



# Put People First Agenda, Delivered to 2013 Vermont Legislature

JANUARY 10, 2013

## **Put People First Agenda**

January 9, 2013

*Officially delivered to Speaker of the House Shap Smith and State Senator Phil Baruth, along with thousands of postcards showing broad public support for the Agenda*

We are Put People First and we represent the people of Vermont: young and old, workers, parents, immigrants, people with disabilities, and many more. We are the people who experience the human rights crisis day in and day out. We sit around kitchen tables piled with bills, thinking about our hungry kids, freezing homes, and medical bills. We get paid poverty wages, see professions in our community undervalued, experience the devastating effects of climate change, and know countless other stories. Ours is a people's movement that believes Vermont can and must do better, and more of our neighbors, coworkers, and family members are joining each day. We have come together to work for a Vermont that puts people first by protecting and fulfilling human rights and ensuring a healthy environment.

For too long, we have been divided from one another by attempts to make us compete for our rights. This year, we have come together with all who struggle in this system that denies our human rights and destroys our planet. Government has an obligation to fulfill the human rights of all people. We know it is our responsibility to hold our government accountable to that obligation. We recognize that many of our legislators have come to the State House to put people first, but until we fix the root causes of our broken system, no individual alone can make that kind of change.

Our state is obligated to ensure that everyone can meet their fundamental needs and exercise their human rights to healthcare, housing, food, transportation, education, work with dignity, social security, and a healthy environment. When our government protects and fulfills these rights, everyone in our communities is better off. We can all lead lives of dignity and join together to create a better Vermont, United States, and a more livable planet.

This legislative session, we are proud to call on our elected representatives to make our vision a reality. That means making concrete progress on key issues impacting the human rights of Vermont's people in the coming year. We're asking our legislators to:

- Stand with us for the human right to healthcare by continuing toward universal healthcare in Vermont, rooted in human rights principles. As we transition toward Green Mountain Care, make certain that our health system expands the public provision of health services and does not move

- backward by limiting or denying access to public programs by making them less affordable.
- Advance the human right to safe and dignified work by establishing paid sick days, evidence-based protections for healthcare workers against fatigue, burnout and worker and patient injury. Support the right to organize for early childhood educators and independent providers of home and community living services.
  - Ensure the human right to freedom of movement and access to transportation by supporting access to driver's licenses for all Vermont residents regardless of immigration status.
  - Guarantee the human rights and full inclusion of people with disabilities by providing adequate funding for home and community based programs, both now and in the future. Strengthen Vermont's promise and commitment to a community-based system for people with disabilities, keeping the promise made when Brandon Training School closed 20 years ago.
  - Advance the human right to a healthy environment and livable planet by enacting home weatherization legislation that includes equitable financing and universal access, and take all possible steps to prevent the transportation of climate destabilizing tar sands oil through Vermont.
  - Move forward on a People's Budget, based on human rights principles, created through an accountable process of public participation. Make people, not money, the center of budgeting by funding services based on the fundamental needs of people in Vermont.

Put People First recognizes that the way our state raises and spends money dramatically impacts the extent to which human rights are protected and fulfilled. We believe the budget is a moral document that should reflect our society's deepest values and priorities. In the budget and in all other systems in our society, we must put people first in our decision-making. Rather than a paradigm that "manages to the money," we need a system that distributes resources based on the fundamental needs of our communities and in ways that are participatory and equitable. We're not just asking for more, we're asking for a different way of doing things.

We are gathered in a spirit of collaboration and optimism that this year, Vermont will take one step closer to becoming a beacon for human rights in this country. We look forward to continuing the hard and important work of building a people's movement to make this change possible in 2013. Will you join us?

The growing list of Put People First organizations that support the Put People First Agenda includes:

- AFSCME
- 350 Vermont
- Green Mountain Self-Advocates
- Migrant Justice
- Rising Tide Vermont
- United Professions of Vermont/AFT
- Vermont Center for Independent Living
- Vermont Early Educators United/AFT
- Vermont Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals AFT
- Vermont State Employees Association
- Vermont Workers' Center (Coordinates Put People First)
- Voices for Vermont's Children



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