sole fault of the Douglas/Dubie administration? Of course not. Was it, as Douglas/Dubie like to infer, the fault only of Democrats? Of course not. Was the tax burden under Dean, roughly a third of recent years, all due to Howard Dean? Of course not.

Then whose fault, whose credit? The reasonable and fair conclusion is that it was, and is, a combination of politics, competing circumstances and forces beyond the easy control of administrations and legislatures, whoever they are. Demonizing taxes as an election weapon as Douglas/Dubie are doing, and have done in the past, is for the naive.

Consider the following: States with the least tax burden the last several years are Alaska (50th) and Nevada (49th). Now let’s apply a few other measures to see how they do compared to Vermont.

Health care: Vermont ranked first (that’s

the best) in 2009. Alaska was 34th, Nevada 45th.

Education: Vermont ranked first (again, the best) in 2005-06. Alaska was 44th, Nevada 47th.

Infant mortality (the higher the number the better): Vermont ranked 42nd in 2006. Alaska was 24th, Nevada 27th.

Doctors per population (the lower the number the better): Vermont was sixth in 2007. Alaska was 34th, Nevada 46th.

Violent crime: Vermont was 49th in 2007 (one away from the best). Alaska was eighth, Nevada was third (near to the worst).

More data could be mined and more states could be compared with Vermont. New Hampshire, for example, fares well in tax burden, offset to a degree by high property taxes and fees of other kinds. True analysis depends on many refinements.

There is no one-to-one relationship. To imply as Dubie/Douglas do that low taxes create jobs and high taxes drive them away is, once again, for naive voters. Simple cause

and effect does not explain social concerns like these. We live in the real world, not a political diagram.

The question we ought to be asking ourselves, then, is, What do our tax dollars buy? It should be obvious that Vermont has gotten value for its tax money. It should also be obvious that low-tax burden states like Alaska and Nevada haven’t gotten much for theirs (there are other states habitually in the same category; think Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana).

The Dubie/Douglas fear-mongering is irresponsible and mischievous. They are—appropriate to the season—the Halloween masks of taxes. If you don’t care about education, health care, low crime rates, and numerous other public benefits, then they have a point. If you do, they don’t.

Terry Doran is a retired journalist. He lives in Montpelier.

Join us at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual  
**FREE! Food and Wellness Expo!**  
 Saturday November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
 11am to 3pm  
 Montpelier City Hall  
 39 Main Street, Montpelier

**FREE!** samples of natural foods and Vermont specialty products!  
**FREE!** food and wellness exhibits!  
**FREE!** kids pumpkin painting!

**NEW!** this year Bring a food item to donate to the Vermont Foodbank and receive a \$5 OFF coupon for The Coop!



Open 8am-8pm every day  
 623 Stone Cutters Way Montpelier, VT  
 223.8000 hungermountain.com

For more information, call 802-223-8000 or visit us at hungermountain.com

# Wayside Bakery

## Menu & Order Form

Our bakery is open 7 days a week to serve you. With a little notice (normally 1 day, or 3 days before holidays) we can provide you with homemade baked goods for any occasion. You can be the hero at the office when you bring in old-fashioned buttermilk donuts or muffins. Once you get it home, walk through the door with fresh Parker House rolls and a double-crust pie, just look at all the smiling faces.

<p><b>CREAM PIES \$7.95</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Pumpkin                      <input type="checkbox"/> Custard  <input type="checkbox"/> Chocolate Cream   <input type="checkbox"/> Date  <input type="checkbox"/> Coconut                      <input type="checkbox"/> Banana (NEW)</p> <p><b>FRUIT PIES \$8.95</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Raspberry Sour Cream   <input type="checkbox"/> Mince  <input type="checkbox"/> Blueberry Sour Cream   <input type="checkbox"/> Cherry  <input type="checkbox"/> Apple (E)                      <input type="checkbox"/> Raspberry (E)  <input type="checkbox"/> Blueberry (E)               <input type="checkbox"/> Blackberry (E)  <input type="checkbox"/> Rhubarb (E)                  (E) Available w/ Equal Sugar</p> <p><b>SPECIALTY PIES \$9.95</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Maple Cream                      <input type="checkbox"/> Pecan  <input type="checkbox"/> Lemon Meringue   <input type="checkbox"/> Cherry Crumb  <input type="checkbox"/> Peanut Butter Ice Cream                  Served with hot fudge  <input type="checkbox"/> Cheese Cake                  With Graham Cracker Crust  <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian Tourtiere                  Homemade Pork Gravy  <input type="checkbox"/> Maple-Apple Crumb</p> <p><b>FRUIT SQUARES \$0.95</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fig                                      <input type="checkbox"/> Date  <input type="checkbox"/> Apple                                   <input type="checkbox"/> Raspberry  <input type="checkbox"/> Lemon                                 <input type="checkbox"/> Mince  <input type="checkbox"/> Blueberry</p>	<p><b>FOR DINNER \$2.95</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Parker House Rolls (dz)  <input type="checkbox"/> Italian Garlic Rolls (dz)  <input type="checkbox"/> Buttermilk Biscuits (1/2 dz)</p> <p><b>FOR LUNCH \$2.95</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Loaf of Rye Bread  <input type="checkbox"/> Loaf of Honey Wheat Bread  <input type="checkbox"/> Loaf of White Bread  <input type="checkbox"/> Hamburger Buns (1/2 dz)</p> <p><b>FOR BREAKFAST \$2.95</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Plain Buttermilk Donuts (1/2 dz)  <input type="checkbox"/> Sugared Buttermilk Donuts (1/2 dz)  <input type="checkbox"/> Plain Donut Holes (2dz)  <input type="checkbox"/> Sugared Donut Holes (2dz)</p> <p><b>MUFFINS \$2.95 (Qty. 4)</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Orange                              <input type="checkbox"/> Blueberry  <input type="checkbox"/> Raspberry                          <input type="checkbox"/> Corn  <input type="checkbox"/> Peach                                   <input type="checkbox"/> Apple  <input type="checkbox"/> Blackberry                          <input type="checkbox"/> Morning Glory</p> <p><b>OTHER \$0.95</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Chocolate Brownie  <input type="checkbox"/> Decorated Cookie  <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Plain Cookies (your choice)</p>
--	--

---

Order Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Needed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (pick up after 2PM unless noted, before 2PM X-Mas Eve)

Customer Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone#: \_\_\_\_\_ Order Taken By: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total Items Ordered: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Due: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*Thanks for your order...Wayside Restaurant & Bakery\*\*\***

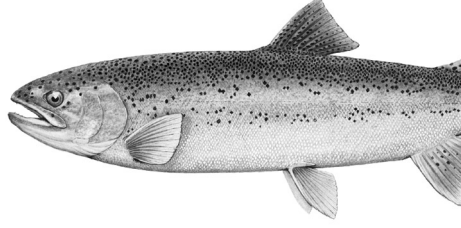
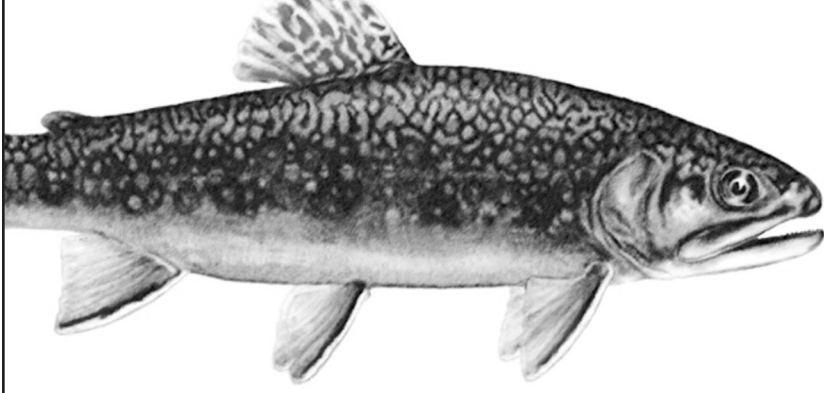

# fall fish sale

## brook or rainbow trout

**3"-5" fish \$1.20/fish**  
 picked up at the store

**8-10" fish \$2.75/fish**  
 delivered to your pond

Both sizes sold in lots of 50 fish.  
 Order deadline is Monday, October 25th  
 for pick-up October 28th, 1pm.

**GUY'S Farm & Yard**  
 19 Barre St., Montpelier 229-0567  
 HOURS: Mon-Fri, 8-6; Sat 8-5



**79 MAIN STREET  
 MONTPELIER, VT  
 802-223-BABY**

Mon-Sat 10am to 6pm  
 Sun 12pm to 4pm  
 www.zutano.com  
 zstore@zutano.com



Also Visit our Zutano Store Located in the Children's Section of the Northshire Book Store in Manchester, VT

**CLOTHES UNIQUE AS YOUR BABY.®**