

CAMPAIGN FOR VERMONT

Achieving Accountability

*Transforming State Government into a Modern,
Transparent 21st Century System*

“Public oversight, civic participation and electoral engagement – the stuff of democratic accountability – all depend upon transparent, open government.”

[The Sunlight Foundation](#)

June 3, 2013

Dear Fellow Vermonters:

It is our responsibility as Vermonters to require real transparency in government and full disclosure on where and how well every dollar is spent. Campaign for Vermont takes this obligation seriously, because we know Vermont – and our nation – is at an important fork in the road.

Achieving transparency is the most essential step in transforming state government into an efficient, responsive and accountable 21st Century organization capable of solving our state's most pressing challenges and ensuring the highest possible value, quality and equality.

Transparency is the best way to achieve efficiency, increase productivity and meet our biggest challenges—chronic poverty, skyrocketing costs, negative demographics and limited job opportunities.

It is the only way to build a real and lasting culture of accountability in government.

Transformation requires transparency.

And transparency—the ability to measure the real results of government—should be a non-partisan issue. Even from the politician's perspective, their policy aspirations—progressive, centrist and conservative—are better served by transparency and accountability.

This is why Vermonters expect little, or no opposition to enhanced transparency, measurement and accountability—except among those who have made a career in politics and government and believe they themselves are best served by current systems.

This paper identifies essential elements of reform that, with real leadership, will transform state government into a fully transparent and nimble 21st Century system. Campaign for Vermont's principles of transparency – and the change they inspire – represent a fundamentally new and transformative agreement between Vermonters and those we elect to represent us. It is a new and better deal for residents, and for government.

To aid in achieving this transformation, we will enhance our advocacy efforts as we continue to build a strong grassroots organization. If you share this goal, you can add your name to the growing list of Vermonters endorsing this effort at www.CampaignForVermont.org

In this paper, Campaign for Vermont proposes a clearly defined metrics-based approach, and creation of a non-partisan Transparency & Accountability Authority to define and oversee implementation of the most significant and necessary reforms across state government. We further propose that transparency and accountability standards be included in all legislation, without exception; financial disclosure within all branches and levels of state government should be required in real time; and Vermont ensure enforceable ethics policies for all public officials and establish them where they do not currently exist.

Our ability to provide a helping and compassionate hand to those who need one is at significant risk because the system rely upon to help them is at risk of collapsing financially under the burden of programmatic inefficiencies. The need for change, however, is verified in my view, by the fact that current systems have failed to appreciably reduce any of the most regressive human service

challenges—poverty, addiction, domestic violence, education results among low income children—in decades. It would appear, by many measures, that multiple generations of Vermonters have been trapped in the most regressive cycles imaginable. We think Vermont can do better.

By providing lawmakers, public managers and citizens with the necessary tools to accurately and promptly measure effectiveness and value in programs and services, we can dramatically reduce chronic poverty and its impacts; address the mounting crisis of affordability; neutralize an increasingly unsustainable tax burden; and better prioritize investment spending in areas where more bold and transformational reforms are required – like job creation, health care and education.

Most importantly, the transformation we propose provides every resident with unprecedented, unrestricted and unbiased information necessary to measure and judge those we choose to govern us. Imagine it: A system where residents can monitor the performance of their government—in real time. It will inspire powerful, positive and economically essential reforms.

We have no illusions. Achieving this transformation will not be easy. It requires support from elected officials and, more importantly, the support and advocacy of every Vermonter who believes in requiring transparency and accountability in government.

For more than 100 years, state government and the political system that shapes it has evolved with a deep institutional reliance on outdated bureaucratic processes and systems—often with good reason, back then. Put another way, when a government agency or initiative is not successful, they are rarely eliminated and another is often created to do what the first could not—and both are funded.

Over the same period, virtually every politician has promised a more efficient and transparent system of public management. The inertia of business-as-usual is a politically powerful force. However, there's no doubt state employees see great value in, systems that enhance their ability to deliver and verify the highest value. It is the political forces that will resist a transparent, metrics-based system. Politicians are unable to make substantial reforms to any policies related to their election, compensation or accountability – campaign finance reform is a frequent illustration of this phenomena.

The transformation we propose represents a departure from the familiarity and security of the old systems of government. We cannot, however, continue to measure the value or progress based on how much we are spending with little, or no, actionable data. To borrow an old saying: We cannot afford to keep doing what we've been doing, because we'll just keep getting what we've been getting.

Addressing this challenge – making transformational change – is why Campaign for Vermont was established and why it is growing. We are a diverse, and independent grassroots organization of over 500 hundred partners, with thousands more Vermonters engaged in the dialogue, and more joining every day. As I noted earlier, we will enhance our advocacy efforts to support this rapidly growing grassroots campaign.

If you believe, transparency and accountability in government is the most essential element of building a future where every Vermonter is secure and can prosper, please join us at CampaignForVermont.org

Best Wishes,



Bruce Lisman, Founder



Achieving Accountability

Transforming State Government into a Modern, Transparent 21st Century System

INTRODUCTION

The transformative effects of transparency, and the fundamental right of residents to know everything about their government, are founding principles of the Campaign for Vermont.

Transparent government is:

- Accountable;
- More nimble, efficient, productive and valuable;
- Measures and tracks outcomes—in real time—as well as spending and activity;
- Can show how *well* money is spent and how *much* money is spent.
- Significantly reduces waste, fraud and abuse.

Transparency provides lawmakers and executive branch managers tools to make better decisions and deliver better results; offers residents the opportunity to provide real-time feedback on programs and services; empowers state employees and inspires innovation in policy; and improves the ability of Vermont's media to fulfill their critical role as a government watchdog.

Effectively measuring the real results of government is a non-partisan issue. Progressive, centrist and conservative policy objectives are all better served by transparency and accountability.

Transparency is the most essential—and the most non-partisan—step in transforming state government into a vastly more efficient and responsive 21st Century system capable of solving our state's most pressing challenges.

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

In the 19th and 20th centuries, state government was engineered, often with good reason, and always with the best intentions, to administer bureaucratic programs. These systems generally met the needs of an earlier age, allowing the administration of government programs in a mostly sensible way, given the limited information management capacity back then.

Today, in an era of increasingly efficient and accurate systems and technology capable of measuring and reporting real time data, Vermont still relies, overwhelmingly, on this antiquated administrative model. It is the public management equivalent of reading by kerosene lamp, nearly 140 years after Edison commercialized the incandescent light bulb.

To be sure, the current system is capable of collecting and reporting data and statistics – but often too long after they would be most useful in improving delivery of government services.

This system no longer meets the needs, or expectations of the people it serves. More to the point, it is fundamentally less productive than more modern alternatives.

The shortcomings of the current systems is best illustrated by its inability to solve our most stubborn challenges – chronic poverty and its many impacts, slow economic growth and stagnant household incomes, negative demographic trends, and a mounting crisis of affordability. Instead of managing programs and services – with modern, data-driven and transparent tools and techniques – government continues to merely administer them based primarily on broadly defined goals and a budget appropriation.

These appropriations—which tend to consume the attention of politicians and special interests groups who rely on the cash they deliver—are too often confused with results, when in fact it is a mere measure of spending. In addition, when government agencies or initiatives are not successful they are rarely eliminated and another is often created to do what the first could not—and both are funded.

The desire among politicians, issue-driven stakeholders and other special interest groups to accumulate and manage political capital has created a policymaking environment that prioritizes the management of these antiquated government systems—and the funding they rely on—for optimal political value. Both the public administration systems, and the political processes that define them, are not only antiquated, but locked in costly and counterproductive symbiotic relationships that put politics ahead of demands made by Vermonters to meet the current economic, social and environmental challenges of our time.

Campaign for Vermont's point is this: It is both more costly and counterproductive to use 20th Century systems to address the problems of the 21st Century or serve effectively 21st Century residents.

Building an economy where everyone is secure and can prosper requires a system of government that is capable of both measuring and adapting to its results—a system that empowers state employees who, with the benefit of a more innovative infrastructure and management culture that inspires improvement, would no doubt thrive.

Vermont must discard outdated and inefficient administrative systems, and the political influencers who defend them, rethink how laws are cast and fundamentally reengineer state government in ways that make it truly more efficient, productive and valuable to the people of Vermont.

This is a time for real change—transformative change—in the systems, processes and management of state government to engineer its systems and manage its processes. It is a time for fundamental reform. It is time to transform state government into a more nimble, efficient and productive 21st Century public enterprise that measures its results in real time and is wholly capable of meeting our challenges.

THE MORE THINGS ‘CHANGE’ THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

Discussing reform is quite common in state government and particularly popular among politicians seeking election or reelection. Notably new governors frequently conduct “top-to-bottom” reviews in an attempt to ferret out inefficiencies and improve services. We’ll cite two examples below.

Taken all together, they offer strong historical evidence of a political and administrative bias favoring the status quo. From these efforts the emergence of real reforms – meaningful reengineering of the systems for implementing and managing policy and programs—is far too rare.

It is our view that the current system allows special interests and their political allies to bury inadequate outcomes under mountains of stale data or a promise of yet more studies to identify “reforms.” The result, in nearly every case, has been largely symbolic actions or creation of another program to be implemented in an outdated, inefficient system.

In the 1970’s, Gov. Richard Snelling instituted the Cost Control Council (CCC). The CCC studied government with an emphasis on identifying operational efficiencies and areas where new technologies could streamline, or otherwise improve, programs and services.

In 2003, newly elected governor Jim Douglas, who had served as a senior aide to Governor Snelling, created a similar council. The Douglas council—which became the Vermont Institute for Government Effectiveness (VIGE) – was charged with reviewing each program with an eye toward new methods of achieving objectives at the lowest possible cost.

Both reviews, it was said, would make government more effective and save millions of dollars. Though they did highlight the opportunity for real change and resulted in some modest operational improvements, very few of the bold, and most necessary, reforms were implemented.

This is powerful evidence of how much of an obstacle the politics of the past century are in reforming systems of government—and we currently think of that time as a period of magnanimous bipartisanship. But relapsing intransigence has little to do with party. In reality, incumbent politicians, or aspiring politicians for whom the formula represents a path to victory, have the greatest interest in preserving the status quo. They therefore work to weaken, or block, reforms. The executives who called for reforms, and there have been others we’ve not cited—also lacked the political capital and perhaps the political resolution, to push changes through a political process that might very well result in changes to the political environment in which they, or their party and allies operate.

There is, of course, a pettier partisan element to all of this. If it’s one side’s idea, the other opposes it—like children arguing for arguing’s sake.

Later in Governor Douglas term – and in direct response to the Great Recession – both the Douglas administration and some legislators, notably the Democrat-controlled House Government Operations Committee, issued reform proposals dubbed “Challenges for Change.” These efforts too fell short, due in large part to ideological divides, political squabbling; bureaucratic inflexibility; and a political system that relies heavily on serving, and funding, entrenched special interests.

Ultimately, it is our view that insufficient transparency—the ability to measure results in real time and hold systems, and the policymakers who craft them accountable—is the single greatest obstacle to reforming government systems in any meaningful way.

NO TRANSFORMATIVE RESULTS

Nearly a decade after VIGE and more than three decades after the first Cost Control Council only the scope of the challenge and the urgency of transformation have changed.

Nevertheless, there is once again a chorus of politicians in Vermont conceding the need for greater transparency. Unfortunately, it's the same politically inspired tune – recognizing a problem, promising change and implementing largely superficial “reforms” that result in little meaningful improvement.

Most recently, the Legislature's inability to rationally address campaign finance reform illustrated an inability to address issues related to their reelection, compensation or accountability. A few years ago, it was the Challenge for Change process and Tiger Team efforts, which were geared to finding cost savings reforms and improved outcomes during the recent Great Recession. Yet, as in the past, special interests and their lobbyists did not embrace these reforms and the Legislature allowed them once again to languish with little effect.

In 2009 the liberal Public Asset Institute and the conservative Ethan Allen Institute, to their credit, kick started the dialogue again by undertaking the first truly comprehensive transparency initiative. Together, they produced a transparency website featuring the state's accumulated publicly available financial data. It was an important step, but due to the limited depth and breadth of information available from government itself, fell short of the granular degree necessary to achieve true transparency, accountability, efficiency and productivity. Nevertheless, it was an important illustration of how little information is in fact available to the public, and to policymakers, in the management of government's most essential and valuable services.

In 2011, a newly elected Secretary of State launched a “Transparency Tour” with 12 “stops” to discuss Vermont's public records and open meeting laws with municipal and state employees and residents who serve on local boards. In announcing the tour, the secretary said in a prepared statement, “Open and transparent government is good government! Vermont's citizens deserve accountability in their government.”

During the following legislative session, the secretary worked with the Legislature to advance very modest improvements to Vermont's public records statutes. Though they were heralded as the “most significant changes since the bill's enactment in 1976,” (clear political hyperbole) there has not been any meaningful change in the overall transparency or accountability of state government. Effectively, while some changes were made, largely related to the compensation awarded media in public records cases, the Legislature elected to make wholly inadequate systems marginally less inadequate. There was no systemic reform and the effort – though a valuable public relations tool – fell far short of the transformation in law, systems and culture required for achieving accountability.

Despite repeated and grandiose promises for reform, Vermont still doesn't measure up. There has been no meaningful effort to fundamentally transform the budgeting, management or service delivery models of state government.

FAILING TO MAKE THE GRADE

In a report issued in March 2012, U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG) gave Vermont a grade of D- for “providing online access to government spending data” they’ve called an “online checkbook.”

According to [Phineas Baxandall](#), the senior analyst for tax and budget policy at USPIRG: “State governments across the country continue to be more transparent about where the money goes, extending checkbook-level disclosure of data on spending to contracting, tax subsidies, development incentives and other expenditures. But most states still have a lot of room for improvement. Citizens expect information to be at their fingertips the way they can view their cell phone minutes or the location of a package. Putting spending information online helps hold government accountable and allows taxpayers to see where the money goes.”

The report goes on to conclude that, among other advantages, states that have created or improved their online transparency have typically done so with **little upfront cost**. In fact, states with the most comprehensive transparency websites actually save money for taxpayers, restore public confidence in government, and prevent misspending and inappropriate contracting.

The [State Integrity Investigation conducted a deep, data-driven assessment of every state](#) in March 2012. In their analysis, a partnership with [Public Radio International](#), they measured both transparency and accountability. No state received an A grade. Five states received a B grade or better. Nineteen states received a C grade. Vermont received a D+.



In legislative accountability and ethics enforcement agency categories [Vermont received an E](#), including a zero in providing citizens the right to access asset disclosure documents; an issue that has periodically made its way into Vermont’s gubernatorial campaigns, but never campaigns for Legislature.

In addition, the State Integrity Investigation noted that Vermont’s public records laws continue to contain more than 200 exemptions; and there are no financial disclosure requirements for elected officials. Vermont also received a grade of F for its lack of clear, enforceable ethics policies for public officials at all levels and branches of government.

We do note, however, that the [Sunlight Foundation](#) graded the general transparency of Vermont’s legislative process at B level. The Sunlight Foundation measured standard items like the timely posting of votes, legislation, lists of legislators, committee assignments and legislative journals and schedules. They did not evaluate ethics policies, public document disclosures or the presence of specific metrics or requirements for measuring the results of proposed legislation.

THE LAW OF INTENDED CONSEQUENCES

In 2012, transparency as a tool for achieving accountability was the centerpiece of several campaigns for statewide office. In the same year, the Shumlin administration launched a fiscal “transparency” website: www.spotlight.vermont.gov.

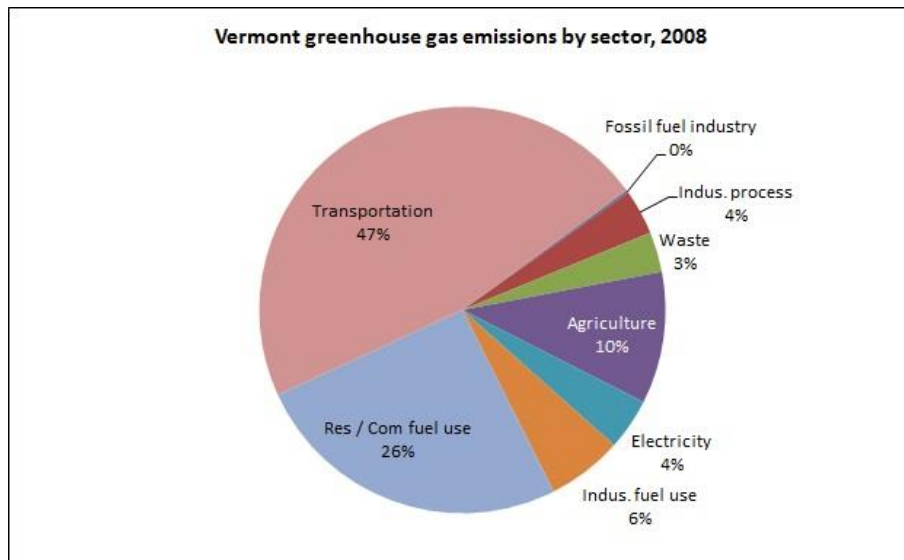
The new site provides accumulated financial information and basic summary charts and graphs, many from existing budget documents. We urge you to visit it and evaluate it firsthand.

When evaluating the site, ask:

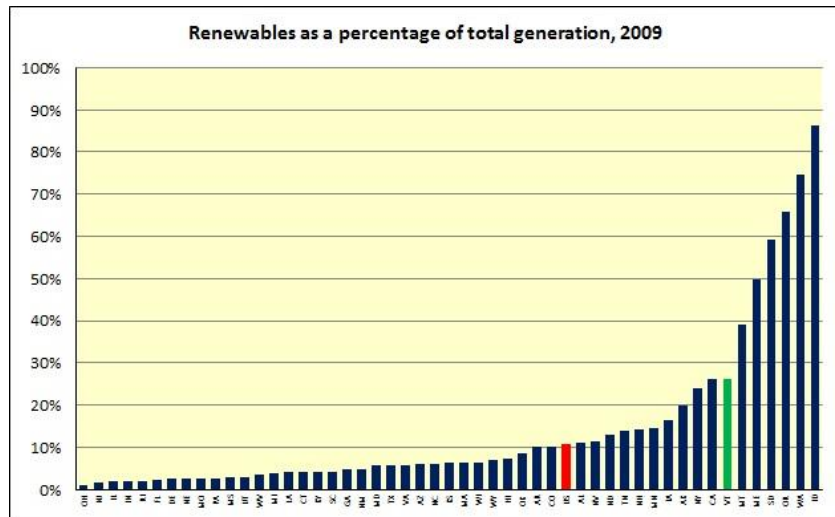
- Is this what residents, lawmakers, executive branch managers and the media need to measure the results of taxpayer-financed spending, and hold elected officials accountable, in real-time?
- Does it allow public servants to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of programs, day-to-day, week-to-week and month-to-month?
- Are these tools measuring results in a timely way and are these tools reporting on spending and activity?
- Are both the policy and bureaucracy of state government structured and equipped to respond quickly when it’s clear it is not achieving the desired outcomes?

We note that much of the data provided is at least one year old. In notable cases, particularly in policy areas identified as priorities, information is much older.

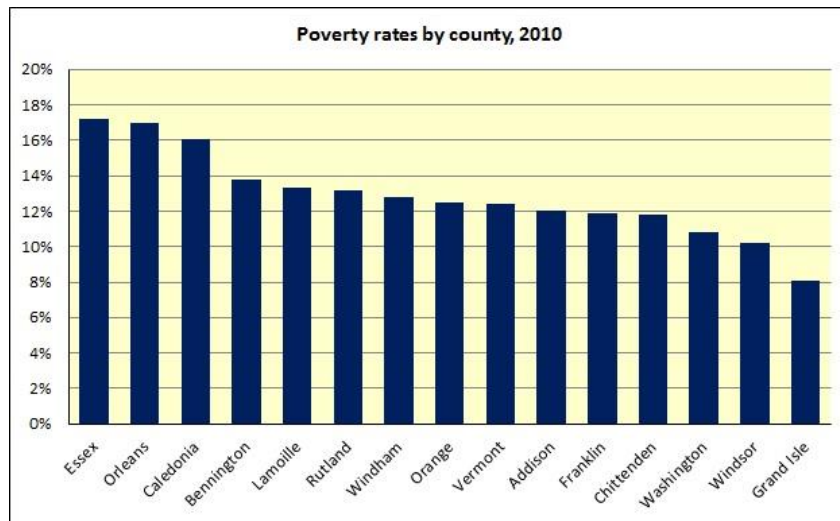
The greenhouse gas emissions data on the administration’s new site, for example, is from 2008:



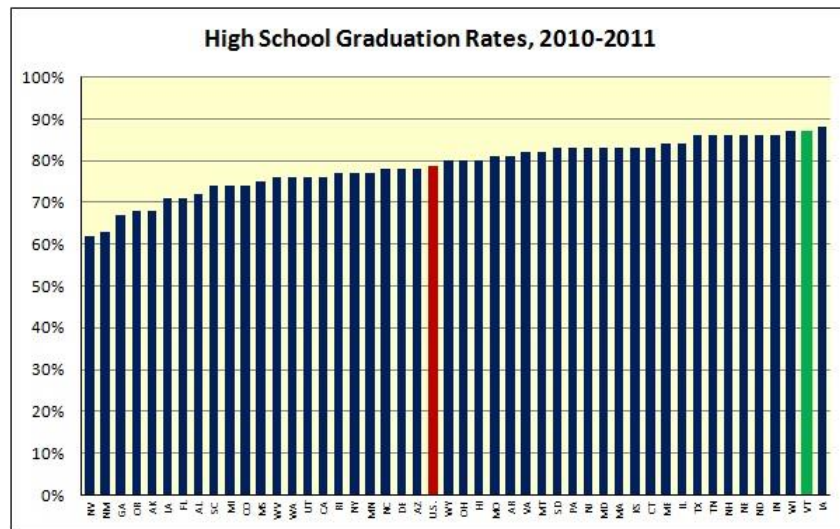
Likewise, data on percentage of energy generated by renewable sources is from 2009:



The data reporting poverty rates by county is from 2010:



Even the graduation rate of our children is from 2010-2011:



In fact, the only available month-to-month totals are federal employment statistics and the number of people in the custody of the Department of Corrections.

When it takes a year, or more, for state government to acquire results—and often longer to analyze them—it is unable to modify management priorities or spending fast enough to ensure the best possible results at the lowest cost.

In some places, there is no doubt that we are throwing good money after bad, and in others we’re getting great results. We just don’t know it until it’s too late to realign our priorities and invest more in what’s working.

Even with these changes, public managers lack access to useful and deployable data. More importantly, so do Vermonters. This makes the system both inefficient and unaccountable – a costly combination. This must change.

More to the point, there is not one single reference to the importance of modernizing the management systems of government on Gov. Shumlin’s “transparency” site or in the “strategic plan” offered by the administration. It’s more of the same. It’s time for change.

We do want to note that this modest improvement in online transparency was the justification for USPIRG’s decision to give Vermont a grade of C+ in its updated report, [Following the Money 2013](#). They note, however, that all 50 states now have spending information online. “In 48 states – except California and Vermont – this information is searchable.” They also point out, as did Campaign for Vermont in 2011, that Vermont offers little or no information outside the state’s traditional accounting systems.

Table ES-1: How the 50 States Rate in Providing Online Access to Spending Data, USPIRG, *Follow the Money 2013*, March 26, 2013, Pg. 7:

State	Grade	Point Total
Texas	A	96
Massachusetts	A-	93
Florida	A-	92
Illinois	A-	92
Kentucky	A-	92
Michigan	A-	91
Oklahoma	A-	91
Oregon	B+	89
Utah	B+	88
Nebraska	B+	88
Arizona	B	86
Iowa	B	85
Pennsylvania	B	85
Washington	B-	81
New Hampshire	B-	80
Virginia	B-	80
Georgia	C+	77

State	Grade	Point Total
Vermont	C+	77
Connecticut	C+	76
Indiana	C+	75
Missouri	C	74
West Virginia	C	74
Maryland	C	73
Mississippi	C	73
New Mexico	C	73
New York	C	73
South Carolina	C	73
Tennessee	C	73
Idaho	C	72
Louisiana	C	71
Minnesota	C	71
New Jersey	C	71
South Dakota	C	70
Arkansas	C-	69

State	Grade	Point Total
Delaware	C-	69
Kansas	C-	68
Maine	C-	68
Alabama	C-	66
Alaska	D+	64
Nevada	D+	62
Ohio	D+	61
Colorado	D+	60
North Carolina	D	58
Montana	D	57
Rhode Island	D-	54
Wyoming	F	48
Wisconsin	F	47
Hawaii	F	39
California	F	37
North Dakota	F	31

Initiated by [Benchmarks for a Better Vermont](#), a collaboration of Marlboro College, Common Good Vermont, United Ways of Vermont, Vermont Community Foundation and other partners, Vermont's Legislature this year welcomed [Mark Friedman](#), director of the Fiscal Policy Studies Institute in Sante Fe, New Mexico. Mr. Friedman is perhaps most notable for his work on results-based accountability and budgeting. It was through the leadership of former secretary of human services Con Hogan, some 25 years ago, that Vermont first became acquainted with Mr. Friedman's innovative work. Secretary Hogan introduced the priority of measuring outcomes, but has diminished significantly within the management culture of the agency.

The Legislature's interest in the one-day discussion was not reflected in any meaningful way in its work. Though legislators may agree with the need for results-based reforms, they've not invested any time in reforming their own policymaking processes.

This is not to suggest that they do not work hard or take the prospect of reform seriously—only that they've done very little, if anything, to demonstrate a serious commitment to—or even to see an urgent need for 21st Century reform.



Recommendations for Achieving Accountability

Transforming State Government into a Modern, Transparent 21st Century System

RECOMMENDATION #1: DEFINE METRICS THAT MATTER

Transparency allows everyone – Vermonters, policymakers, public employees and the media – to measure results and track government’s progress (and the public’s return on investment) pegged to clearly defined metrics visible to all those who are interested. In our view, the most important metrics are the ones that measure outcomes – how well our money is spent.

Knowing what we’re getting for our investment is more important, and far more useful, than knowing only how much we’re spending. Currently, as noted above, politicians are framing policy debates, and basing policy decisions and appropriations, on data that is all too often out of date. They frequently use funding levels and old data to create the illusion of transparency and progress. In reality little progress has been made.

Take the current 2014 state budget process, for example. Campaign for Vermont has documented that state spending grew by over 22% from 2008 through 2013, or more than \$909 million – almost \$1 billion. For 2014, the Vermont’s House of Representatives has further increased state spending by over 4.7%, more than twice the rate of inflation. Yet, while we know they’re spending a lot more money and raising property taxes, gas taxes and multiple fees to do it, there’s little to no information about reforms to measure, much less improve, outcomes.

Policymakers and public managers must define, measure, and frequently report metrics that matter. It’s not enough to state a broad objective. Public policy should include precise goals for spending and service; and detail how, exactly, state government will measure the results. Additionally, laws should note which elected leaders, appointed officials and civil servants are accountable for achieving those results.

This level of accountability—enshrined in laws and in administrative rules—is essential to overcoming the instinct of 19th and 20th century bureaucratic systems to discuss or study reform, but never implement meaningful and necessary transformative reforms.

RECOMMENDATION #2: CREATE A TRANSPARENCY AUTHORITY

More than any other branch of government, the responsibility for reform rests with the Legislature. The Legislature must embrace results-based accountability and transparency by requiring that every bill drafted, and every law passed, includes specific transparency measures and outcome-based metrics.

No one wants the fox guarding the hen house, except the fox. To this end, Campaign for Vermont proposes the creation of an independent Transparency & Accountability Authority (TAA) board comprised of representatives from inside and outside government.

The TAA should consist of:

- Three members appointed jointly by the Vermont Broadcasters Association and Vermont Press Association;
- Three members appointed jointly by watchdog groups Public Assets Institute and Ethan Allen Institute;
- Three members of the business community recommended by the governor.

The appointment process should be similar to that of the Judicial Nominating Board in order to filter out political influence as much as possible.

Additionally, the TAA should have an advisory committee composed of the senior, non-exempt civil servants from the Joint Fiscal Office, Auditors Office, Department of Finance and Management, and Department of Information and Innovation (IT) to offer the TAA practical guidance on transforming state government.

It is important to note that the TAA will not be a commission or study group, but an authority with clear powers to compel state government to reform its management and reporting systems. It will have staff paid the first year from appropriation but subsequently from savings, as it too will have outcome metrics to achieve. A 1% annual savings through reforms equals \$50 million, far more than necessary to fund such an authority.

Begin with Human Services and Education - The Authority should be tasked to first address the biggest, and most important, challenges—beginning with the Agency of Human Services.

As CFV founder Bruce Lisman noted recently, the economic challenges Vermont faces are much bigger than ‘business as usual’ policies are capable of solving. The core of this problem is a fundamentally inefficient system of government administration—a system that consumes resources that should be directed toward what Lisman calls the “big ideas” and “transformational reforms” that will build an economy where everyone is secure and can prosper.

“The need for bold investments in areas like education, health care and human services is widely recognized,” Lisman said. “But chronic, recurring budget gaps and shortfalls prevent lawmakers from focusing on the future, rethinking our outdated and inefficient systems and programs. Administrative officials and policymakers should start by limiting

this year's budget increase to inflation, plus population growth (2.55%). This formula was a basic and long-held principle of fiscal sustainability advocated by governors Snelling, Dean and Douglas. But restraint alone is not enough. We must also move to a more modern effective management system - beginning first with human services."

Since 2008, human service spending has increased 29%. During this period, Vermont's population has grown by less than one-half of one percent per year. And, despite these expenditures, outcomes for low income Vermonters have not improved. In fact, the current administration said in [January 2013](#) they don't know why some developmental services caseloads are growing. That reveals real flaws in the management systems that are very likely precluding necessary investments in serving that vulnerable population.

In our view, the highest priority reforms—and the initial focus of the TAA—must be in those systems currently designed to move Vermonters out of poverty, because those in poverty are not getting adequate results and are often the most costly to administer and sustain. In fact, lawmakers have created an inefficient benefit system of 'silos' that are too complicated, inflexible and ineffective. In many cases, Vermonters are trapped in poverty, unable to work, because of "benefit" systems that make it impossible for them to get ahead. That's a disgrace and we must do better.

As a first step, we recommend a "**shared-view-of-the-client**" – a modern and transparent management system that groups each state benefit and service (regardless of agency or department) by client. Such a system would create a singular, and far more efficient, plan for each client; eliminate benefit cliffs; and chart a clear and realistic path to financial security and economic independence.

Education is the state's second largest budget area. As presented in [Campaign for Vermont's 2013 education policy paper – Putting Children First](#), Vermont is currently spending enough money to have the best education system in the world, to include universal pre-K, more classroom investments and a 20% increase in teacher salary. Moreover, most of the necessary data sets for education spending, activities and outcomes are available to measure progress within Vermont and compare Vermont to other states. These data are not organized into a systematized management "dash board" capable of providing more timely data. This makes it nearly impossible to align the data to more specific outcome metrics; a necessary requisite to the policy reforms identified in [Campaign for Vermont's education policy paper](#) and to holding government accountable.

Together, human services and education cover over two-thirds of the entire state budget. Other segments of the state budget; resident-centric services such as the business registration process and tax department systems; and elements of the political process, such as lobbyist activities and campaign contributions would also benefit tremendously from the focus on an independent TAA.

RECOMMENDATION #3: CODIFY TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN ALL LEGISLATION

In addition to the creation of the TAA, a cultural transformation within our political and legislative process must take place. To support this change, Campaign for Vermont proposes that every piece of legislation, upon introduction, be required to include specific accountability and transparency measures, as illustrated in the Criteria for the Introduction of Legislation below.

<p>Criteria for the Introduction of Legislation</p> <p>House / Senate Bill #(s) & Title: _____</p> <p>Purpose _____ (300 words)</p> <p>Specific Problem(s) Addressed & Outcomes Required: _____ (300 words)</p> <p>Problem: Revenue___ Social*___ Economic**___ Environmental___ Other___</p> <p><small>*Includes education, healthcare, & social safety net. **Includes commerce, regulation & economic development.</small></p> <p>Specific Metrics for Measuring Success: _____</p> <p>Data Collection & Public Reporting: Weekly___ Monthly___ Annually___</p> <p>Website for Reporting Data: _____</p> <p>Review Frequency: Quarterly:___ 1 yr:___ 2 yrs:___ 3 yrs:___ 5 yrs:___</p> <p>Bill text: _____</p>
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In our view, this requirement is essential to redirect the focus of individual lawmakers and the political culture of the Legislature. The Legislature must more clearly define how they are measuring progress toward the desired outcomes of their own legislation—and they must hold themselves and the Executive Branch accountable.

RECOMMENDATION #4: REQUIRE REAL TIME FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY IN EXECUTIVE BRANCH

There is an important role for the Executive Branch to play and there are opportunities for it to lead by example. First, real reform will require an executive who understands, embraces and can articulate the importance of this cultural transformation in government. That executive must also introduce these standards of transparency and accountability within the entire executive branch, where it is possible without legislative authorization.

Moreover, the governor should order, or lawmakers should require, that all financial management documents used by managers throughout state government, be available online, at all times. (This would exclude only those documents containing personal health and tax information of residents.)

This would allow lawmakers, residents, media and watchdog groups to see exactly where every dollar is coming from and where every dollar is going. Being able to monitor the financial activity of a department or agency on a daily basis—in real time—is an essential ingredient in the transformation to a fully accountable government. Every Vermonter should be able to go online and see how, where and why every agency and department within state government is spending her or his hard-earned money.

In the 21st Century, there is no excuse for a state government that remains unwilling to provide residents with complete, unrestricted access to public financial information. It is, after all, the public's checkbook.

In reality, posting financial documents on the Internet is not a burden of time or money. These documents are already routinely, often daily, posted on internal intranet sites and shared drives throughout state government so managers can process routine transactions and monitor finances. As the USPIRG report notes, states achieving the highest degree of transparency did so with very little upfront cost with many saving money.

Politicians and bureaucrats will make all sorts of excuses, of course, because it ensures a maximum degree of oversight in financial and program management. But that's the point—accountability. It's the best way to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government and get better results.

RECOMMENDATION #5: ESTABLISH CLEAR ETHICS POLICIES AND ENFORCEMENT SYSTEMS

Vermont should evaluate existing ethics policies and be sure that there are standards of conduct applied to every public office. In addition, these policies must be enforceable through a system that is transparent and independent. From criminal misconduct like municipal embezzlement to abuse of power, events frequently remind us of the importance of laws and policies that govern ethics policies and enforcement systems. Vermont's laws cover criminal activity but do not speak directly to the ethics in all branches and levels of government nor is there a fair and independent process for adjudicating and addressing violations of these basic expectations.

CONCLUSION

Vermont can no longer afford to measure the effectiveness of government based on how much we are spending.

Transforming state government into a transparent and nimble 21st Century system is a critical path for meeting our biggest challenges and assuring maximum efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

Transparency will shape a real culture of accountability in government. This transformation requires real leadership from elected officials and from Vermonters who must demand transparency and accountability.

Campaign for Vermont believes that transparency and accountability is the only way to build a future where every Vermonter is secure and can prosper. This is a founding principle of our diverse, grassroots advocacy organization. Transformation cannot wait, it must happen now—that's why so many Vermonters have joined Campaign for Vermont.

Join the effort at CampaignForVermont.org.

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