

# **THE VERMONT DIFFERENCE: DIRECT DEMOCRACY TO THE IMPACT OF PROGRESSIVE POLITICS**

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The Vermont political environment is home to three, frequently lauded, unique attributes that separates it from other states. This thesis investigates why and how Vermont sees such a prevalence in split ticket voting, how the most successful third party in the country, the Vermont Progressive Party, has been able to establish and maintain success in Vermont for the last forty years, and investigates of the current state, successes, failures, and future of direct democracy in Vermont's town meetings. The thesis then asks whether each of these elements is replicable outside of the Vermont political environment and what the implications are for expansion of these attributes to other states and nationwide. The research uses a range of methodologies: an IVR survey and in-depth follow up interviews for split ticket voters, in-depth interviews of members of the Vermont Progressive Party, and an online survey of Vermont town clerks. This thesis finds that split ticket voters in Vermont point to a number of reasons for splitting their ticket, most prominently, however, it is due to the close connection that Vermonters feel to their political representatives which can transcend party label. The Progressive Party's success is largely due to Bernie Sanders' proof of concept when he became mayor of Burlington, VT, in addition to community-building organization techniques, and a legislative environment that does not overly hinder third party candidates and parties. Direct democracy in the form of open and hybrid town meeting in Vermont provides benefits in the form of negotiation, issue-education, and community building. However, lower participation rates and recent events that are pulling towns away from direct democracy indicate an uncertain future for town meeting direct democracy. The research finds that these three aspects of Vermont's political environment are more complicated and less than the ideal that many academics, pundits, and activists argue for. However, they also present significant positives and it is clear that certain political environments

could lead to expanding split ticket voting and the presence of successful third parties and ultimately potentially less contentious and more representative democracy to states outside of Vermont and the nation.

This Master's thesis was completed under the direction of Dr. Dorothea Wolfson, Dr. Straus and Dr. Hill. It was read by Lee Drutman and Al From.

## **PREFACE**

I was born in California and have lived in five different U.S. states and three different countries. After moving to Vermont in 2018, I started to learn about and personally experience many of the unique attributes that I investigate in this thesis. I met and talked with split ticket voters, town clerks, and members of the Progressive Party. I bought chickens from our then-Lieutenant Governor. I participated in town meeting day. In choosing what to study for my thesis, I wanted to highlight these fascinating, and often overlooked, aspects of Vermont politics. In so doing, I hope to expand our understanding, not only of Vermont, but of possibilities for the future of our national political system. I hope that my research will be read and considered by both academics and individuals, particularly Vermonters, interested in the fascinating intricacies and possibilities of Vermont's political environment.

I would like to thank my family for their encouragement and help throughout this process. I particularly want to thank my husband, Shannon Jackson, for his encouragement and steadfast support, and my mother, Kathleen Ragan, for the hours of guidance and proof-reading. Thank you also, to: Bill McInturff, Charles Lineweaver, Molly O'Brien, Deirdre Lineweaver, Michelle Jackson, Brad Jackson, Hillary Jackson, and Zachary Benuck. I would not have been able to do this without you.

Finally, thank you to Johns Hopkins University, my advisor and the professors who helped me write this thesis. Dr. Dorothea Wolfson, thank you for being an unfailing advocate for me during this process. Thank you, also to Dr. Jacob Straus and Dr. Kathryn Wagner Hill for your help, encouragement, and guidance.

Colleen R. Jackson, Burlington Vermont, 5.12.21

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# THESIS INTRODUCTION

At 7:01pm on election day 2020, the Vermont results were called for future President Joe Biden. At 7:01pm on election day 2018, Vermont results were called for Senator Bernie Sanders. At 7:01pm on election day in 2016, Vermont results were called for Secretary Hillary Clinton. This consistency combined with the paucity of Vermont's electoral college votes camouflages fascinating and unique aspects of the political environment in Vermont. Vermont, a consistently "blue state" at the federal level has one of the highest rates of split ticket voting in the country. Vermont is home to the most successful third party in the country, which has had consistent representation in the state legislature for over 30 years and, in state's largest city of Burlington, achieved the first successful realignment in the United States since the Republican Party emerged prior to the Civil War. In addition, Vermont is the one of the last remaining homes of direct democracy in this country, even surpassing other New England states where direct democracy has less presence. Learning about these aspects of Vermont politics can teach us about our democracy and how and whether these unique elements of the Vermont political environment could or should be expanded across the nation's political landscape.

After all, how many times do we hear or read statements similar to the following:

- *"95% of voters want the two parties to work together to solve the country's problems, with 86% saying they 'strongly' support bipartisan cooperation."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hayes, "Biden, Republicans each have a good reason to compromise (Commentary)," *Syracuse.com*, February 2, 2021, <https://www.syracuse.com/opinion/2021/02/biden-republicans-each-have-good-reason-to-compromise-commentary.html>.

- *“Nearly two-thirds of Americans say **the U.S. needs a third major political party** because the GOP and Democratic Party ‘do such a poor job representing the American people,’”<sup>2</sup>*
- *“**Americans don’t feel Congress represents them very well... only 25 percent of** respondents felt people like them were even somewhat well represented in Congress, with 60 percent saying they were not well represented.”<sup>3</sup>*

This thesis investigates these three aspects of Vermont’s, and the nation’s, politics and strives to use this research to determine how these unique elements have occurred in Vermont, whether they meet the expectations of those who vocally call for similar changes across the country, how they could potentially be replicated, and the implications of expanding these aspects to other states and across the country.

### **Split Ticket Voting in Vermont**

The first chapter in this thesis investigates split ticket voting in Vermont’s 2018 election.<sup>4</sup> In 2018, prominent news agencies declared the election a “blue wave” for Democrats.<sup>5</sup> Nationally, this election continued a long-term trend towards fewer divided state governments: a

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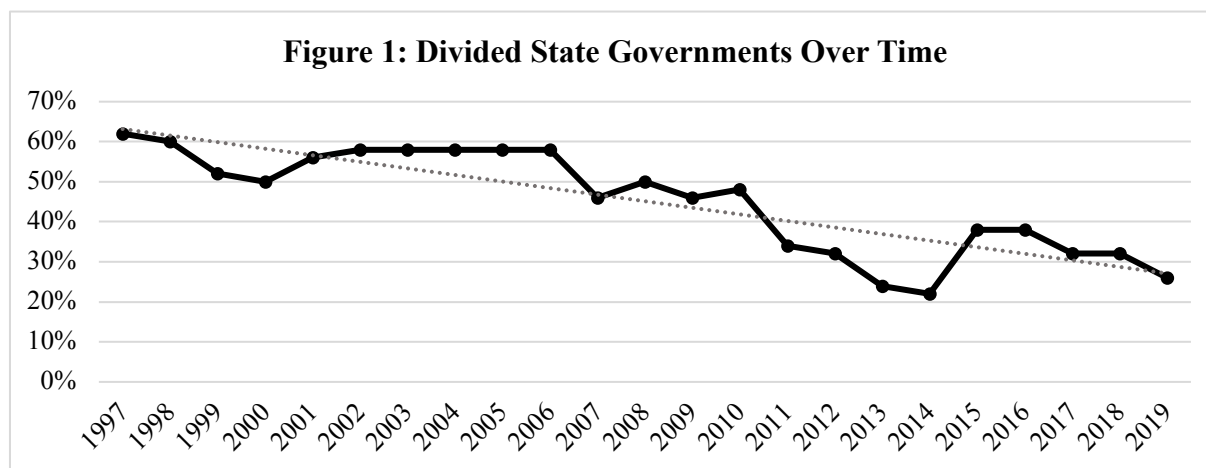
<sup>2</sup> John Bowden, “62 percent say third political party is needed in US,” *The Hill*, February 15, 2021, <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/538889-62-percent-say-third-political-party-is-needed-in-us?fbclid=IwAR2R40EU3pHgMw8CBOysr6HbZOzqTSdrugkw7pge6IIIBZCD8meobucXmzg>.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Mellman, “Mellman: How well does Congress represent America,” *The Hill*, April 23, 2019, <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/440326-mellman-how-well-does-congress-represent-america>.

<sup>4</sup> There are multiple ways of defining split ticket voting. In many instances, it references voting for a presidential candidate from one party and a member of the House or Senate that represents another party. This chapter defines split ticket voting as any defection from a party-line vote from president (although 2018 was not a presidential election) to votes for state Representatives and Senators.

<sup>5</sup> Harry Eten, “Latest House results confirm 2018 wasn’t a blue wave. It was a blue tsunami,” *CNN*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/06/politics/latest-house-vote-blue-wave/index.html>; Matthew Yglesias, “Democrats’ blue wave was much larger than early takes suggested,” *Vox*, November 13, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/11/13/18082490/blue-wave>; and Sabrina Siddiqui, “The Democratic blue wave was real,” *The Guardian*, November 17, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/nov/16/the-democratic-blue-wave-was-real>.

government where the executive branch and either or both branches of state legislatures are controlled by the same party. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, prior to 2006, over half of state governments were divided. Following the 2018 election, only a quarter (26%) of state governments were divided. **Figure 1** shows the percentages of state governments that were divided between party control since 1997.



(National Conference of State Legislatures, “State Partisan Composition,” Last Modified August 8, 2019, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/partisan-composition.aspx>.)

Related to the decreasing numbers of divided governments, the 2018 election was also notable for how infrequently voters decided to choose candidates from both parties. The 2018 election had the smallest number of split ticket voters for almost three decades.<sup>6</sup> This trend has only continued, with reports of even less split ticket voting occurring in the 2020 election.<sup>7</sup> Currently, and looking specifically at split ticket voting within states, only a little over one in

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Skelley, “Split-Ticket Voting Hit A New Low In 2018 Senate And Governor Races,” *FiveThirtyEight*, November 19, 2019, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/split-ticket-voting-hit-a-new-low-in-2018-senate-and-governor-races/>.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Bump, “2020 saw the least split ticket House voting in decades,” *Washington Post*, February 19, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/02/19/2020-saw-least-split-ticket-house-voting-decades/>

five Americans live in a state with a divided government.<sup>8</sup> Vermont is one of only three states with a Republican governor and a Democratic legislature.<sup>9</sup>

In Vermont in 2018, left-leaning politicians continued their winning streak: democratic socialist and Independent Senator Bernie Sanders was elected along with Democratic Senator Peter Welch and Progressive Democrat Lt. Governor David Zuckerman. In addition, Vermont voters elected a veto-proof Democratic and Progressive majority to the state legislature.<sup>10</sup>

However, in addition to these resounding liberal and Democratic victories, Vermont voters also re-elected Republican Governor Phil Scott.<sup>11</sup> This occurred because of substantial split-ticket voting across Vermont.

It is also important to note that since 2018, split ticket voting at the federal level has continued to decrease while split ticket voting in Vermont has increased. In his analysis of the 2020 election, Geoffrey Skelley of *FiveThirtyEight* found, “Just 16 out of 435 districts backed a presidential nominee from one party and a House candidate from the other party... That translates to just 4 percent of districts ‘splitting’ their tickets in 2020, the smallest share in the past 70

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<sup>8</sup> Ballotpedia, “State government trifectas,” accessed May 3, 2021 [https://ballotpedia.org/State\\_government\\_trifectas](https://ballotpedia.org/State_government_trifectas).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. The two other states with Republican governors and Democratic legislatures are Maryland and Massachusetts. In addition, there are eleven states total with divided states governments: Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

<sup>10</sup> Office of the Vermont Secretary of State, “Official Report of the Canvassing Committee United States and Vermont Statewide Offices: General Election, November 6 2018,” accessed October 24, 2018, <https://sos.vermont.gov/media/awufmkui/2018generalofficialresults.pdf>; Ballotpedia, “Veto-proof state legislatures and opposing party governors in the 2018 elections,” accessed October 18, 2019, [https://ballotpedia.org/Veto-proof\\_state\\_legislatures\\_and\\_opposing\\_party\\_governors\\_in\\_the\\_2018\\_elections](https://ballotpedia.org/Veto-proof_state_legislatures_and_opposing_party_governors_in_the_2018_elections).

<sup>11</sup> Vermont Secretary of State, “Official Report of the Canvassing Committee United States and Vermont Statewide Offices: General Election, November 6, 2018.”

years.”<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, in the 2020 election in Vermont, Governor Phil Scott received over 10 points more than in his 2018 victory: receiving 55% of the vote in 2018 and 69% in 2020.<sup>13</sup>

The first chapter in this thesis investigates the reasons behind Vermont’s divided government and split ticket voting. The research conducted includes both qualitative and quantitative research: an IVR survey to identify split ticket voters in Vermont, followed by 78 interviews conducted by this researcher with split ticket voters.

The chapter finds and discusses the correlation between the split-ticket voting patterns observed in 2018 in Vermont against the literature’s prominent theories to determine the motivating factors in split-ticket voting in the 2018 election and the possible motivations for upcoming races including the 2020 Vermont gubernatorial race. The research answers what is driving this split-ticket voting? It provides key insight into what may increase split-ticket voting not only in Vermont, but across the country.

### **The Vermont Progressive Party**

In addition to disproportionate numbers of split ticket voting, Vermont is currently home to the most successful third party in the country: The Vermont Progressive Party.

The existence of a consistently electorally successful third party in the United States is extremely rare. While a number of independents have succeeded at reaching political office across the country, sustained success across multiple candidates who identify as part of the same party is an extreme anomaly. For decades, scholars have pointed to various election laws and

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<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Skelley, “Why Only 16 Districts Voted for A Republican And A Democrat in 2020,” *FiveThirtyEight*, February 24, 2021, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-only-16-districts-voted-for-a-republican-and-a-democrat-in-2020/>.

<sup>13</sup> NBC News, “Vermont Governor Election Results,” last modified December 27, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-elections/vermont-governor-results>.

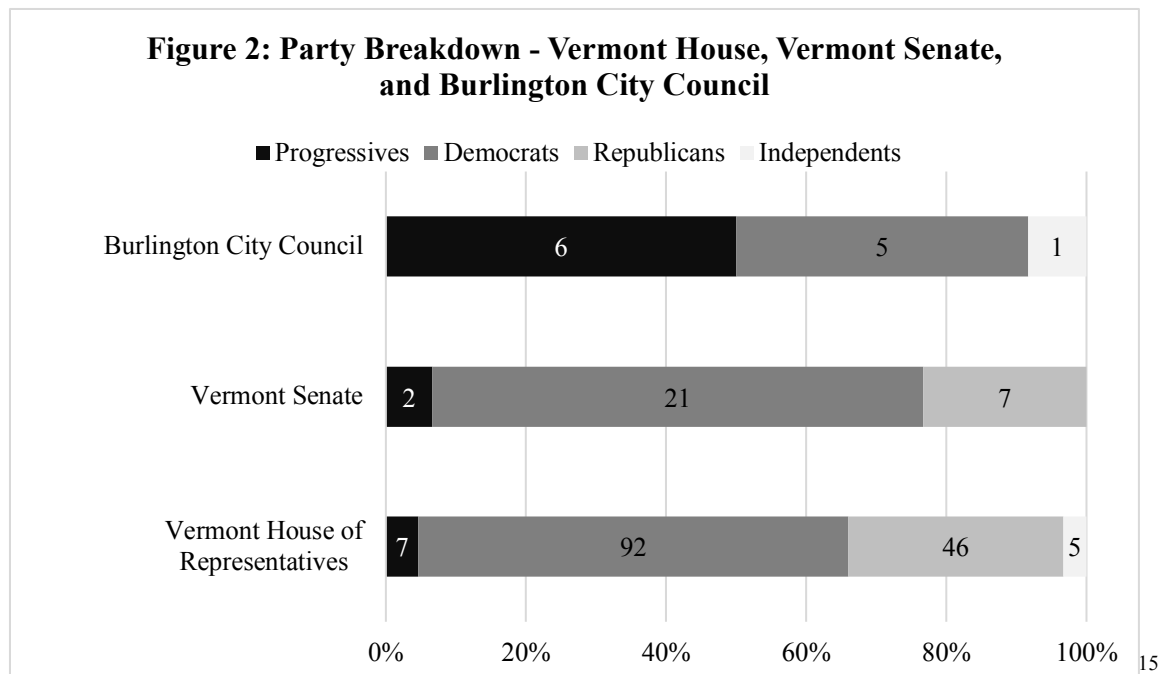
rules that have encouraged and ensured the two-party system. This stands in stark contrast to the majority of other democracies around the world with multiparty political systems. The Progressive Party, however, has been able to overcome many of the hurdles placed on third parties in the United States.

The beginning of the Progressive Party dates back to Senator Sanders 1981 victory in the Burlington mayor's race. His victory, and the group of individuals who helped him lead the largest city in Vermont, led to the creation of the Progressive Coalition, and then the remarkable success of the Vermont Progressive Party. On its website, the Progressive Party proudly states, "For nearly 40 years, an unbroken stream of Progressives have served on the Burlington City Council and Vermont Legislature. These range from Progressive-endorsed independents, like Senator Bernie Sanders, to fusion candidates endorsed by the Progressive Party and Democratic Party."<sup>14</sup> In the last 40 years, Progressives have consistently been represented in the state legislature, have elected the highest ranked third party official in the country, Former Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman, and have become one of the two major parties in the city of Burlington. **Figure 2** below shows the 2021-2022 party breakdown for the Burlington City Council, Vermont Senate and Vermont House of Representatives, demonstrating Progressives' presence in these three bodies.

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<sup>14</sup> The Vermont Progressive Party, "Elected Progressives," accessed February 18, 2021, <https://www.progressiveparty.org/elected-progressives>.





(Vermont General Assembly, “Vermont House Membership by Party,” accessed February 18, 2020, <https://legislature.vermont.gov/house/clerk-of-the-house/legislative-statistics/membership-by-party/>; Vermont General Assembly, “Legislators: All Senators,” accessed February 18, 2021, <https://legislature.vermont.gov/people/all/2022/Senate>; The City of Burlington, “City Council,” accessed February 18, 2020. <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CityCouncil>.)

The second chapter of this thesis uses 18 in-depth interviews with key members and activists associated with the Vermont Progressive Party to investigate the Party. Research questions focused on: how and why Progressive party activists are drawn to the party, what has contributed to the Progressive Party’s success, how the Progressive Party differs from the Democratic Party, the activists’ position on fusion candidacies - the laws that allow for electoral

<sup>15</sup> Note: the numbers represented in this chart categorize a “Progressive” as an individual who identifies themselves as a “Progressive/Democrat” but not one that identifies as a “Democrat/Progressive. Were all “Democrat/Progressives” to be included under the “Progressive” label the numbers for the Vermont House would be: P:12, D:87, R:46, I:5, and the numbers for the Vermont Senate would be: P:4, D:19, R:7. The numbers for the Burlington City Council would remain the same.

success at the state level but also inherently tie Progressive officials to the Democratic Party - and the future of the Progressive Party.

An investigation into the Vermont Progressive Party is a unique opportunity to determine how third parties can be successful and compare these findings to the many scholarly works that have laid out the hurdles to success and how laws could be changed or circumvented by third parties to achieve success. The research also allows for an investigation of how a third party has been able continue to succeed in a two-party environment – an environment that scholars see as hostile to third parties.

This chapter allows us learn more about third parties in our political party system and what would and could be the case around the country if more political party options were able to be presented to voters and non-voters as viable options on their ballots. For members of third parties across the country, the Vermont Progressive Party can also present some clear guidance, not only on how to overcome barriers to gain electoral success, but also to maintain that success. Lastly, an investigation of the Vermont Progressive Party and the environmental factor that have led to its success forces us to answer the questions: How do we define third parties? Where does the line blur between being one party and another? And does our definition of major party need to be changed regionally?

### **Town Meetings and Direct Democracy in Vermont**

In 1838, Alexis De Tocqueville described that in New England town meetings, “the principle of popular sovereignty is not, as in certain nations, hidden or sterile; it is recognized by mores, proclaimed by laws. It expands with freedom’s expansion and meets no obstacle on the

way to its ultimate ends.”<sup>16</sup> The town meeting-style of direct democracy that De Tocqueville described almost two centuries ago still exists in its original form in areas of Vermont.

For centuries, every year on the first Tuesday in March, Vermonters come together in their local municipalities to discuss issues and vote on town meeting day. Topics range from the school budget to mergers, and which local officials will represent their communities in the years to come. Many Vermonters are deeply proud of this form of democracy in addition to the consistency with which Vermont has held true to direct democracy: The Secretary of State’s “A Citizen’s Guide to Vermont Town Meeting” describes that:

*“Vermont town meeting is a tradition dating back to before there was a Vermont. The first town meeting was held in Bennington in 1762, 15 years before Vermont was created. In the late 1700s, as today, town citizens in Vermont held meetings so that they could address the problems and issues they faced collectively. Popular matters of legislation in earlier town meetings included whether or not to let pigs run free or whether smallpox vaccinations should be allowed in the town (some thought vaccinations were dangerous). Voters also decided what goods or labor could be used as payment for taxes... Town meeting also served a social function (as it does today), bringing people together who might not otherwise know each other. This can strengthen social ties within a town and help people work together to tackle community problems.”<sup>17</sup>*

The final chapter of this thesis investigates the future of town meetings in Vermont. While the quote above seems to paint a straightforward picture of town meeting day in Vermont, the reality is much more complicated. While many rural towns have maintained town meeting day in its original form, many others have transitioned towards hybrid systems that combine a town meeting or a town meeting-like informational meeting with government-organized ballot voting (also called the Australian ballot), while other towns and the few cities in Vermont solely

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<sup>16</sup> Alexis de. Tocqueville, *Democracy In America* (New York: G. Dearborn & Co., 1838), 62.

<sup>17</sup> Office of the Vermont Secretary of State, “A Citizen’s Guide to Vermont Town Meeting,” last modified 2018, <https://sos.vermont.gov/media/uomghd2h/citizen-guide-text-2.pdf>.

use Australian ballots. One town, Brattleboro, uses representative democracy in its town meetings.<sup>18</sup> Other New England states have experienced similar changes, updates, and migrations away from the traditional in-person town meeting. This migration away from in-person town meeting day has only been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. In fact, for the last two years, this in-person style meeting has been discontinued almost unanimously across the state in favor of coronavirus-safe town meeting voting procedures.<sup>19</sup> In addition, many Vermonters and legislators are advocating for making universal mail in ballots a permanent fixture of election day in Vermont.<sup>20</sup>

The final chapter of this thesis investigates the benefits and detriments of the in-person town meeting as it compares to Australian ballot system. It investigates whether the current system still reflects the various aspects of town meetings though the centuries that scholars have both praised and criticized, what the future of town meetings in Vermont might hold, and, were they to disappear, what Vermonters could lose. It does so through a quantitative survey of over half of the town clerks in Vermont– the group most intimately acquainted with town meeting day – in addition to in-depth interviews with four clerks to ascertain more qualitative information about the findings and these clerks’ reactions to the survey results in addition to some additional questions about the future of town meeting in light of the new rules and regulations put into place during the coronavirus pandemic.

While the research for this chapter was conducted prior to and then just following the coronavirus pandemic’s shutting down in-person town meeting day, the implications of the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Kevin O’Connor, “Majority of Vermont’s floor-meeting towns turn to ballots for March 2,” *VT Digger*, February 24, 2021, [https://vtdigger.org/2021/02/24/majority-of-vermonts-floor-meeting-towns-turn-to-ballots-for-march-2/?fbclid=IwAR0v6JCGdgylCPBFTJrCGW7vw\\_gsR0rq04ZXXrdHCCzLadegzVUNH\\_vWHkE](https://vtdigger.org/2021/02/24/majority-of-vermonts-floor-meeting-towns-turn-to-ballots-for-march-2/?fbclid=IwAR0v6JCGdgylCPBFTJrCGW7vw_gsR0rq04ZXXrdHCCzLadegzVUNH_vWHkE).

<sup>20</sup> Ashley Moore, “Vote-by-Mail,” *Alliance for A Better Vermont*, February 24, 2021, <https://www.abettervermont.org/2021-blog/universal-vote-by-mail>.

findings have gained importance as Vermont considers moving away from the in-person town meetings that scholars have lauded as the purest form of direct democracy. This research demonstrates what Vermont could lose, and gain, if it continues along this path.

Together, these three chapters delve into some of the unique aspects that sets Vermont's political system and democracy apart from other states. They also investigate three key elements of democracy that political scientists, pundits, and average Americans look to as solutions to our growing partisanship and political dissatisfaction. Learning about the intricacies of split ticket voting, successful third parties, and town-meeting style direct democracy teaches us not only about Vermont, but also holds valuable insights into the state of, and potential paths forward, for how states could potentially replicate these elements and change our democracy at the national level as well.

# CHAPTER 1: AN INVESTIGATION OF THEORY IN PRACTICE: SPLIT-TICKET VOTING IN VERMONT’S 2018 ELECTION

## INTRODUCTION

The 2018 midterm election was labeled a “blue wave” by prominent news agencies.<sup>21</sup> After the dust settled, House Democrats had gained 40 seats, “the largest Democratic House gain since 1974.”<sup>22</sup> Further, “House Democrats to [won] about 10 million more votes than House Republicans. That’s the largest raw vote margin in a House midterm election ever.”<sup>23</sup> Democratic wins, however, were not solely at the national level. Democrats also reduced the Republican lead in governorships from 17 to 4, and gained 332 state legislature seats.<sup>24</sup>

The 2018 election also continued a long-term trend of fewer divided state governments. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, before 2006, over half of state governments were divided—when any of the two legislative chambers or the governorship is held by a different party. Following the 2018 election, only a quarter (26%) of state governments were divided. **Figure 1** shows the percentages of state governments that were divided between party control since 1997.

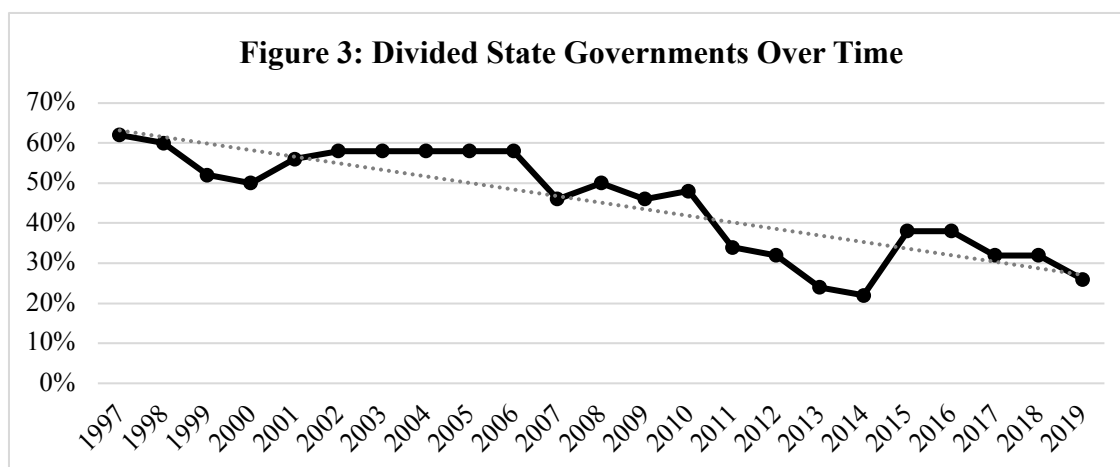
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<sup>21</sup> Harry Eten, “Latest.”; Matthew Yglesias, “Democrats”; and Scot Siddiqui, “The Democrats.”

<sup>22</sup> Harry Eten, “Latest.”

<sup>23</sup> Harry Eten, “Latest.”

<sup>24</sup> Z. Byron Wolf and Joyce Tseng, “The 2018 blue wave, in 3 charts,” *CNN*, November 18, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/28/politics/blue-wave-2018/index.html>.



(National Conference of State Legislatures, “State Partisan Composition,” Last Modified August 8, 2019, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/partisan-composition.aspx>.)

Related to the decrease in divided government, the 2018 election was notable for how infrequently voters decided to choose candidates from both parties. According to *FiveThirtyEight*, “2018 is part of a trend that shows fewer Americans are splitting their tickets.... This election had the smallest median difference of any midterm cycle going back to at least 1990”<sup>25</sup>

Looking specifically at Vermont, the 2018 voters elected independent and democratic socialist U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (66% of the vote), Democratic Congressman Peter Welch (68%), Progressive Democrat Lt. Governor David Zuckerman (57%), and a veto-proof Democratic and Progressive majority to the state legislature.<sup>26</sup> Vermont voters, however, also re-

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Skelley, “Why Only 16 Districts Voted for A Republican And A Democrat in 2020.”

<sup>26</sup> Office of the Vermont Secretary of State, “Official Report of the Canvassing Committee United States and Vermont Statewide Offices: General Election, November 6, 2018”; Ballotpedia, “Veto-proof state legislatures and opposing party governors in the 2018 elections.”

elected Republican Governor Phil Scott (54%).<sup>27</sup> This was only possible because of party-line defection in the form significant split-ticket voting.

The 2018 election was Governor Scott's first reelection after having been elected as Vermont's 82<sup>nd</sup> Governor in 2016. Governor Scott previously served three terms as Vermont's Lieutenant Governor, and represented Washington county as a state senator. Since his election in 2016, Scott has frequently made national news for expressing opinions and signing legislation that has deviated from President Trump's or the Republican Party's position on the issue. Examples of this include Governor Scott calling for Trump's resignation following the January 6<sup>th</sup> assault on the capitol,<sup>28</sup> voicing that he would not vote for President Trump in 2020,<sup>29</sup> and signing substantial gun control legislation.<sup>30</sup> Governor Scott faced Democratic challenger Christine Hallquist in his 2018 reelection bid. Hallquist received substantial national attention as the "first transgender candidate to be nominated for a governorship by a major party."<sup>31</sup> However, despite the historic nature of her candidacy, was not considered to be a strong candidate with the Cook Political Report maintaining the prediction of "solid Republican" throughout the campaign.<sup>32</sup> Governor Scott would then go on to win reelection against a stronger candidate, Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman during the 2020 election.

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<sup>27</sup> Office of the Vermont Secretary of State, "Official Report of the Canvassing Committee United States and Vermont Statewide Offices: General Election, November 6 2018."

<sup>28</sup> Wislong Ring, "Vermont's Republican governor: Trump shouldn't be in office," *AP*, February 7, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/vermont-donald-trump-trump-impeachment-vt-state-wire-politics-4bd062c6be264be69c130d03137a515f>

<sup>29</sup> Jemima McEvoy, "Vermont Gov. Scott Joins Republicans Who Won't Vote Trump – But Not Ready To Endorse Biden, Either," *Forbes*, August 21, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2020/08/21/vermont-gov-scott-joins-republicans-who-wont-vote-trump-but-not-ready-to-endorse-biden-either/?sh=1ed0cc22564b>.

<sup>30</sup> Jason Hanna and Lawrence Davidson, "Vermont governor signs sweeping gun control measures" *CNN*, April 11, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/11/us/vermont-gun-control>.

<sup>31</sup> Jess Bidgood, "Christine Hallquist, a Transgender Woman, Wins Vermont Governor's Primary," *The New York Times*, August 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/14/us/politics/christine-hallquist-vermont.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid



The strength of Governor Scott's 2018 victory, as well as its deviation from the overarching trend in the United States raises the question: what is driving this split-ticket voting? Answering this question provides insight into modern day split-ticket voting not only in Vermont, but across the country. It also presents insight into how a Republican governor has been successful in what has become a consistently blue state.

This chapter outlines the scholarly research on split-ticket voting and reasons behind divided government to establish a number of theories to why split-ticket voting occurs, describes the methodology for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from Vermont, reports the findings from interviews conducted, and discusses the correlation between the split-ticket voting patterns observed in 2018 in Vermont against the literature's prominent theories to determine the motivating factors in split-ticket voting in the 2018 election and the possible motivations for the 2020 Vermont gubernatorial race.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Over the years, a number of theories have emerged to explain split-ticket voting and partisan defection. They can be split into two main categories: motivated/intentional split-ticket voting and unintentional split-ticket voting. Intentional split-ticket voting theories interpret voters' split-tickets as behavior as intentionally designed to lead to a divided government. In other words, the voters split their tickets on purpose. Unintentional theories of split-ticket voting interpret split-ticket voting as a result of a lack of understanding or caring about the results of the election or of that type of voting. The next few sections lay out some of the most prominent intentional and unintentional split-ticket voting theories:

## Intentional Split-Ticket Voting

The most prominent theory on intentional split-ticket voting is the Balancing Theory. The Balancing Theory describes split-ticket voting as an intentional act on the part of the voter to create a divided government: “voters understand ... that the executive and the legislature together determine public policy, so that when control of the two institutions is divided any adopted policies must be compromises between the two party’s platforms.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, moderate voters, whose ideal policy positions lie between the two parties, will split their ticket in order to create a government where the opposing parties will necessarily need to compromise and ultimately coalesce around more moderate positions.

Thus, according to this theory, “ticket-splitters come from the central, moderate range of the ideological spectrum. More extreme voters cast straight tickets, while moderate voters are more likely to split their tickets.”<sup>34</sup> The author of the Balancing Theory, Morris Fiorina, predicted that less partisanship and less difference between the parties would lead to less need for balancing behavior and therefore less ticket splitting while more partisanship and more differences between the parties would lead to more need for balancing behavior and ticket splitting.

The Balancing Theory has been corroborated by a number of scholars.<sup>35</sup> Looking specifically at the state level, one study finds evidence of balancing split-ticket voting behavior

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<sup>33</sup> Morris Fiorina, *Divided Government* (Needleman Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 1992), 74.

<sup>34</sup> Fiorina, *Divided Government*, 76.

<sup>35</sup> See: Thomas Carsey and Geoffrey Layman, “Policy Balancing and Preferences for Party Control of Government,” *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Dec., 2004): 541-550.; James Garand, and Marci Glascock Lichtl, “Explaining Divided Government in the United States: Testing an Intentional Model of Split-ticket Voting,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 2000).; and Dean Lacy, Emmerson Niou, Phillip Paolino, and Robert Rein, “Measuring Preferences for Divided Government: Some Americans Want Divided Government and Vote to Create It,” *Political Behavior*, Vol. 41, Issue 1, (March 2019): 79-103.

at the state government level,<sup>36</sup> while other scholars have built off of the original balancing theory to argue that the decision to split-ticket vote is part of “moderating behavior” that voters engage in strategically: straight ticket votes can be considered “moderating behavior” if the party of the president is known or predicted.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, another study put forward “Cognitive Madisonianism,” a theory that draws significantly from the balancing theory and suggests that a number of voters split their tickets due to, “a conscious decision that it is somehow “good” to check power and balance policy, as our nation’s Founders might have wanted.”<sup>38</sup>

While many scholars have corroborated and built off of the Balancing Theory, a number of studies also challenge its assumptions. For example, several studies have evaluated a number of the propositions that would be outcomes of the Balancing Theory (e.g. that greater polarization would lead to increases in split-ticket voting). One study found that sincere voting and incumbency bias to be more likely factors behind split-ticket voting.<sup>39</sup> Other scholars also find more evidence of sincere voting than strategic/balancing behavior in their work.<sup>40</sup> Another prominent intentional theory of split-ticket voting revolves around “Sincere Voting.” This theory

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Bailey and Elliot Fullmer, “Balancing in the U.S. States, 1978-2009,” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 2011): 148-166.

<sup>37</sup> Alberto Alesina and Howard Rosenthal, “A Theory of Divided Government,” *Econometrica*, Vol. 64, No. 6 (Nov., 1996): 1311-1341.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Lewis-Beck and Richard Nadeau, “Split-ticket Voting: The Effects of Cognitive Madisonianism,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 66 No. 1, (February 2004): 97-112.

<sup>39</sup> See: Richard Born, “Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina’s Policy-Balancing Model,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (February 1994); and Richard Born, “Congressional Incumbency and the Rise of Split-Ticket Voting,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (August 2000): 365-387.

<sup>40</sup> See: Thomas Brunell and Bernard Grofman, “Testing sincere versus strategic split-ticket voting at the aggregate level: Evidence from split house–president outcomes, 1900–2004,” *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 28, Issue 1, (March 2009): 62-69; Barry Burden and David Kimball, “A New Approach to the Study of Ticket Splitting,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (Sept. 19, 1998); John Geer, Amy Carter, James McHenry, Ryan Teten, and Jennifer Hoef, “Experimenting With the Balancing Hypothesis,” *Political Psychology*, Vol. 25, Issue 1, (Mar. 2004): 49-63; Jeffrey Karp and Marshall Garland, “Ideological Ambiguity and Split-ticket Voting,” *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 4, (December 2007); and Franco Mattei and John Howes, “Competing Explanations of Split-Ticket Voting in American National Elections,” *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (July 2000): 379-407.

argues that split-ticket voting is not a tactical move made by a voter, instead, it is a sincere representation of his or her policy positions.<sup>41</sup>

There are a number of versions of this Sincere Voting theory. The most cited argues that split-ticket voters vote for the different parties based on the parties' different "strengths" in different offices. This theory, developed following a significant period of divided government when Democrats held firm control over Congress, while Republicans held the White House, surmises that, "offered two presidential candidates, voters choose the one they think more likely to keep taxes low and defense strong and to govern competently. Offered two House candidates, voters choose the one they think more likely deliver local benefits and to protect their favorite programs."<sup>42</sup> Thus, voters are sincerely splitting their ticket based on an analysis of how the candidates' strengths match up with the roles of the office.

Another sincere voting model is called the Comparative Midpoints Model.<sup>43</sup> This model looks at House and Presidential races as two separate calculations made by a single voter. Voters in a House districts who are represented by more conservative Democrats or more liberal Republicans may split-ticket vote because they are ideologically closer to the presidential candidate of the other party. **Figure 4** visually represents the comparative midpoints model.

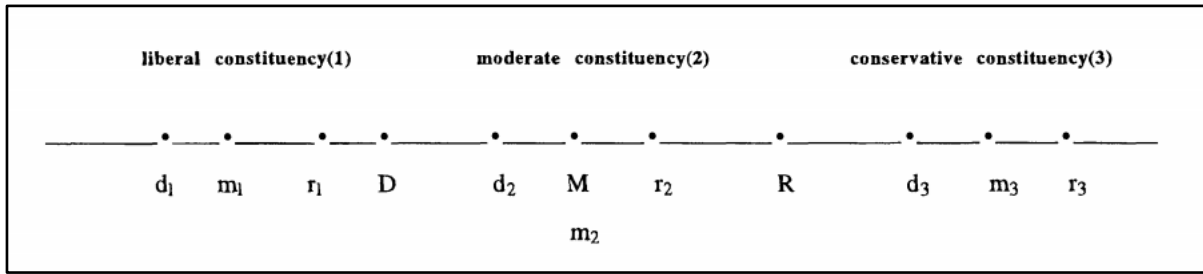
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<sup>41</sup> Gary Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1990.)

<sup>42</sup> Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government*, p119.

<sup>43</sup> Bernard Grofman, William Koetzle, Michael McDonald, and Thomas Brunell, "A New Look at Split-Ticket Outcomes for House and president: A Comparative Midpoints Model," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (February 2000): 34-50.

**Figure 4: Comparative Midpoints Model**



(Bernard Grofman, William Koetzle, Michael McDonald, and Thomas Brunell, "A New Look at Split-Ticket Outcomes for House and president: A Comparative Midpoints Model," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (February 2000): 34-50.)

As the comparative midpoints model suggests, the capital "D" and "R" represent the ideological placement of the Democrat and Republican candidates for the presidency while the lower case letters ( $d_1$ ,  $r_1$ ,  $d_2$ ,  $r_2$ ,  $d_3$  and  $r_3$ ) represent the Democratic and Republican House candidates in three different districts. The lower case  $m_1$ ,  $m_2$ , and  $m_3$  represent the median voters in each of the three districts, while the upper case  $M$  represents the median voter. A voter in district 3 may find that their ideological preferences exist between the republican candidate for president and the democratic candidate for the House in their district. Therefore, a split-ticket for this voter would be a sincere representation of his or her ideological preferences.<sup>44</sup>

Like the Balancing Theory of split-ticket voting, "sincere" voting theories have also received significant criticism. The most prominent criticism argues that both the balancing theory and sincere voting theories assume that voters know enough about the candidates to

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

understand either: how the candidates' positions would balance out in the context of a divided government or exactly how proximate the candidates' positions are to the voters' positions.<sup>45</sup>

In more recent years, the notion of Ambivalence—an individual being torn between the two parties by cross-pressures—has emerged as another intentional or “motivated” theory of split-ticket voting. One study that focuses on ambivalence uses American National Election Study (ANES) data to determine that ticket splitting is, in part, driven by ambivalence: where voters feel conflicted between the two parties and project this conflict onto their voting behavior. That study concludes that “divided government occurs in part because citizens are divided within themselves.”<sup>46</sup>

Building off of this finding, another study found that access to information plays a significant role in the decision-making process for these ambivalent voters.<sup>47</sup> Ambivalent voters with low political knowledge and/or no access or exposure to campaign information are likely to engage in economic voting. In contrast, ambivalent voters with high political knowledge and/or exposure to campaign information are more likely to engage in ideological voting.<sup>48</sup>

### **Unintentional Split-Ticket Voting**

In contrast to the intentional theories of split-ticket voting that place significant weight on the voters' intentions in the ballot box, unintentional theories of split-ticket voting argue that split-ticket voting is a result of external influences, and are not due to a calculated motive on behalf of the voter.

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<sup>45</sup> Karp and Garland, “Ideological Ambiguity.”

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Mulligan, “Partisan Ambivalence, Split-Ticket Voting, and Divided Government,” *Political Psychology*, Vol 32, No. 3, (2011).

<sup>47</sup> Scott Basinger, and Howard Lavine, “Ambivalence, Information, and Electoral Choice,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (May, 2005).

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Armitage and Mark Conner, “Attitudinal Ambivalence: A Test of Three Key Hypotheses,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 26, Issue 11, (2000): 14-21.

A number of scholars have compared partisan affiliation with split-ticket voting.<sup>49</sup> They consistently find that voters who identify with more extreme ideologies or partisanship are less likely to split-ticket vote. This theory of Partisan Sorting predicts that, over time, increasing polarization will contribute to ideological sorting and should therefore reduce split-ticket voting: first because “As the psychological self-concept narrows, voters are unable to bring themselves to cross party lines”<sup>50</sup> and second, because “as sorting increases, Americans increasingly dislike and distrust each other on a social level—even more than they disagree on policy outcomes.”<sup>51</sup>

Ultimately, this partisan-sorting theory predicts that split-ticket voting will decrease as partisanship increases and conversely, split-ticket voting will increase as partisanship decreases. Corroborating this, academics have found that, “split ballots are most common when [Republican] and the Democratic candidate are nearest each other, blurring their ideological differences enough to make partisan considerations in voting behavior less important.”<sup>52</sup> These predictions and findings are in direct contradiction with Fiorina’s balancing theory prediction that polarization will lead to more split-ticket voting.

Taking the link between a lack of partisanship and split-ticket voting further, many scholars also point to Indifference as a driver for split-ticket voting. To clarify the terminology: in the political context an ambivalent individual holds an equal number of positive and negative views of both parties or candidates while an indifferent individual has no opinions of the parties or candidates. For instance, “when people are indifferent about candidates, the choice is neither

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<sup>49</sup> See: Paul Beck, Lawrence Baum, Aage Clausen, and Charles Smith, Jr., “Patterns and Sources of Ticket Splitting in Subpresidential Voting,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (December 1992); and Ian McAllister and Robert Darcy, “Sources of Split-ticket Voting in the 1988 American Elections,” *Political Studies*, XL, (1992): 695-712.

<sup>50</sup> Nicholas Davis and Lilliana Mason, “Sorting and the Split-Ticket: Evidence from Presidential and Subpresidential Elections,” *Political Behavior*. 38(2) (2015): 337-354. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11109-015-9315-7>.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Burden and Kimball, “A New Approach to the Study of Ticket Splitting.”

difficult nor crucial. However, when citizens are ambivalent about them, the choice may be difficult but substantial in election.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, scholars have investigated the difference in split-ticket voting between indifferent and ambivalent individuals. Proponents of the “indifference” theory demonstrate that while ambivalence is positively correlated with split-ticket voting, in fact, “indifference—the complete absence of affective political attachments—has a *greater* positive effect on split-ticket voting.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, while some voters may be split within themselves and using the ballot box to voice those cross-pressured feelings, others are simply indifferent to the candidate options before them and thus, they are more likely to select their candidates at random which leads to an increased proportion of these individuals who split-ticket vote.<sup>55</sup>

The last overarching theory of unintentional split-ticket voting points to Incumbency Advantage as one of the driving factors behind split-ticket voting. A number of scholars have used regression analyses to investigate the motivations behind split-ticket voting and in many instances the findings single out incumbency as a driving factors behind split-ticket voting.<sup>56</sup> Specifically during the increase in split-ticket voting in the 1956-68 and 1972-92 periods, “incumbency was a powerful determinant of [this] step jump in ticket-splitting that occurred.” In fact, “22.4% of the overall rise from 1956-68 to 1972-92, and 32.5% of that specifically occurring in losing-presidential-party districts, can be attributed to nothing more elaborate than this one factor.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Sung-jin Yoo, “Two Types of Neutrality: Ambivalence versus Indifference and Political Participation,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72 Issue 1, (January 2010): 163-177.

<sup>54</sup> Nicholas Davis, “The Role of Indifference in Split-Ticket Voting,” *Political Behavior*. 37(1) (2014): 67-86, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11109-013-9266-9>.

<sup>55</sup> See also: Judd Thornton, “Getting Lost on the Way to the Party: Ambivalence, Indifference, and Defection with Evidence from Two Presidential Elections,” *Social Science Quarterly*, v. 95, issue 1, (March 2014): 184-201.

<sup>56</sup> Beck, Baum, Clausen, and Smith, “Patterns and Sources.”

<sup>57</sup> Born, “Congressional Incumbency.”



The theory argues that incumbent visibility advantages the incumbent by encouraging “cross-party” or split-ticket voting because, voters will give the incumbent the “benefit of the doubt” when confronted with the options the ballot box.<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, even small amounts of benefit of the doubt can “dramatically change the nature of electoral competition and generate barriers to entry”<sup>59</sup> for challengers. In addition, the insulating effects of benefit of the doubt are magnified the closer the incumbent’s positions are to the ‘center’ or median voter.<sup>60</sup> This correlates with split-ticket voting theories like Partisan Sorting that find that split-ticket voting is more likely when the parties are closer together.

Incumbency advantage is frequently pointed to by scholars as a driving or at least a supplementary force in split-ticket voting: due to name recognition, fundraising capacity, and experience.<sup>61</sup> In fact, incumbency is such a recognized influence on split-ticket voting that some scholars criticize other theories for not including or discounting the incumbency advantage: “Jacobson and Fiorina assume that all seats are open at the same time or with the same frequency.”<sup>62</sup> Instead, proponents of this theory find that majority or minority status will lead to decreased and increased (respectively) rates of retirement in the two parties. Minority party seats will disproportionately turn into open races which will further disadvantage the minority party.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, these scholars argue party control of the legislature and executive branches are not as representative of the will of the people as Jacobson and Fiorina suggest in their theories.

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<sup>58</sup> Scott Feld and Bernard Grofman, “Incumbency Advantage, Voter Loyalty, and the Benefit of the Doubt,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 3(2) (1991).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> See: Burden and Kimball, “A New Approach,” Richard Forgette and Glen Platt, “Voting for the Person, Not the Party: Party Defection, Issue Voting, and Process Sophistication,” *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 2, (June 1999); Mattei and Howes, “Competing Explanations,” and Mcallister and Darcy, “Sources of Split-ticket Voting.”

<sup>62</sup> Stephen Ansolabehere and Alan Gerber, “Incumbency Advantage and the Persistence of Legislative Majorities,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (May 1997): 161-178.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Ultimately the academics behind these intentional and unintentional theories of split-ticket voting recognize that these theories are not mutually exclusive. Even Fiorina qualified his theory, stating that, “all in all, the empirical support for this kind of policy balancing model is mixed... [and] many colleagues believe that such models make too severe informational demands on the voter. But I never advanced such a model as an explanation of *all* ticket splitting.”<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, the goal of each of these theories is to investigate the motivations or reasons behind the split-ticket voters who may have substantial influence on the outcomes of elections and the creations of divided government. My research below investigates the Vermont 2018 election when a group of split-ticket voters led to a divided Vermont government. The discussion of my results will parse out which theories of split-ticket voters fit best within the context of the 2018 election in Vermont.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The first goal of the methodology was to identify Vermont split-ticket voters for further research. To locate these split-ticket voters, data from the Vermont Secretary of State were utilized. The Vermont Secretary of State’s website provides town and precinct-level vote totals and percentages for Vermont elections. To determine the towns and precincts with the highest proportions of split-ticket voters, it was necessary to compare key race vote totals. These calculations were accomplished by finding the average absolute difference between Senator Bernie Sanders’ and Governor Phil Scott’s percent of the vote, between Representative Peter Welch’s and Governor Phil Scott’s percent of the vote, and between Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman’s and Governor Phil Scott’s percent of the vote.

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<sup>64</sup> Fiorina, *Divided Government*, 153.

The full calculations used to determine which precincts were likely to have high proportions of split-ticket voters can be found in **Appendix B**. For example, the calculations for the Addison precinct, including the percentage of the vote received by each candidate and the absolute difference in vote total between Governor Scott and each of the other candidates are included in Table 1. Addison was chosen because it is the first county in Vermont alphabetically.

<b>Table 1: Addison Precinct Vote Percentages and Absolute Difference Calculations for Addison</b>								
Sanders	Scott	Abs/ Diff: Sanders /Scott	Welch	Scott	Abs/ Diff: Welch /Scott	Zuckerman	Scott	Abs/ Diff: Zuckerman/ Scott
50.93%	71.76%	<b>21%</b>	54.48%	71.76%	<b>17%</b>	37.81%	71.76%	<b>34%</b>

The absolute differences between Governor Scott and each of the other candidates' percentages of the vote was averaged. The average absolute difference was 34.02% for Addison. Precincts with high levels of split-ticket voters are more likely to have lower absolute differences because a lower average absolute indicates that more voters voted for both Governor Scott and each of the more liberal candidates. In other words, in towns and precincts with very low average absolute difference, there is a higher percentage of split-ticket voters.

Therefore, the towns and precincts were ranked to establish which precincts had the lowest average absolute differences and should be targeted to maximize contact with split-ticket voters. Comparing Addison's average to the other Vermont precincts, Addison is ranked 188<sup>th</sup> out of 246 towns and precincts and therefore was not targeted as part of this research.

Once the towns and precincts with high split-ticket voting were identified, a telephone list was procured of 95,000 Vermont landline phone numbers from around the state with a focus on the selected towns and precincts. An IVR survey was then conducted to identify voters who

voted a split-ticket and to collect data on some non-split-ticket voters. Between August 16, and August 21, 2019, the IVR survey identified 207 split-ticket voters who met the following criteria:

1. Voted in the 2018 election;
2. Identified as: A Democrat, an Independent-lean Democrat, or a Strong Independent; and
3. Voted for Governor Scott in 2018, is either somewhat or very likely to vote for Governor Scott in 2020, or is favorable to Governor Scott.

The IVR questionnaire included minimal questions to maximize response rate. These included the three key questions related to Governor Scott (favorability, 2018 vote, and likely 2020 vote), knowledge of and favorability toward other prominent politicians in Vermont, a right direction/ wrong track question, and demographic information. The full IVR questionnaire and topline responses are included in **Appendix A**.

While the 207 voters identified by the IVR survey were not all split-ticket voters in 2018 (some were favorable to Governor Scott but had not voted for him), their favorability, past voting behavior, and potential future voting behavior placed them within the category of either a split-ticket voter or a potential split-ticket voter. Following the identification of these 207 split-ticket voters, two attempts were made to contact each individual for possible in-depth interviews. The attempts were made over the phone and at different times during the day to maximize possible contact. Ultimately, 78 follow-up interviews were conducted with these voters between August 26, and September 17, 2019.

The goal was to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on Vermont political issues and Governor Scott. These voters were also asked to complete a projection exercise about how a Democratic candidate potentially running against Governor Scott could appeal to them. The full follow up interview questionnaire and topline results are also included in **Appendix A**.

As with most surveys, there are a number of elements to this methodology that may contribute to some bias in the results. First, it is important to acknowledge potential response bias in that these individuals elected to participate not once but twice in this survey and that split-ticket voters who elected participated in this survey may have different opinions from those who elected not to participate.<sup>65</sup> Second, selection bias may also be at play. The methodology was designed to target the areas with highest concentration of split-ticket voters in Vermont. It may be the case that split-ticket voters in different areas of the state hold different opinions and that this methodology may not have fully captured that range of opinions. Prominent research organizations mitigate this type of selection bias by ensuring demographic consistency.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, demographic information for this survey was tracked. Gender, education, works status, and marital status were all relatively consistent with Vermont demographics. However, the survey skewed slightly older and more retired than the full Vermont population. In addition, this survey was conducted using a landline telephone sample due to cost constraints. While, according to the National Health Statistics Report from the Center for Disease Control, Vermont has traditionally been one of the states with the fewest cellphone-only households,<sup>67</sup> split-ticket voters from households with landlines who were surveyed may hold different opinions than those who live in cellphone-only households.

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<sup>65</sup> Scott Keeter, Nick Hatley, Courtney Kennedy, and Arnold Lau, “What Low Response Rates Mean for Telephone Surveys,” *Pew Research Center: Methods*, May 15, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2017/05/15/what-low-response-rates-mean-for-telephone-surveys/>.

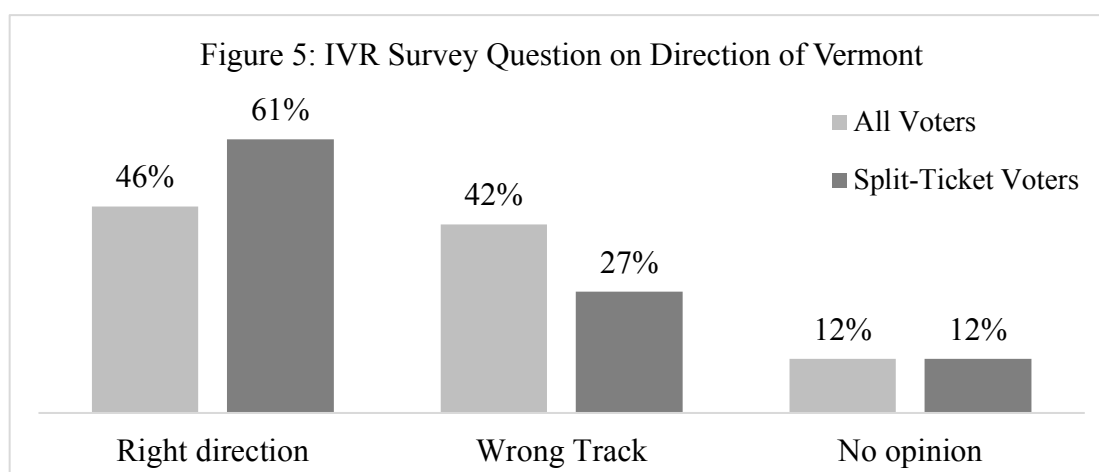
<sup>66</sup> Andrew Mercer, Arnold Lau, and Courtney Kennedy, “For Weighting Online Opt-In Samples, What Matters Most?,” *Pew Research Center: Methods*, January 26, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2018/01/26/for-weighting-online-opt-in-samples-what-matters-most/>.

<sup>67</sup> Stephen Blumberg, Nadarajasundaram Ganesh, Julian Luke, and Gilbert Gonzales, “Wireless Substitution: State-level Estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, 2012,” *National Health Statistics Reports*, No. 70, December 18, 2013, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr070.pdf>; and National Center for Health Statistics, “National Health Interview Survey Early Release Program,” released August, 2015, [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/wireless\\_state\\_201608.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/wireless_state_201608.pdf).

## RESULTS

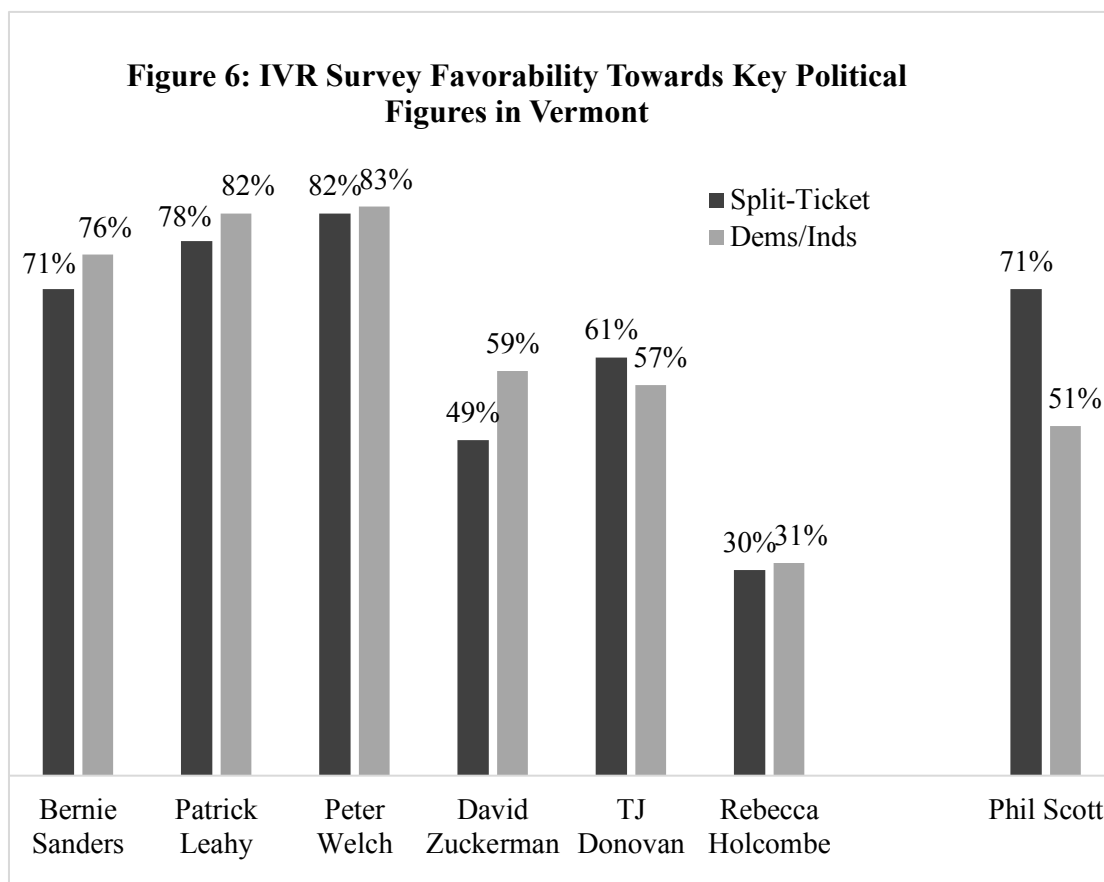
### Interactive Voice Response Survey

Overall, the IVR survey found that split-ticket voters differed from overall Vermont voters. Split-ticket voters were more likely to say that Vermont is headed in the right direction (all voters: 46%, split-ticket: 61%) and less likely to say that Vermont is on the wrong track (all voters: 42%, split-ticket: 27%). **Figure 5** compares all voters to split-ticket voters on the right direction/wrong track question.



The IVR survey also collected responses on name recognition and favorability for key Vermont politicians amongst all Democrats and Independents compared to split-ticket voters. The results demonstrate that there was little variation between split-ticket voters and Democrats and Independents on name recognition. Senator Sanders (Dems/Inds: 99%/ Split-ticket: 100%), Representative Welch (96%/96%), Senator Leahy (98%/97%), and Governor Scott (97%/98%) had near-universal name recognition in both groups while name recognition dropped for Lieutenant Governor Zuckerman (Dems/Inds: 85%/ split-ticket: 86%), Attorney General TJ Donovan (74%/73%), and 2020 candidate for the Democratic nomination for Governor of Vermont, Rebecca Holcombe (49%/46%).

There were, however, some slight differences in favorability of these individuals between split-ticket voters and all Democrats and Independents. While the more moderate politicians saw similar favorability numbers from these two groups, split-ticket voters were slightly less likely to be favorable towards Senator Sanders and Lieutenant Governor Zuckerman, who are both more progressive politicians. While 76% of Democrats and Independents were favorable to Sanders, 71% of split-ticket voters were favorable. Similarly, while 59% of Democrats and Independents were favorable to Zuckerman, only 49% of split-ticket voters were favorable. The split-ticket voters were also much more likely to be favorable to Governor Scott (71%) than Democrats and Independents (51%)<sup>68</sup> **Figure 6** compares Democrat and Independent voter and split-ticket voter favorability of prominent Vermont politicians.



<sup>68</sup> It is important to note that favorability was one of the defining criteria for these split-ticket voters.

## **In-Depth Interviews**

As mentioned above, the original IVR survey was designed to identify individuals who met at least one of the following criteria for further research.

- (1) are favorable to Governor Scott;
- (2) voted for Governor Scott in 2018; or
- (3) were either very or somewhat likely to vote for Governor Scott in 2020.

Ultimately, 207 were identified and 78 of those participated in further research. The results outlined below are from those 78 more in-depth interviews.

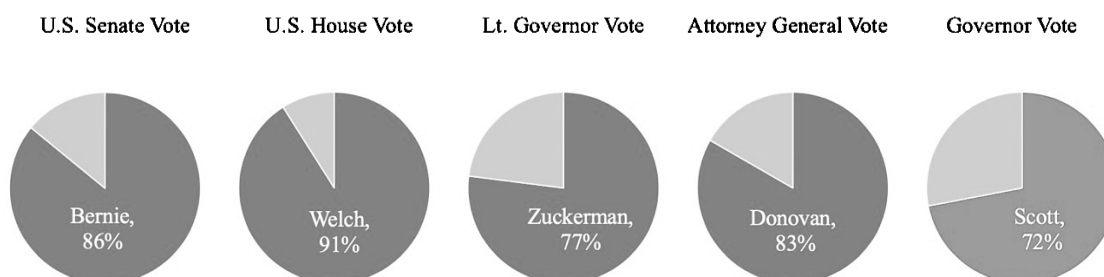
The first couple questions in the interviews were designed to obtain a broad understanding of these voters' overarching ideological and voting preferences. First, having previously collected party identification in the IVR survey, the question was asked again to ensure relative continuity. The results demonstrated that the vast majority of these individuals did meet the party identification criteria for the research and were also comprised of a good mix of Democrats, Independents, and Progressives. The respondents were split between identifying as Democrats (41%) and Independents (41%). Additionally, six self-identified as a Progressive and seven indicated that they did not have a preference. One individual gave different answers – he identified himself as an independent in the IVR survey but as a Republican in the follow-up interview.

The respondents were also asked about their 2018 votes. The results demonstrated that the vast majority of these individuals had split their vote in some fashion during the 2018 election, 86% had voted for independent Bernie Sanders, 91% for Democrat Peter Welch, 77% for Progressive Democrat David Zuckerman, and 83% for Democrat TJ Donovan. Figure 7 shows the consistency with which this group voted for these more liberal politicians and



compares those percentages with their vote for Governor Scott. Therefore, with some variation, the group of individuals identified and interviewed for this survey had, for the large part, voted down-ticket Democrat/Independent for all races *except* for the gubernatorial race. Therefore, these were not simply split-ticket voters, they were Democratic-defecting split-ticket voters.

**Figure 7: In-Depth Interview Split Ticket Voter 2018 Vote**

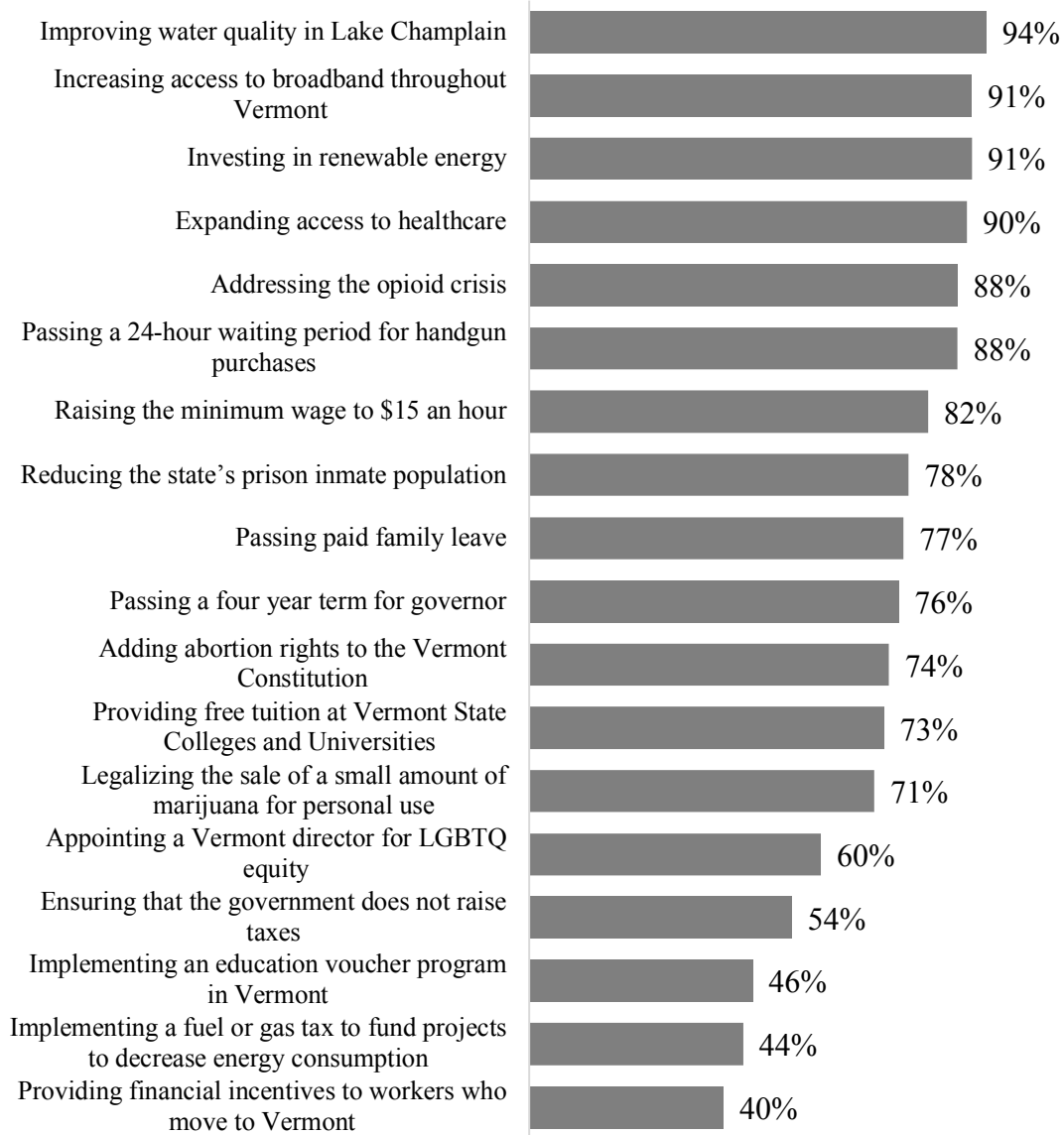


Questions about specific policy issues were also included in order to assess whether these voters' party identification lined up with their issue preferences. The survey respondents were presented with a number of proposals that "may be or are being considered by the Vermont State Legislature." The included proposals were derived from a list of pending legislation from the Vermont State Legislature's website and some issues championed by the Scott administration.<sup>69</sup> The respondents were asked how much they supported or opposed these proposals. The respondents' answers indicated that not only had the majority of these individuals voted for down-ticket Democrat/Independent in the 2018 election, but they also supported many of the Democratic-leaning legislative proposals. In fact, they were more likely to support the more liberal ideas than they were to support Governor Scott's administration's preferences.

<sup>69</sup> Vermont General Assembly, "Bills Released for Introduction But Not Yet Introduced," accessed October 20, 2019, <https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/released/2020>; Vermont Official State Website, "Office of Governor Phil Scott," accessed October 12, 2019, <https://governor.vermont.gov/>.

The proposals with the highest support were either neutral or traditionally Democratic positions. For example, 94% of respondents supported “improving the water quality in Lake Champlain,” 91% supported “investing in renewable energy sources,” 91% supported “increasing access to broadband throughout Vermont,” and 90% supported “expanding access to healthcare.” The respondents also expressed significant support for many of the most liberal positions: 88% supported “passing a 24-hour waiting period for handgun purchases,” 82% supported “raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour,” 77% supported “passing paid family leave,” 74% supported “adding abortion rights to the Vermont Constitution,” 73% supported “providing free tuition at Vermont state colleges and universities,” and 71% supported “legalizing the sale of a small amount of marijuana for personal use.” **Figure 8**, on the next page, ranks support for each of these issues.

**Figure 8: In-Depth Interviews Total Support for Vermont Legislative Issues**



Republican issues, and specifically those championed by the Scott administration, received low support from this group of split-ticket voters. For example, only 46% of voters supported “implementing an education voucher program in Vermont,” 46% opposed “providing financial incentives to workers who move to Vermont.” Thus, these voters were not only Democratic voters, they mostly agree with liberal policy issues even though most voted for

Governor Scott. Later questions in the survey addressed the question of why this discrepancy occurred in the 2018 Vermont gubernatorial election.

The final question on issue preference asked the respondents to choose between two competing priorities: progressive values or economics. When asked to specifically choose between supporting a candidate (or lean towards supporting a candidate) who “focuses on progressive values and economic justice” or “a candidate who focuses on issues like the economy and balancing the state budget,” 46% of respondents either supported (26%) or leant towards supporting (21%) candidates who focus on progressive values and economic justice. Thirty eight percent either supported (24%) or leant towards supporting (14%) candidates who focus on issues like the economy and balancing the state budget. Fifteen percent of respondents volunteered that both best describe how they generally support candidates in Vermont. Therefore, these split-ticket voters not only largely supported more democratic policy positions, when they were forced to choose, a plurality said they would support a candidate who focused on progressive policies over one that focused on the economy and balancing the state budget. Later questions in the survey investigated these voters’ decisions in 2018 to determine why they did not follow this path in 2018.

This liberal-leaning amongst these split-ticket voters did not emerge as strongly when asked about their political priorities in an open-ended format. Fifty-nine percent of the split-ticket voters’ responses mentioned the economy, high taxation, and the need to create jobs in Vermont. These responses largely focused on the split-ticket voters’ own bottom lines and many articulated the fear that any increased taxation would harm their standard of living. This was the first real evidence of these split-ticket voters being drawn in two different directions

ideologically. They agreed with many liberal positions but were also concerned that those policies might directly burden them financially.

*“I’m a retired person - trying to make my fixed income be able to keep up with the out-of-control costs both for myself and both local and state taxes. I haven’t been able to keep up with their demands. It’s getting harder and harder for fixed income Vermonters to live here.” – Male, 60-69, Strong Independent*

**Table 2** shows the most mentioned issues by these split-ticket voters.

<b>Table 2: In-Depth Interview Priorities for Vermont Coded Open End Responses</b>	
	<b>All Split-Ticket Voters</b>
The economy, high taxation, and the need for jobs	59%
Healthcare and better access to healthcare	29%
The environment, climate change, and cleaning up Lake Champlain	15%
Gun control	12%
Education	9%
Women’s issues	4%
Other	9%
Don’t know	6%

Following these questions about political ideology and priorities, the respondents were asked a number of broad open-ended questions about Governor Scott: *why* they are favorable to Governor Scott, *why* they had voted for Governor Scott in 2018, and *why* they would be likely to voter for Governor Scott in 2020. The questions were only asked of the segment of the sample for whom the question applied (i.e. if they had indicated that they were favorable, had voted, or would vote for Governor Scott).

### **Favorable to Governor Scott**

Sixty of the split-ticket voters interviewed indicated that they were favorable to Governor Scott. When this group was asked why they were favorable to Governor Scott, they painted a picture of the Governor as a genuinely honest, nice, and pragmatic individual. Governor Scott had impressed them by listening to all Vermonters, not just to his Republican base. In addition,

they felt positively about the fact that he had not always followed Republican Party lines (especially on gun rights and abortion). Finally, they saw Governor Scott as honestly willing to compromise with Democrats when new information was presented to him. The following paragraphs describe each of these sentiments in greater detail.

Split-ticket voters who were favorable to Governor Scott were most likely to give examples of his good character rather than specific policy positions. In fact, 45% of responses included compliments of this kind. These included: praise of his intelligence, his pragmatism, and his integrity. Other positive characteristics mentioned were his work ethic and his interactions with the public. **Table 3** lists some examples of these categories.

<b>Table 3: In-Depth Interview Examples of Good Character Language Used to Describe Governor Scott</b>			
Intelligence	Pragmatism	Integrity	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Knowledgeable</i></li> <li>• <i>Intelligent</i></li> <li>• <i>An independent thinker</i></li> <li>• <i>Not closed minded</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pragmatic,</i></li> <li>• <i>[A] sensible guy</i></li> <li>• <i>Practical</i></li> <li>• <i>Reasonable</i></li> <li>• <i>Rational</i></li> <li>• <i>[Having] common sense</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Upstanding guy</i></li> <li>• <i>Sincere</i></li> <li>• <i>Honest</i></li> <li>• <i>A decent human being</i></li> <li>• <i>A gentleman</i></li> <li>• <i>A person of integrity</i></li> <li>• <i>Doesn't make promises that he can't keep</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Determined</i></li> <li>• <i>Hardworking</i></li> <li>• <i>A really nice guy</i></li> <li>• <i>Personable</i></li> <li>• <i>Good attitude</i></li> </ul>

The next most frequently mentioned reason by these split-ticket voters for favorability towards Governor Scott was that he frequently deviated from traditional Republican positions. Thirty-three percent of responses mentioned this and many mentioned that, in deviating from Republican positions, Governor Scott had supported Democratic issues that the split-ticket voters cared about. Many split-ticket voters clarified that while Governor Scott carries the Republican label, he is not what they considered a “*true Republican*.”

*“I don't consider him a true Republican. If the U.S. Senate is what the Republican Party is, Scott is not a true Republican. He does not blindly follow that. He is a Democratic-Republican rather than a true Republican.” – Female, 60-69, Democrat*

Many respondents gave specific examples of the ways that he has deviated from some traditional Republican positions. The respondents most frequently mentioned his more liberal positions on gun legislation and abortion—two issues that had recently dominated the political news in Vermont. Similarly, 27% mentioned that he was willing to compromise (or had been forced to compromise) with the Vermont legislature and Democrats across the aisle.

*“I would like to see him compromise more but I think he has compromised especially in gun control. That shows to me that a pragmatic Republican still exists and he has been less polarizing than our current national politics.” – Male, 50-59, Progressive*

Another group of responses were simply generally positive. Twenty three percent of responses included a simple generic description that Governor Scott was doing a “*good job*” and that they simply did not have anything to complain about.

Next, 20% of responses pointed to the feeling that Governor Scott’s approach to governing considers and cares about *all* Vermonters not just his base. These Democratic defectors felt that Governor Scott respects them and other Democrats and Independents as his constituents just as much as the Republicans in the state. These split-ticket voters mention that he does this “even though” he is a Republican.

*“I don't think he necessarily represents the Republican Party as much as he is trying to represent all of Vermont.” – Female, 60-69, Independent–Lean Democrat*

Only 12% of responses mentioned Governor Scott's economic position on the budget and taxation in Vermont. The individuals who gave these responses tended to be seniors who tied Governor Scott's position on the economy and taxes directly to their own ability to maintain their current standard of living. This low percentage of economic-focused responses in this section contrasted sharply with the split-ticket voters' prior focus on economic issues when asked about political priorities in Vermont.

*"He is the only thing that is keeping the Vermont government spending in check. Taxes are way too high. Phil Scott is more in line with people shouldn't be taxed so much... Because I'm 70 years old I see increased taxes as taking away things that I worked my entire life to save. My beliefs align with people who want to keep taxes down."* – Male, 70 years old or older, Strong Independent

Another twelve percent of responses mentioned the need for a balance of partisanship in the Vermont State Government. These individuals felt that a Republican Governor, like Governor Scott, was necessary to maintain order, compromise, and a steady path forward for Vermont due to the strongly Democratic and Progressive legislature.

*"It's mostly that I like the idea that Vermont has a Republican Governor. I think that that shows the political diversity in our state... I think there is danger in alienating the more conservative population in Vermont if we had a liberal Governor."* – Male, 30-39, Independent-Lean Democrat

Other reasons given for favorability towards Governor Scott were that he was a moderate politician (10%), that he was a businessman and understood blue collar workers (7%), and that there have been no good Democratic candidates (3%). Seven percent were unsure of why they were favorable to Governor Scott.

**Table 4** shows these various categories for favorability towards Governor Scott.



<b>Table 4: In-Depth Interview Reasons Given For Favorability for Governor Scott Coded Open End Responses</b>	
	<b>Split-Ticket Voters Favorable to Governor Scott</b>
Good demeanor, intelligent, hardworking, true to his word	45%
Supported Democratic positions/ Not a real Republican	33%
Willing to compromise	27%
He is doing a “good job”	23%
Cares about Vermont and all Vermonters	20%
His position on budget and taxation	12%
Needed change from Democratic governor, needed to balance government	12%
Is a moderate	10%
He is a businessman and understands blue collar workers	7%
No good Democratic candidates	3%
Don’t know	7%

### **Why They Voted For Governor Scott in 2018**

Fifty-six of the 78 split-ticket voters had voted for Governor Scott in the 2018 election. When asked why they had voted for Governor Scott, these split-ticket voters were most likely to mention his policy positions. A significant number also mentioned that they were unimpressed or carried significant distain for the Democratic candidate who had run against him in 2018. Another significant portion of respondents pointed to Governor Scott’s incumbency status as a demonstration that they could trust him to do well in the future because he had done well in the past.

A third of these split-ticket voters indicated that they had voted for Governor Scott because of some of his specific policy positions. The most frequently mentioned policy was his position on taxes and the budget. However, respondents also mentioned his position on guns, ways to address population decline, the opioid crisis, wind energy, education consolidation, and marijuana legalization.

*“He does support jobs in Vermont. he wants to keep people in Vermont. He supported paying people to come into Vermont. I thought that was creative and I think we need that.” – Male, 60-69, Democrat*

Interestingly, the next most frequently given reason for voting for Governor Scott in 2018 was that Christine Hallquist, the Democratic nominee for Governor, was not a good candidate. A full quarter of responses mentioned her inadequacy in some form. Objection to her ranged from some of her specific policy positions with which they disagreed (for instance, that she was a “*corporate democrat*”) to insults and questions about whether her gender transition indicated an inability to be Governor of Vermont.

*“I listened to the debate and he just made more sense. Christine Hallquist really blew it. She was totally out of it. She came down on him about who he had voted for and he said he would write it in [rather than saying Trump.] She didn't do her homework.” – Female, 60-69, Democrat*

These split-ticket voters’ familiarity with Governor Scott also seemed to benefit him in 2018. Sixteen percent of responses simply mentioned that they were familiar with him and his work as Governor. One respondent stated outright that their vote was driven by “*the incumbent thing*.” Another respondent talked about the fact that Governor Scott had high name recognition and that she liked that she had, “*seen him out there... in the community*.”

Fourteen percent of responses used generic terminology to describe Governor Scott. In addition, only a few responses mentioned the fact that Governor Scott was willing to compromise (5%) and that having a Republican Governor balances out the Democratic legislature (4%).

*“No specific policies. He comes across as being genuine and truthful.” – Female, 60-69, Independent-Lean Democrat*

Interestingly, nineteen percent of respondents were unsure or said that they didn’t remember why they had voted for Governor Scott in 2018. This could be an indication that split ticket voters relied on his high name recognition. Alternatively, Hallquist was the, “first transgender candidate to be nominated for a governorship by any major party”<sup>70</sup> and there may have been some discomfort talking about her candidacy.

**Table 5** shows the various reasons given for a 2018 vote for Governor Scott.

<b>Table 5: In-Depth Interview Voting for Governor Scott Coded Open End Responses</b>	
	<b>Split-Ticket Voters Who Voted for Governor Scott in 2018</b>
Specific policy agreement	33%
Christine Hallquist was not a good candidate	25%
Incumbency benefits: name recognition, solid performance, no big bad changes	16%
He is a good guy	14%
Willing to compromise	5%
Able to balance the Democrats in the legislature	4%
Don’t know	19%

### **Why They Are Likely to Vote for Governor Scott In 2020**

Seventy-six percent of split-ticket voters indicated that they were either somewhat or very likely to vote for Governor Scott in 2020. When these respondents were asked why they were likely to vote for Governor Scott, a small but significant shift emerged in their answers. While Governor Scott’s policy positions and his track record in the office were major points brought forward by the respondents, a plurality of respondents qualified their answer with the fact that

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<sup>70</sup> Jess Bidgood, “Christine Hallquist, a Transgender Woman, Wins Vermont Governor’s Primary.”

their vote in 2020 could largely depend on the Democratic candidate who would be running against Governor Scott.

Twenty-eight percent of these split-ticket voters said that their decision in 2020 would depend on the candidate or candidates who run against Governor Scott. Some mentioned specific candidates who they would rather vote for, while others spoke in more generalities.

*“Depends who he is running against. I pick character over party in Vermont. We can do that here we are lucky.”- Female, 50-59, Progressive*

Twenty-six percent of these split-ticket voters mentioned Governor Scott’s policy proposals, especially his stance on taxes and the economy. Those that mentioned policies were largely concerned with spending in Vermont and drew a direct connection between Governor Scott’s policy positions on the economy and taxes with their own bottom line. Other’s used the question as an opportunity to talk not only about the policies that he supported but those that they would want him to support more. The largest subset of this group of split-ticket voters were those who mentioned the need to continue to hold firm in his position on the state budget, the economy, and especially keeping taxes low.

*“[I would want him] to continue to try to make the state more affordable. At my age, I knew more people I grew up with who are moving out of the state and the primary reason is that they can’t afford to live here in their retirement years. There are too many elected officials who don’t live month to month on that fixed income. I have lived here my whole life and we are thinking about moving because in a handful of years I won’t be able to pay for my standard of living. I will either have to go back to work or move elsewhere.” – Male, 60-69, Strong Independent*

Twenty four percent of these split-ticket voters mentioned that Governor Scott’s track record as an incumbent contributed to their 2020 vote calculation. Interestingly, a number of these individuals used rather apathetic terminology when describing why incumbency drove their vote choice. In fact, some individuals admitted they would vote for him in 2020 simply because they were familiar with him.

*“It’s a name I am familiar with. I don’t really follow Vermont politics very much except when it comes down to taxes. [It’s] brand recognition.” – Female, 60-69, Independent-Lean Democrat*

Nine percent of these split-ticket voters mentioned Governor Scott’s ability to compromise and work with Democrats and seven percent mentioned his character and demeanor in the job. Fourteen percent were unsure.

**Table 6** shows these various categories for responses to why these split-ticket voters were likely to vote for Governor Scott in 2018.

<b>Table 6: In-Depth Interview Reasons for Likely 2020 Governor Scott Vote Coded Open-End Responses</b>	
	<b>Split-Ticket Voters Likely to Vote for Gov. Scott in 2020</b>
Depends on who is running against Governor Scott	28%
Specific policy agreement	26%
He has done a good job so far in the office	24%
Compromises and works with Democrats	9%
He has a good character	7%
Don’t know	14%

### **Advice for Governor Scott’s 2020 Democratic Opponent**

While the research outlined above delved into the reasons why these split-ticket voters were favorable to, voted for, or would vote for Governor Scott, the research also included an investigation of the choice that most did not make in 2018 or likely would not make in 2020,

voting for Governor Scott's Democratic opponent. Therefore, the split-ticket voters were asked to "give advice" to a Democratic candidate running for Governor in 2020. This specific approach of asking for "advice" was used to maximize honest answers rather than putting the respondents on the defensive by asking "why they had not" voted for the Democratic nominee in 2018. The results indicated that these split-ticket voters cared very much about which issues the Democratic governor candidates take on. They believe in many progressive issues but want to ensure that a candidate's more liberal issues are balanced with fiscal restraint. Many also want a candidate who is honest and truthful, and who cares about and listens to Vermonters.

Forty percent of these split-ticket voters mentioned a certain favorite policy when asked what advice they would give to a prospective Democratic candidate for governor. Once again, the economy, employment, and lowering taxes rose to the top. Twenty-six percent of responses included mentions about Democratic candidates needing to be more fiscally sound in terms of the Vermont budget, economy, employment, and taxes. Twenty-four percent of total responses included mentions of progressive issues like healthcare, taking care of the environment, raising the minimum wage, and climate change. However, some responses included overlap between socially liberal and fiscally conservative policy ideas. This indicates that many split-ticket voters were supportive of more Democratic and progressive policies, but recognized that choices need to be made in order to maintain a balanced budget.

*"Stick to the basics. No pie in the sky stuff. I like minimum wage and Medicare For All but pick one of those pieces. I think we need to raise minimum wage. If they are going to do something stick to something that is meaningful to the majority of Vermonters. Things that are tangible. Stick to the economy and wages." Male, 60-69, Democrat*

Twenty-one percent of responses mentioned the need for the Democratic candidate to be more moderate, more realistic, and to avoid “fringe issues” that could tend to isolate more moderate voters. However, a couple of respondents qualified that this was largely dependent on which issues they were talking about.

*“Stop talking to specific groups only. That is the downfall of the progressive agenda. You are looking at the small group of progressives and that makes everyone else feel left out. That is not a good idea.” – Female, 50-59, Strong Independent*

Eighteen percent of these split-ticket voters wanted the candidate to be genuine, honest and truthful. Some of these respondents pointed to national politics as an example of a path that they did not want Vermont politics to go down. In addition, 17% included the need for the Democratic candidate to connect with and listen to every day Vermonters.

*“The state of Vermont does not end at Rutland and White River Junction. Southern Vermont is the stronghold of the Democrats. In 2016 and 2018 the candidate for governor came to Billows Falls. When candidates come to our towns and talk to us that makes a difference. It is critical to me that we see our candidates. Whenever they are in town I take the time to visit them and find out what they are doing.” – Male, 60-69, Democrat*

Thirteen percent of responses included a desire for a candidate who would be willing to compromise with the other side of the aisle and to work with the legislature. Nine percent of responses mentioned a need for a solid track record. Another eight percent of responses encouraged the Democratic candidate to be more progressive – sometimes pointing to Senator Sanders as the example. Ten percent of respondents indicated that they were unsure.

In addition to the findings above, two key insights emerged from the responses to these questions. Only two respondents indicated that they would hesitate to vote for any Democratic

candidates because of their desire for a split Vermont state government. Similarly, only nine percent of these split-ticket voters indicated that they had ruled out voting for a Democrat.

*“I would be nervous to have a Democratic governor because I think they would have too much leeway. I vote Democratic all the way through but not for Governor. I would be scared about the broad sweeping changes. I would be leery of them. I want checks and balances. I don't want anyone with absolute power.” – Female, 40-49, Strong Independent*

**Table 7** categorizes the advice given to the Democratic candidate running in 2020.

<b>Table 7: In-Depth Interview Advise To Potential Democratic Challengers Coded Open End Responses</b>	
	<b>All S-T Voters</b>
Focus on the economy, employment, and lowering taxes	26%
Focus on specific policies (environment/climate change, healthcare, education, raising the minimum wage, gun control, the opioid crisis)	24%
Be more moderate, realistic, and avoid “fringe issues”	21%
Be truthful and honest	18%
Listen to “every day” Vermonters	17%
Compromise and work with the legislature to accomplish something	13%
They need a good track record and experience	9%
Nothing; I am voting for Governor Phil Scott	9%
Don’t know/ Other	10%

The full survey and top-lines statistics for both the IVR survey and the follow up interviews can be found in **Appendix A**.

These data paint a picture of Vermont split-ticket voters as fairly conflicted between being fiscally conservative and socially liberal. They are more likely than the average voter to be happy with the direction of Vermont under Governor Scott and they focus heavily on economic issues as top priorities for Vermont. However, a large majority agree with many strongly liberal policy proposals and they generally voted down-ticket Democrat for most of the other Vermont elections in 2018. When specifically asked about Governor Scott, they are favorable to and voted for him because of his character and his willingness to deviate from traditional Republican



positions. However, these split-ticket voters are not set on voting for Governor Scott in 2020 and are relatively open to a Democratic opponent, depending on his or her issue-focus. It is clear that Governor Scott is a popular Governor and has a relatively strong hold on the governorship. While Vermonters elected a divided state government in 2018, if the 2020 election had been decided by these split-ticket voters in a coronavirus-free environment, a strong Democratic candidate may have endangered Governor Scott's position as the only Republican statewide official in Vermont.

## DISCUSSION

Most theories about split-ticket voting use aggregate data to find correlations between split-ticket voting and potential motivations. The methodology used in this research does not allow such broad sweeping statements. However, it does enable the testing of Vermont split-ticket voters' stated reasons for splitting their tickets against some of the more prominent theories.

The most striking outcome of this research is that there was little evidence of the Balancing Theory. Only two individuals of the seventy-eight Vermont split-ticket voters indicated that they had voted for Governor Scott to "balance" the Democratic legislature.

*"I favored him over Hallquist because I thought he was moderate on issues and would balance against a Democratic legislature"- Male, 50-59, Independent-Lean Democrat*

In contrast, there was far more support for the Sincere Voting Model. While this theory is generally used to talk about the differences between presidential and congressional split-ticket

voting, the theory can easily be adjusted to the differences between gubernatorial and congressional split-ticket voting. In both instances, voters are considering an executive in addition to members of Congress. These are two very different and distinct roles. This theory argues that, “Offered two presidential candidates, voters choose the one they think more likely to keep taxes low and defense strong and to govern competently. Offered two House candidates, voters choose the one they think more likely deliver local benefits and to protect their favorite programs”<sup>71</sup>

The results indicate that this may have been a frequent calculation made by these Vermont split-ticket voters. The Vermont split voters’ answers correlated significantly with a Sincere Voting Model’s prediction that economy and taxation play a larger role in electing an executive. When asked in an open-end format about their policy priorities for Vermont, the vast majority of split-ticket voters immediately spoke about the Vermont economy, taxes, and keeping people and jobs in Vermont. Similarly, when asked why they had voted for Governor Scott in 2018 or would vote for Governor Scott in 2020, many immediately mentioned his stance on taxes and the budget. Thus, many of these split-ticket voters sincerely believed that a vote for Governor Scott was in line with their fiscal vision for the state. While this research did not delve into the motivations behind the votes for Senate, U.S. House or Lieutenant Governor, there is a possibility that split-ticket voters used a separate calculation for those races.

*“[Governor Scott] does support jobs in Vermont. he wants to keep people in Vermont. He supported paying people to come into Vermont. I thought that was creative and I think we need that.” – Male, 60-69, Democrat*

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<sup>71</sup> Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government*, 119.

Cross-pressures that make a voters' opinions of both parties neutralize any lean in either direction is termed "ambivalence." This was somewhat evident in the cognitive dissonance that emerged when contrasting these split-ticket voters' stated priorities with their support for many policies that would invariably lead to higher taxes. They were concerned about their own bottom line, increased taxes, and the economy. However, these split-ticket voters were also supportive of some of the most expensive and economy-affecting progressive policies like raising the minimum wage and Medicare for All unprompted. Therefore, ambivalence may have played a role in neutralizing the policy draws from both sides. That said, the pattern of down-ticket Democratic voting and singularly defecting from party line to vote for Governor Scott speaks to more than mere ambivalence across the board. These voters selected to split-ticket vote for Governor Scott specifically which points to more of an intentional Sincere Voting Model rather than ambivalence or ambivalence only within the context of the gubernatorial race.

The split-ticket voting theory of voter Indifference also saw some support in the data, but it was less evident than the Sincere Voting Model. Almost two-in-ten split-ticket voters were unsure or could not remember why they had selected Governor Scott over Hallquist in the 2018 election. While there is a possibility that this might be due to measurement error rather than an honest response, this high a level of "don't know" responses may indicate that many split-ticket voters were indifferent about this particular election. A few voters even admitted to indifference when asked about why they had voted for Governor Scott.

*"Honestly nothing comes to mind. Name recognition. Perhaps he was Lieutenant Governor under a Democrat." – Male, 40-49, Democrat*

Interestingly, split-ticket voting in Vermont, a state that is largely considered one of the most liberal in the country, is already partial evidence against the Partisan Sorting theory of split-ticket voting. However, the fact that these split-ticket voters identified as moderates (40%) at a much higher rate than the total voters surveyed (29%) lends some credence to the idea that more moderate voters who are less extreme or partisan are more likely to split-ticket vote. Many also pointed to Governor Scott being a moderate as one of the reasons why they were favorable to him, why they had voted for him in 2018 and why they would likely vote for him in 2020. That said, as with the Ambivalence theory of split-ticket voting, this theory does not help explain why voters selectively chose to express their more moderate stances when voting for Governor Scott and not for a race with a far more liberal Democratic candidate like Senator Bernie Sanders or Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman.

*“He generally takes moderate positions. Open to compromise, particularly since he was reelected and the composition of the legislature has change. He is not closed minded and is willing to change his view on issues when new information comes forward. He is a bit more conservative than I would like but he is moderate enough that I am generally satisfied.” – Male, 60-69, Democrat*

Finally, in the data, there was significant evidence of the power of Incumbency as an incentive to split-ticket vote. First and foremost, when asked why they were favorable towards Governor Scott, 45% included compliments of his character, mentioned they had “*met him before,*” and knew information about his activities out of work. (“*I like that he is a race car driver.*”) This demonstrated that Governor Scott has benefitted from being a more familiar face and having been in office and around Vermont communities. These split-ticket voters had been exposed to Governor Scott for a substantial period of time and this exposure has prompted

favorable opinions of Governor Scott, specifically in regards to his character, and that he “*listens to all Vermonters.*”

These positive views and Governor Scott’s high name recognition lead these split-ticket voters to articulate that they have been and are willing to give Governor Scott the benefit of the doubt. Specific responses where the split-ticket voters talk about Governor Scott not being great, but also not shaking the boat too much firmly corroborates Feld and Grofman’s theory of “benefit of the doubt” that falls under the Incumbency Advantage theory. The fact that a significant number of these split-ticket voters see Governor Scott as a moderate or “*not a real Republican*” also aligns with the findings that the insulating effects of benefit of the doubt are magnified the closer the incumbent’s positions are to the “center” or median voter. The split-ticket voters’ negative reactions to the Democratic candidate Hallquist also corroborated much of the academic work that finds that amateur, and therefore less appealing, candidates tend to run against strong incumbents. Christine Hallquist’s lack of any prior electoral experience, in addition to her poor performance in the debates and on the campaign trail closely fit this Incumbency Advantage theory.

*“He is doing alright. I like him. I don’t know how I would want him to change.*

*Keep what he is doing.”- Female, 50-59, Democrat*

It is clear from the comparison between this research on Vermont split-ticket voters and the larger political theories on split-ticket voter motivation that elements of truth exist within most theories of split-ticket voting. There were a few split-ticket voters who fit each model, the Balancing Theory, the Ambivalence and Indifference theories, and the Partisan Sorting Theory.

However, these Vermont split-ticket voters show far more evidence of the Sincere Voting Model and Incumbency Advantage theories.

## **CONCLUSION**

Split-ticket voting has declined in recent years. The 2018 midterms were no exception. However, this was not universally the case. In both 2018 and 2020, Vermont experienced significant split-ticket voting in the form of Democratic defection. In 2018, Vermont elected Democratic Socialist Senator Bernie Sanders, Democrat Representative Peter Welch, and Progressive Democrat Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman, as well as a veto proof majority for Democrats and Progressives in the Vermont State Legislature. Last but not least, Vermonters also elected Republican Governor Phil Scott by a substantial margin. This grouping of elected officials has resulted in considerable cooperation, negotiation, and compromise between Vermont's Republican governor, the Democratic legislature and federal delegation. The legislature's stated goals were, in many cases, moderated, and Governor Scott has deviated from the Republican line in many instances. In other words, Vermont's political environment reflects the type of situation that many people wish for across the country. This research into split ticket voting in Vermont, allows us to see what has driven this type of voting and therefore, how it could potentially happen in other areas across the country.

A review of the prominent academic theories on split-ticket voting demonstrates a wide variety of possible split-ticket voting motivations. However, only a couple theories are strongly upheld by the results from interviews of Vermont split-ticket voters. These Vermont split-ticket voters are voting sincerely when they select more liberal members of Congress and their state legislature in addition to a Republican governor. They believe in many of the liberal ideas that

the federal and state legislature is considering. However, they are ultimately concerned about their own bottom line when it comes to the Vermont economy and their state taxes. In addition, despite Governor Scott's being a Republican, these split-ticket voters were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt largely because they feel that they know him personally as a genuine and well-meaning individual. The voters are also able to compare Scott favorably (and more liberally) to other Republicans, which helps them separate his Republicanism from national Republicans like then-President Donald Trump and Senator Mitch McConnell.

For individuals attempting to replicate this type of split ticket voting in other states and across the country steps could be taken to duplicate portions of the environment here in Vermont by creating more in-person connection with voters and creating space between gubernatorial or other in-state candidates other external national figures of the same party.

This research on Vermont split-ticket voters allows us to determine which motivations played a larger role for Vermonters in this election, how a Republican governor was able to win Vermont, and it also gives us insight into how candidates and parties could encourage split ticket voting in other states.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE REALITY OF MULTIPARTY POLITICS IN AMERICA: THE VERMONT PROGRESSIVE PARTY AND ITS FORTY-YEARS OF SUCCESS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1981, Bernie Sanders became the mayor of Burlington Vermont by a margin of ten votes. His victory set into motion a political movement in Vermont that led to the emergence and continued presence of the most successful third party in the country: The Vermont Progressive Party. The Vermont Progressive Party website proudly states: “For nearly 40 years, an unbroken stream of Progressives have served on the Burlington City Council and Vermont legislature.”<sup>72</sup> Currently, nine members of the Vermont state legislature identify as Progressives first, another seven identify as Progressive second.<sup>73</sup> The Progressive Party also currently holds a majority on the Burlington City Council.<sup>74</sup> To give perspective to this success: currently, from members of congress to state legislatures across the country, there are 46 elected individuals who do not identify with a party, 33 of them are independents who range from liberal to conservative, 9 members of the Vermont Progressive Party, and the remaining four identify with three different third parties.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The Vermont Progressive Party, “Elected Progressives,” accessed February 18, 2021, <https://www.progressiveparty.org/elected-progressives>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid; Due to the existence of fusion candidacies in Vermont, elected officials can elect to be a part of more than one party. The party an elected individual puts first is considered to be their “primary” party.

<sup>74</sup> The City of Burlington, “City Council,” accessed February 18, 2020, <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CityCouncil>.

<sup>75</sup> Ballotpedia, “Current independent and third-party federal and state officeholders,” Accessed May 3, 2021, [https://ballotpedia.org/Current\\_independent\\_and\\_third-party\\_federal\\_and\\_state\\_officeholders](https://ballotpedia.org/Current_independent_and_third-party_federal_and_state_officeholders). Officeholders from non-states were not included in this calculation.



Unlike the majority of other democracies around the world with multiparty systems, the United States has an entrenched two-party system. Scholarly work has laid out clear reasons why the political structure of our government encourages two major parties – and discourages third parties. It has also investigated various ways in which third parties can succeed, in many instances, using the Vermont Progressive Party as an example. However, no analysis has investigated the evolution of a single third party over an extensive period of success – what that party looks like over time, who is drawn to that party, and how a third party continues to be successful in the face of continued institutional barriers to success.

Learning more about the Vermont Progressive Party allows us to learn more about third parties in our political party system and what could be the case around the country if more political party options were presented. For members of third parties across the country, the Vermont Progressive Party can also present some guidance, not only on how to overcome barriers to gain electoral success, but to maintain that success. Lastly, an investigation of the Vermont Progressive Party's success enables us to ask the questions: How do we define third parties? Where does the line blur between being a part of a third party or a major party?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Scholars have investigated the rise and fall of political parties in the United States of America from the framer's conversations about emerging factions,<sup>76</sup> to books published in 2020. A significant amount of energy is spent disabusing readers that the United States has only two

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<sup>76</sup> See: James Madison, "Federalist 10," Congress.gov Resources, 1787, <https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers#TheFederalistPapers-10>; and George Washington, "Transcript of George Washington's Farewell Address," OurDocuments.gov, 1796, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=15&page=transcript>

successful parties. The history of third parties in this country is frequently described.<sup>77</sup> While third parties have rarely achieved electoral success, Hicks argues “What is of infinitely greater consequence is the final success of so many of the principles for which they have fought.”<sup>78</sup>

In addition to uplifting third party success, much literature speaks to institutional factors that contribute to why the United States has an entrenched two-party system that disincentivizes third parties.<sup>79</sup> A consistent theme presents the fact that the two parties do not fully represent the political positions of the public<sup>80</sup> and that many disapprove of their party options.<sup>81</sup>

The largest institutional element in creating a two-party electoral system and, consequently, the largest hurdle to third parties is winner-take-all elections. Duverger’s Law contends that, “the simple-majority single-ballot system favors the two-party system.”<sup>82</sup> Scholars frequently reference this law in their work.<sup>83</sup> They also contrast this winner-take-all form of elections with proportional elections in other democracies.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See: David Gillespie, *Challengers to Duopoly* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012); and Eric Chester, *True Mission: Socialists and the Labor Party Question in the U.S.* (Sterling: Pluto Press, 2004).

<sup>78</sup> John Hicks, “The Third Party Tradition in American Politics,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 20(1) (1933): 3-28, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1902325>; See also Jonathan Martin, *Empowering Progressive Third Parties in the United States: Defeating Duopoly, Advancing Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 5.

<sup>79</sup> See: Steven Rosenstone, Roy Behr, and Edward Lazarus, *Third Parties in America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p11; and Theresa Amato, *Grand Illusion: The Myth of Voter Choice in a Two-Party Tyranny* (New York: The New Press, 2009).

<sup>80</sup> Gerald Pomper, *Elections in America: Control and Influence in Democratic Politics* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1968), 45; Lee Drutman, *Breaking The Two Party Doom Loop* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 150.

<sup>81</sup> Pomper, *Elections in America*, 5; Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage, 1967), 42; and John Bowden, “62 percent say third political party is needed in US,” *The Hill*, February 15, 2021, <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/538889-62-percent-say-third-political-party-is-needed-in-us?fbclid=IwAR2R40EU3pHgMw8CBOysr6HbZOzqTSdrugkw7pge6IIBZCD8meobucXmzg>.

<sup>82</sup> William Riker, “The Two-Party System and Duverger’s Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science,” *The American Political Science Review*, 76(4), (1982): 753-766.

<sup>83</sup> Paul Herrnson, “Two-Party Dominance and Minor-Party Forays in American Politics,” in eds. Paul Herrnson, and John Green, *Multiparty Politics in America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2002), 12.

<sup>84</sup> David Reynolds, *Democracy Unbound: Progressive Challenges to the Two Party System* (Boston: South End Press, 1997), 269.

Scholars argue that the winner-take-all system also creates the “spoiler effect” or “strategic voting.”<sup>85</sup> Amato writes: “Spoiler logic is rooted in an insidious assumption – that the two major parties own the votes and voters.” She argues: “based on this assumption, including any third party or independent is invariable a zero-sum proposition. It is intruding on the major parties’ playing field, rather than expanding the electorate.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, much literature that theorizes and explains how third parties could be successful considers how third parties and third-party candidates can avoid being seen as a spoiler.<sup>87</sup>

Scholars also point to finances and institutional capacity as aspects of the United States electoral system that support only the two major parties. Schraufnagel argues: “third parties do not have the same financial resources as the two major political parties”<sup>88</sup> and lack of resources invariably leads to failure.<sup>89</sup> Institutional financial impediments also deter third party development. Bennett gives the example: “Under the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974, Republicans and Democrats... were eligible to receive a grant of \$2 million to cover the costs of their quadrennial convention. Minor parties could receive a fraction of this amount.”<sup>90</sup>

Compounding on these hurdles, scholars point to media coverage as another institutional impediment.<sup>91</sup> Gillespie describes, “the mainstream media’s flagrant neglect of third-party and independent campaigns and its clear preference for covering the two-party contest”<sup>92</sup> hinders

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<sup>85</sup> Drutman, *Breaking The Two Party Doom Loop*, 259.

<sup>86</sup> Theresa Amato, “Beyond the ‘spoiler’ myth,” in *Empowering Progressive Third Parties in the United States*, ed. Martin, 117.

<sup>87</sup> Terry Bouriches, *Building Progressive Politics: The Vermont Story* (Madison: Center for a New Democracy, 1993), 39.

<sup>88</sup> Scot Schraufnagel, *Third Party Blues: The Truth and Consequences of Two-Party Dominance* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 2.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> James Bennet, *Not Invited to the Party: How the Demopublicans Have Rigged the System and Left Independents Out in the Cold* (New York: Springer, 2009), 133.

<sup>91</sup> See: Bernard Tamas, *The Demise and Rebirth of American Third Parties* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 146.

<sup>92</sup> David Gillespie, *Challengers to Duopoly* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 19.

third party growth. Lack of media coverage compounds: “the major criterion for most forms of media exposure is ‘electability’ which minor parties are hard-pressed to demonstrate. Of course, the electability standard can become a self-fulfilling prophesy, with lack of attention dooming minor parties to a poor finish”<sup>93</sup>

Finally, many scholars point to some institutional rules implemented by the two major parties that create hurdles for third party development.<sup>94</sup> Piven describes: “the major parties have colluded in the development of an array of additional legal obstructions to ward off pesky challengers.”<sup>95</sup> These include raising qualifications for third parties,<sup>96</sup> especially ballot access laws.<sup>97</sup> Some scholarly work also investigates the adoption of the Australian ballot as an institutional impediment to third parties.<sup>98</sup>

Scholars also investigate the role that third parties play in American politics. For example, third parties are frequently mentioned around political realignment – the process by which parties shift and/or are replaced by third parties to accommodate changes in public opinion or the emergence of a new prominent issue. In these analyses, third parties are considered merely a part of the process that either ends with realignment or does not. For instance, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party is seen as “one of the most successful progressive third-party coalitions in

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<sup>93</sup> Diana Dwyre and Robin Kolodny, “Barriers to minor-party success and prospects for change,” in *Multiparty Politics in America*, eds. Herrnson and Green, 170; See also: Reynolds, *Democracy Unbound*, 54.

<sup>94</sup> See: David Gillespie, *Politics at the Periphery: Third Parties in Two-Party America*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993); and Theodore Lowi, “Toward a More Responsible Three-Party System: Deregulating American Democracy,” in *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., eds. John Green and Rick Farmer (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 354.

<sup>95</sup> Frances Piven, *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 6.

<sup>96</sup> Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 94.

<sup>97</sup> John Bibby and Sandy Maisel, *Two Parties – or More?: The American Party System*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003), 70.

<sup>98</sup> See: James Bennet, *Not Invited to the Party: How the Demopublicans Have Rigged the System and Left Independents Out in the Cold* (New York: Springer, 2009), 3; and Schraufnagel, *Third Party Blues*, 33.

American history.”<sup>99</sup> The party grew in influence and was successful at electing numerous candidates to political office, and twenty years after its inception, agreed to merge with the Democratic Party. Using this and others as examples. Sundquist believes that there is no realignment process in which a multiparty system emerges.<sup>100</sup> Sundquist explains: “At no time in the history of this country has there been a sustained period of multiparty competition. Third Parties have come on the scene but only briefly; the new party has replaced an existing party as one of the major parties or it has been absorbed by an existing party or it has faded away.”<sup>101</sup>

Third parties are also described as vehicles for voters to express their preferences and concern with the two major parties. Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus state: “Three motivations prompt people to vote for a third party. Citizens do so when they feel the major parties have deteriorated so much that they no longer function as they are supposed to, when an attractive third-party candidate runs, or when they have acquired an allegiance to a third party itself.”<sup>102</sup> Expanding on this idea, Chressanthis finds, “people who vote for third parties do so under similar motivations as people who vote for the major parties.”<sup>103</sup> These are not wholly protest votes: “votes for third parties represent the transmission of individual preferences by people who believe that their vote is important and that in the aggregate their signal may be interpreted as a signal to alter the direction of current policies as run by the major parties”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Tom O’Connell, “Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, 1924-1944” *Mnopedia*, April 23, 2021, <https://www.mnopedia.org/minnesota-farmer-labor-party-1924-1944>.

<sup>100</sup> James Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States, Revised Edition*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1983), 38.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus, *Third Parties in America*, 126-7

<sup>103</sup> George Chressanthis, “Third party voting and the rational voter model: Empirical evidence from recent presidential elections.” *Public Choice*, 65 (1990): 189-193.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Some work also investigates the motivations of third party candidates. Looking specifically at presidential races, Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus argue that third party challengers “emerge when they perceive weakness in the two major parties. They run either when the major parties have disappointed a large minority faction, when the parties do not pay sufficient attention to the issues of concern to the voters, when there is an incumbent president on which to focus discontent, or when the previous election suggest that one major party may be too weak or too large to hold its supporters together.”<sup>105</sup> To Rosenstone Behr, and Lazarus, third party affiliation for candidates is a political move that is initiated by the major parties’ failure. They argue: “A politician will not even contemplate a third party run until the major parties force him to.”<sup>106</sup>

In contrast, other scholars point to issue-based reasons for third-party affiliation. Gillespie argues, “Purists dominate the ranks of many minor parties, and even when leavened by the presence and influence of some pragmatists, a party may hold that its commitment to creed or devotion to defining issues is more important than winning elections.”<sup>107</sup> Affiliation is not a political calculus, but is instead inflexible and electorally harmful: “Minor party candidates tend to hold firm ideological convictions. Most reject pragmatic strategies that might build broader support for their party”<sup>108</sup> This analysis is derived from Lasswell’s *Psychopathology and Politics*:

*“Among political figures there are two distinct personality types: political agitators and political administrators. Political administrators are pragmatic, goal-centered people who are most successful, and gratified personally, in position of governmental leadership and influence. Political agitators are more rigid people who invest their psychic energies in a mission or cause. They frame their political appeals in emotion and exhortative*

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<sup>105</sup> Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus, *Third Parties in America*, 203.

<sup>106</sup> Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus, *Third Parties in America*, 194.

<sup>107</sup> Gillespie, *Challengers to Duopoly*, 42.

<sup>108</sup> Herrnson and Green, eds. *Multiparty Politics in America*, 82.

*language, and they vilify their adversaries as enemies of the good. Gratification for political agitators comes in the heat of the political contest, the struggle, rather than in the daily routine of governing.*"<sup>109</sup>

There is a relative consensus that third parties are made up of “agitators” rather than “administrators” and that this works to the parties’ detriment. This is the basis for much advice given to third parties to help electoral success: “U.S. progressive third party movement is more likely to succeed if it channels its idealism and sense of urgency into an approach to gaining power that is pragmatic, yet is also farsighted and dynamic.”<sup>110</sup>

The Vermont Progressive Party’s success is also mentioned as a third party that has been able to achieve success.<sup>111</sup> These works mention the unique political environment including: the lack of a major party challenger to the incumbent Democratic mayor when Bernie decided to run, a media that covered Bernie as a legitimate challenger, and the small population of Burlington.

There are also entire pieces of academic writing that wholly focus on the emergence of the Progressive Party in Vermont. Guma’s *The People’s Republic* focuses on Sanders, his campaigns, and his decisions as mayor of Burlington. Guma’s underlying analysis rests on the realignment theory. He describes the political environment that led to the unlikely Sanders victory and investigates the ensuing “revolution” to determine if this was a true realignment.<sup>112</sup> The book leaves this question open: “If Sanders is a historic inevitability will the Democrats be replaced one day by a Progressive Party or merely a permanent campaign machine? Are we seeing in Vermont the birth of a humanistic socialist movement, or a cult of the charismatic

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<sup>109</sup>Harold Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930).

<sup>110</sup> Jonathan Martin, “Introduction,” in *Empowering Progressive Third Parties in the United States*, ed. Martin, 6.

<sup>111</sup> See: Jonathan Martin, “Introduction” in *Empowering Progressive Third Parties in the United States*, ed. Martin, 7; See also Gillespie, *Challengers to Duopoly*, 6 and 44.

<sup>112</sup> Greg Guma, *The People’s Republic: Vermont and the Sanders Revolution* (Shelburne: The New England Press, 1989), 182.

hero?”<sup>113</sup> There is no discussion of what came to pass: The Progressive Party replacing the Republican party in Burlington while also growing to be a significant third party in state politics.

Similarly, Bouriches’ *Building Progressive Politics*, focused on the emergence of the Progressive Coalition, was published in 1993 and Guma’s *The People’s Republic* in 1989. Neither book covers the subsequent decline and reemergence of the Progressive Party in Burlington, nor its sustained presence in the Vermont legislature for the past three decades. Bouriches wrote a more recent article entitled “Lessons of the Vermont Progressive Party.” However, this piece, like his earlier work, focuses on the emergence of the Progressive Party and the hurdles that hindered Bernie, the Progressive Coalition, and the Progressive Party, not the Party’s sustained success.<sup>114</sup>

Senator Sanders’ books *Outsider in the House* and *Our Revolution* both describe how Bernie became involved in politics, his historic election as a “socialist” mayor in Burlington, and the rise of the Progressive Coalition and the Progressive Party. Sanders describes his motivations throughout the books: “I was to present Vermont voters with a political perspective from outside of the two-party system.”<sup>115</sup> He also describes the hurdles that third-party candidates face in electoral politics in the United States: “the perpetual bane of American third parties. ‘I fully agree with what you’re saying, Bernie’ someone in the audience would invariably tell me after a debate. ‘but I don’t want to waste my vote on a third-party candidate.’”<sup>116</sup> Sanders also uses the Progressives’ – and his own – success to intimate that third party politics is possible elsewhere: “If an independent progressive movement could win in America’s most rural state – and until

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<sup>113</sup> Guma, *The People’s Republic*, 183.

<sup>114</sup> Bouriches. *Building Progressive Politics*.

<sup>115</sup> Bernard Sanders, *Outsider in the White House* (New York: Verso, 2015), 19.

<sup>116</sup> Sanders, *Outsider in the White House*, 20-1.



most recently, one of America's most Republican – then it might be possible for progressives to do likewise anywhere in the nation.”<sup>117</sup>

Ultimately, there is substantial scholarly work on third parties: how they do and can succeed, why they exist, and case studies on specific parties. The Vermont Progressive Party has been mentioned by a number of these academic works. However, this past research focuses on the beginnings of these parties – how they can begin to take hold, overcome obstacles, and specifically how the Progressive Party in Vermont was able to succeed initially. It has been four decades since Bernie Sanders won the mayor's race in Burlington. His victory evolved into the Progressive Coalition, the Progressive Party, and now four generations of Progressives in Vermont. The following research investigates the Progressive Party as it is now, how the members see their past and current success, and what they see in the future of the party.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The data for this paper has been collected from in-depth interviews with 18 individuals closely associated with the Vermont Progressive Party including Progressive elected officials, Progressive Party staff, academics, and other Progressive Party activists. Interviews were conducted between November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020. A full list of the Progressive Party activists interviewed, their association with the Progressive Party and the questions asked can be found in **Appendix C**. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to over an hour. In addition, further research compiled from public opinion polls on Vermont Progressive Party can be found in **Appendix D**.

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<sup>117</sup> Sanders, *Outsider in the White House*, 54.

## RESULTS

### ***WHY ACTIVISTS SUPPORT THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY***

Much has been written about Senator Sanders during his time as mayor, but little research has looked at who Progressives are and what they care about. Thus, the first question in this research was: “Why are you a Progressive Party activist?”

A number of key issues immediately emerged. The issues most consistently mentioned are: eschewing corporate contributions, being a party that works for “everyone,” and fighting for the drastic action needed for the climate crisis. The sections below break down these issues.

#### **A Party Free of Corporate Influence and Contributions**

One of the distinguishing features of the Progressive Party in Vermont is that any candidate must forgo corporate contributions. To Progressive Party activists, this ensures that their candidates are not beholden to corporate interests. Progressives also share the goal of expanding this stance to all political parties across Vermont and the country.<sup>118</sup>

This is an issue frequently mentioned by the interviewed activists. Carter Neubiser said, “I can’t in good faith work for a candidate or a party that take corporate money. That was the first issue for why I supported Bernie... That’s the big differentiator.” Progressive activists see taking of corporate money as synonymous with corruption, or the potential of corruption. When describing how he became involved in politics, and with the Progressive Party specifically, City Councilor Jack Hansen described, “I was pretty jaded by American politics and conventional politics and the conventional system and the corporate power and the level of corruption.”

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<sup>118</sup> “We are the only major party that refuses the culture and practice of corporate contributions in politics; we understand that working people are not fully represented in a society that accepts corporate personhood” (The Vermont Progressive Party, “Our Platform,” accessed December 15, 2020. <https://www.progressiveparty.org/platform>.)

To these activists, government should be led by individuals who are beholden only to the people. Many call for campaign finance reform and publicly financed elections to ensure that corporations and wealthy individuals also do not hold outsized influence. Barbara Prine stated, “It’s important to have a Party that stands up for the needs of the people and the planet, not corporate interests.” This eschewing of corporate contributions is mentioned across the board by these Progressive Party activists.

### **A Party That Works for Everyone**

Vermont Progressive Party is also supported because of its focus on the economic wellbeing of average and disadvantaged Vermonters. Activists mention a progressive economic approach that values workers through a number of issues. Some of the more modern economic issues included: raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour and paid family leave. More long-term issues included: addressing wealth disparity, the dangers of capitalism, standing up for low income and disadvantaged people, raising taxes on the wealthy, and being against the economic “status quo.”

Older Progressive activists were more likely to mention economic issues as a driving force. Martha Abbott said one of the issues that drew her to involvement with the Liberty Union Party and the Progressive Coalition and then the Progressive Party was economic priorities. In the midst of the Vietnam War, she asked herself: “If we weren’t spending all that money on the military and war, what could we be doing for the humans?” Similarly, Erhard Mahnke believes Vermont must put “people over profits... Our orientation as a capitalist society is really towards money and greed and power and corporations are ranked above individuals and we need to

reverse that.” In contrast, those in the second and third Progressive generations were more likely to see economics as secondary to other issues like climate policy.

### **Addressing the Climate Crisis**

For younger generations, addressing the climate crisis with the urgency it deserves is one of the most prominent issues that connects them to the Progressive Party. City Councilor Hansen said: “If you look at the [Progressive] Party’s platform and what they stand for – for me, the most important issue is climate change.”

Progressive Party activists in middle generations talk about climate urgency as part of a larger view of the platform. Senator Pearson said if he could only pick one issue, it would be climate change. However, he continued: “they are all wrapped together: climate change, income inequality, racial justice, Healthcare. All of the issues.” To Pearson, a focus on the economy also runs through each of these issues and Progressives have been true to that economic mission.

For Progressive activists in older generations, climate activism can be an important *additional* issue or sometimes an afterthought. Martha Abbott, who had described the importance of economic issues in depth then added, “My mother was always an environmentalist. That became a real important issue to me too.” Her environmental activism working to close the Yankee Nuclear Power Plant was for supporting the health and safety of the workers in addition to environmental reasons.

### **An Alternative to the Two-Party System**

Activists also mention their support for the Progressive Party in the context of fighting for an electoral system that has more than just two options. Megan Polyte’s immediate answer to

this question concerned the systemic change that the Progressive Party represents: “I came to the Progressive Party primarily because I am opposed to the two-party system. If you don’t have at least three choices it will be the least-worst choice. That is an antithesis to democracy itself.”

Progressive Party elected officials especially spoke to this issue. Both Representatives Vyhovski and Colburn expressed: “I find the bipartisan system to be problematic.” Former Lieutenant Governor Zuckerman explained: “I am both attracted to the Progressive Party and the concept of more than two parties.”

Progressive Party activists believe that the existence of a third party presents specific benefits to the legislative system: creating room for debate, discussion and movement, and allowing for legislators to create bi-partisan support for policy that negates the traditional oppositional model. Zuckerman spoke to both of these elements. First, he explained the space that a third party creates within the legislative process: “I think our political system with only two major parties gets polarized. But as soon as there gets more viable choices it broadens the discussion.” Zuckerman gave specific examples where Progressives’ more liberal stances opened opportunities for more left-leaning Democrats to move left. For example, his long-term advocacy around cannabis contributed to passing medical marijuana and paved the way for the legal market for recreational cannabis. Carter Neubiser also mentioned: “The fact that the Democrats are talking about \$15 minimum wage, climate change, the global warming solutions act, paid family leave. That is all a result of our organizing from the 90s. We are moving the conversation in the public and on the ground but also within the Democratic establishment.” Neubiser also spoke in more combative terms arguing that, “There is a value in a small but significant block hitting this issue over and over again. It is something that we can use as a lever to push the

Democrats. There is also always something hanging over the Democrats – the accountability that we can find someone and run someone against the worst of them.”

Zuckerman also spoke to the way that Progressives have been able to negate the traditional oppositional model between the two parties: “Those of us who understand the Progressive Party don’t see the political landscape as linear. [We see it as] even circular and scattershot.” He referenced both populism and economic issues that resonate across the traditional political spectrum that Progressives have made a mainstay in their messaging:

*“The Progressive message that I am a part of is one around economic justice, which often if one were to bend the line between two points and connect them, that is where I think there is common ground between the “right” and the “left.” ... whether one is on the left or the right on social issues, many are being pushed to the bottom economically. ... This is being exploited by the two [traditional] parties.” – Former Lt. Gov. Zuckerman*

Similarly, Representative Colburn told an anecdote about a Progressive candidate who “flipped” a Trump voter because they connected on economic issues and challenging the status quo. Colburn said that this stems from the Progressive “orientation around economic justice. [When you] bring people in through the economics there can be clarity and understanding.”

Thus, the Progressive Party is attractive to these activists both because of the left-leaning issues that the Party represents in addition to the role that the Party plays in changing the political landscape to one that encourages collaboration rather than opposition.

### ***HOW ACTIVISTS DIFFERENTIATE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY FROM THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY***

A significant amount of literature around third parties investigates third parties as separate entities from the two major parties. In Burlington, elected officials follow this

traditional pattern where elected officials hold only one party label. However, in the Vermont state legislature, all sixteen of the individuals who classify themselves as Progressive also carry the Democratic Party label. Considering this overlap at the state level, but the relative lack of scholarly research on such overlaps, this researcher wanted to delve into how members of the Progressive Party differentiate the two parties.

### **Different Structures**

When asked what differentiates the Democratic and Progressive Parties many Progressive activists point out the structural differences: The Democratic Party is larger, with more resources, and more statewide and national support.

In contrast, Progressive Party activists see the Progressive Party as more movement-based and closer to the people. Senator Pollina described: “The commitment of grassroots organizing to electoral politics... That is important part of being a [Progressive] elected official.” To be closer to the people, Progressive Party activists argue that the Progressive Party uses in-person organizing much more and much more effectively than the Democratic Party. This results in a difference in the perceived power base of each party. Wronski pointed out that “So often organizations try to keep tight control over their supporters. Instead, we said ‘this is your organization.’” In contrast, The Democratic Party is seen as being run with a far tighter fist by the party leadership.

### **Different Priorities and Focus**

Progressive Party activists see the Progressive Party as being focused on the issues above any candidate and the Democratic Party as being focused on winning above the issues. Martha

Abbott described that the Progressive Party's "primary focus is on issues and organizing around issues rather than getting specific people elected."

Progressive Party activists argue that because the Democratic Party is more focused on winning and being, becoming, or holding onto power, the Democratic Party is less likely to stand firmly on issues when there is an indication that being principled about that issue may lose them seats or make future elections more difficult. Mahnke argued, "the mainstream of the Democratic Party is often unwilling to stand by what I would say should be their principles." Abbott explained that it is not that the individuals in the Democratic Party are not dedicated to issues, but that the focus of the larger party puts the issues on the back burner: "I know that many, most, people involved in the Democratic party believe in the issues. But I think the underlying structure creates a problem for people who are very well intentioned. Because the underlying structure is about the election more than it is about the policy." Steve Hitgen argued that this focus on issues versus focus on winning makes the Progressive Party a party fighting for something, while the Democratic Party is a party fighting against something: "What you see in the Progressive Party you see a spectrum of people but the goal is not to be anti-Republican but to advance those principles. Otherwise they would just be Democrats."

Ultimately, Progressive activists believe that there is something fundamentally wrong with current the status quo and feel that the Progressive Party's structure is able to "speak truth to power." In contrast, they believe that the Democratic Party is committed to winning through the status quo which makes Democratic Party leadership less likely to make the changes that Progressives see as necessary. Throughout the interviews, many Progressives argued that this leads to a disconnect between the Democratic Party's stated goals and their willingness to go the distance to implement those goals:



*“The Democrats tend to be generally in agreement with [progressive values] but tepid in execution.” – Senator Chris Pearson*

*“[The Democratic Party] doesn’t follow through with what is on their platform” – Representative Emma Mulvaney Stanak*

*“Democrats don’t follow through with what they say they want” – Barb Prine*

*“While [Democrats] may still espouse them, they do not implement them through policy.” – Erhard Mahnke*

## **Platform Differences**

Many Progressive activists feel that the platforms of the two parties overlap significantly – and are becoming more closely aligned. Emilie Krasnow explained that, “The platform of the Progressives has helped push and change the Platform of the Democratic party. Both platforms are pretty similar but it was not always like that.” Representative Vyhovski stated, “I firmly believe that the Dems and Progs agree on the same issues on the surface” and Representative Colburn pointed out, that it is “increasingly interesting that the platforms are aligning more and more not less.” Megan Polyte also articulated the similarities in the platform but argued that this similarity only disguises the differences in priorities and structure mentioned above: “The platform of the Democratic party is similar in its words. But it didn’t feel as authentic to me. Even the cleanliness felt exclusionary.”

That said, Progressive Party activists do feel that there are some specific issue differences between the platforms. The Progressive Party platform is seen as going farther and being bolder on progressive issues. Activists point to issues like climate change, cannabis legislation, and progressive economic issues as examples of where the Progressive Party takes the issues farther than the Democratic Party, and specifically the leadership of the party, is willing to go.

Many Progressive activists, and especially those in older generations, argue that the parties diverge on economic policy. Progressives, they argue, are far closer to working class Vermonters. Senator Pearson stated that the Progressive Party is “doggedly focused on the economy and trying to reshape the economy in a way that works for working people and the middle class.” Erhard Mahnke stated “I wish [Democrats] would stay closer and truer to the roots of the party to the working class and moderate means... the Democratic party doesn’t seem to be able to articulate a basic economic message that resonates with working class voters.” In contrast, Mahnke argues that the Progressive Party is dedicated to continuing to connect with those working-class Vermonters.

Representative Colburn also argued that the Progressive Party platform is much more antimilitaristic than the Democratic Party platform: “Our platform is different. It is more explicit about being anti-militarist.”

Finally, the largest area of divergence is on campaign finance. Many Progressive activists believe that this is one of, if not *the*, defining difference between the parties. Prine explained that Democrats “have never been anti-corporate. They embrace corporations. Maybe they don’t really mean those principles [but] as long as they continue to embrace corporate money they will continue to give in.” Hitgen stated that the two parties differ because for the Progressive Party, “there is also the fundamental commitment to an anti-corporate Democracy.”

## ***HOW ACTIVISTS GET INVOLVED IN THE VERMONT PROGRESSIVE PARTY***

As intimated above, there are “generations” of activists who have different visions of the Progressive Party.

### ***1. The Founding Generation***

This group of individuals are those who were part of creating the Progressive Party or whose political involvement began far before the existence of the Party. Individuals in this generation include: Martha Abbott, Terry Bouriches, and Erhard Manhke.

These activists center their commitment to the Party around economic issues. For instance, Erhard Mahnke has dedicated both his political and professional career to affordable housing. Mahnke explained that, “I am a Progressive because we are able to implement things and put forward ideas that may seem radical when they are first imposed but once implemented and successful they become part of the mainstream.” Mahnke stated, “[The Community Land Trust] is something that started as a ‘crazy’ Progressive notion. We embraced it early on in Burlington and it has grown to become an international movement.” Mahnke believes that “housing is a basic human right and it should not be traded on and speculated on.” His stance on economic justice and housing drives his commitment to the Progressive Party.

Similarly, Martha Abbott stated, “not long after the founding of Liberty Union Party, I started working with Bernie. We worked on telephone service rates and electrical service rates.” To Abbott, these economic issues were of utmost importance because they “made a real difference in people’s lives.” Abbot most cares about, “wages, benefits, healthcare, all the things that the system requires of people who are going to be productive members of society.”

Many of these “first generation” activists worked directly with Senator Sanders in the Liberty Union Party, his early campaigns, or when he was Mayor of Burlington. They speak of him as part of the movement toward progressive policy and as a colleague in that effort.

## **2. *The Inspired Generation(s)*<sup>119</sup>**

These individuals came of age and into political life with Bernie Sanders as Mayor of Burlington or as Congressman. They include: Former Lt. Governor Zuckerman, Senator Pearson, and Representative Colburn.

Zuckerman described that his first exposure to Progressive ideas: “I didn’t know about the Progressive Party when I first got involved. I learned about Bernie Sanders when I heard Bernie speak at UVM in 1992. It was through volunteering on his campaign that I met local folks, primarily in Burlington who were engaged in the Progressive Coalition.”

A prominent characteristic of this generation is that, more than any other generation, they connect their Progressive vision with pragmatism. These individuals have personal experience with how Progressive ideas can be implemented to help people, because they have seen it happen. Representative Colburn stated, “I was in High School when Bernie was Mayor. I benefitted directly from the Mayor’s youth office. That was my introduction.”

This generation is more likely than the first generation to mention social and environmental issues. Learning about climate change was what first inspired Pearson to get involved politically. Colburn was involved in reproductive access work. However, permeating this generation’s approach, is a firm dedication to the people, in economic realities, and in a collaborative approach. Zuckerman stated, “What intrigued me about the Coalition was that there were people who had varying social and economic justice ideology that were working as a

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<sup>119</sup> Some Progressive activists separate this group into two generations.

coalition to help each other's focus be amplified. One person might be interested in environmental justice, economic. They would each support each other in the coalition.”

Many of these individuals credit Sanders as an inspiration and a mentor. To them, he has led the way on Progressive issues from inside of government, not just as an organizer outside the system. His work demonstrates how to take Progressive ideas and make them a reality.

### ***3. The New Generation***

The “new” generation of Progressives came to political life following the failure of Progressive Mayor Bob Kiss’ leadership in Burlington, and the subsequent the rise of progressive politics during Senator Bernie Sanders’ campaign for president. Their views on Progressive politics are more idealistic and tend to be broader-focused than the largely economic examples presented by the older generations. There is also a heavy emphasis on social issues and fighting climate change. While some mention a commitment to economic issues, they almost exclusively bring up the economy as a subsidiary argument. Individuals in this generation include City Councilor Jack Hanson, the Executive Director of the Progressive Party Josh Wronski, and mayoral campaign manager and former Progressive candidate Carter Neubiser.

Neubiser explained: “I’m from Connecticut so I did Bernie volunteering in my home state... Bernie was the first one where there was an existential need for him to win. I got a third job in my neighborhood to be able to donate \$30 a week.” Or for Hansen, “[Bernie] was a politician but he was speaking to the issues... I had never heard a politician talk that way. It changed the way I viewed electoral politics. He made me realize that you can be a part of the system and still challenge it from the inside.”

To this generation, Sanders is a fighter for justice and for progressive ideals. Many are inspired by his unwavering support for progressive issues in the face of an unfair system. This

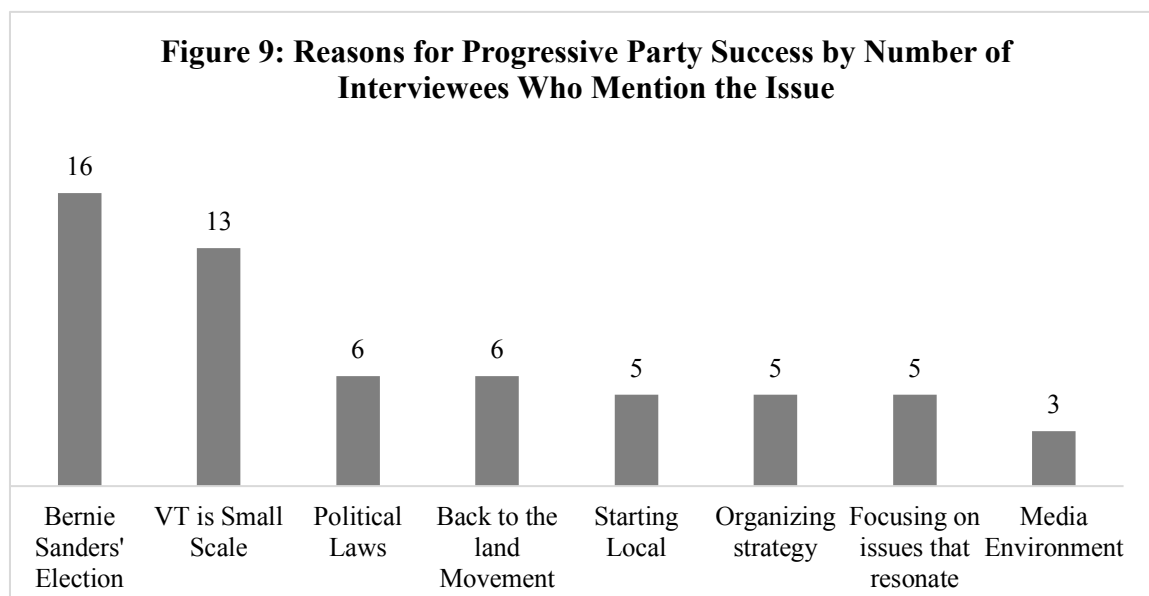
generation's unwavering fight for ideological justice stands in contrast to the economic focus and pragmatic implementation of the other two generations.

It is important to note that there were individuals interviewed who did not necessarily fall clearly into these three generational categories.

### ***WHAT ACTIVISTS CREDIT WITH PROGRESSIVE PARTY SUCCESS***

A substantial amount of scholarly work on third parties in the United States investigates the institutional barriers to entry for third parties. In asking why Progressive activists believe the party has been able to be so successful, we can determine if – 40 years later – there is still consensus within the party around how and why the Party was able to overcome those barriers.

Progressive Party activists firmly believe that the existence and growth of the Progressive Party is largely due to a confluence of a number of unique environmental aspects in Vermont and one unlikely historical event: Bernie Sanders's election as mayor of Burlington. The most frequently given reasons for the success of the Progressive Party are shown **Figure 9**.



## **Bernie Sanders and Proving that Progressives Can Win**

The most frequent reason given by Progressive activists for the success of the Party is Sanders' success. Jack Hansen states, "Bernie coming in and having that 'miracle' election was shocking. You have up-ended the Democratic machine in the largest city in the state." Bernie ran a progressive, issue-focused campaign and governed Burlington with an eye towards those priorities. Abbot stated, "He raised the conversation on all those issues so effectively, that we were able to till that soil. We were able to continue those fights in-state while he was in Washington." Zuckerman added that the Progressive Party has been successful "because [of] the original success of Bernie and other people running outside of the Democratic party and then operating government in a successful way. Once that success occurred that gave legitimacy to the idea that another party could exist." Steve Hitgen said, "The practical achievement of being elected was a really important one." In this way, Sanders established a "proof of concept" not unlike other charismatic third party leaders throughout history like founders of the Wisconsin Progressives Party Phillip and Robert La Follette.<sup>120</sup>

Most Progressive Party activists believe that Bernie and other Progressives' have demonstrated legitimacy that will continue. For example, Zuckerman described that, "There are now children and even grandchildren of original progressives that are involved... The fact that we have multi-generational engagement helps with the continuum." Hitgen, however, believes that the success of the Party continues to rest with Senator Sanders' success: "There is still, to this day, a 'Bernie gets hit by a bus' situation. Who is the unapologetically left leader in Vermont if that happens? There is no answer for that... Without him I don't know what we do next."

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<sup>120</sup> Ronald L. Feinman, "Philip La Follette: The Second Son," *Reviews in American History* 11, no. 3 (1983): 409-13. Accessed May 4, 2021, doi:10.2307/2702475.

## Vermont's Political Environment

Progressive activists describe the political environment in Vermont as “unique” and believe that the Progressive Party’s success is linked to a number of these characteristics.

***Small Scale:*** Activists consistently link the “small scale” of Vermont politics to the Party’s success. Jack Hansen pointed this out immediately: “The smallness of Vermont is huge. The fact that the largest city in the state is 40,000 people opens it up.” This scale enables candidates to work hard knocking doors and connect with their communities. Senator Pearson explained: “When you run for the house you have a district of either 4,000 or 8,000 people. You can knock all of those doors and if you work hard enough, you can knock them twice.”

Because of the logistical benefits of the small scale, money is less of an issue. Anthony Pollina stated: “Vermont is a small state which makes campaigning easier in terms of the money you need.” Wronski explained how this works in Burlington: “You can win a City Council election with 400 or 1200 people...Money doesn’t matter as much. Someone can raise \$3-4000 and still run a very effective campaign.” At the state level, Senator Pearson said, “If you spend \$10,000 on a legislative race you would be setting records.”

***The Electorate:*** Mahnke and Jack Hansen both mentioned an influx of progressive-minded individuals to Vermont during the 1960s and 1970s. Erhard stated “a lot of it starts with the back-to-the-land movement in the latter half of the 60s and 70s.” Similarly, Jack stated that the Party was boosted by the “Hippies that moved to Vermont.”

Progressive activists also mention the community-based politics. Shannon Jackson said: “people can really talk with their neighbors and understand the problems that they face.” Similarly, Polyte said: “People were already more inclined to view things through the lens of the



person communicating it rather than through a party.” This unique attribute of the electorate helps voters vote for the person, not the party, and therefore benefits third-party candidates.

***Political Rules and Laws:*** Progressive activists also mention that many Vermont political laws have been beneficial or at least neutral to third-parties. For example, Vermont politics allow for the existence fusion candidates who run with more than one party label. This is also used by the Working Families Party in New York. This is when candidates run in the Democratic primaries, but also organize write-in campaigns for the Progressive nomination. This enables competition between Democrat and Progressive candidates to occur within the Democratic primary rather than the general election, and removes the “spoiler effect.”

Progressive activists see both the positives and negatives in fusion candidates. To Pearson, fusion is not ideal but a necessity because “even a really strong Independent or Progressive probably cannot win in Chittenden county because of the nature of the ballot.” Most Progressive activists agree that the ability to “run fusion” helps Progressives get elected while they push for changes to the electoral system that would open up third party candidacies in the general election without introducing the spoiler problem – like ranked choice voting.

Jack Hansen also pointed out that the political structure in Vermont which allows for candidates from different parties to serve as Lieutenant Governor and Governor allowed former Lt. Governor Zuckerman to serve as the highest-ranking Progressive Party official in the country. Hansen argues this would have been much less likely if Vermont laws required the Governor and Lt. Governor to run on the same ticket. Representative Mulvaney Stanak also pointed to the ease of getting on the ballot: “There is a structural reason [for Progressive Party success] – we have one of the easiest ways to gain ballot access. The threshold is to organize towns and counties. It is not easy but it is way easier than party structure in other states.”

***Vermont Media:*** Finally, Progressive activists point to the structure of local, Vermont media as a relative benefit to the Party. Activists ascribe a portion of Bernie's victory in 1981 to how the media covered the race. Bouriches stated, "[Bernie was] in all the TV and daily newspaper without having to pay. The existence of local news in a city where politics are small scale helped Progressives get a foothold of legitimacy in elections." Burlington media has also helped Progressives gain legitimacy statewide. Wronski stated: "Burlington is the largest city in Vermont. [Progressive victories] became state news and even national [news.]"

### **Progressive Party Strategy**

Progressive activists also point to Party strategy fundamental to their success. Three aspects of Progressive Party strategy rise to the top: starting local, on-the-ground organizing, and talking about issues that resonate. By starting with local elections, the Progressive Party and Progressive candidates gain legitimacy within their communities which they can build out to larger constituencies. Neubiser contrasted the Progressive Party's success in starting locally with third parties, like the Green Party that have tried to start nationally: "The amount of influence we have is outsized because we started at the local level. When you look at the Green Party they don't have a lot of infrastructure. You waste the resources on that one [national] candidate. What happens when he loses? That is not how you organize long term."

Similarly, Progressive activists pointed to the culture of grassroots organizing in the Party. Colburn sees Progressive "organizing continue to resonate with people and out-organize paid canvassers and glossy mailers...there is something about the grassroots model and the way the Party really seeded itself locally in a state where there were already some really ripe

conditions.” Similarly, Jackson noted that when candidates are familiar with their communities, “the Progressive Party’s solutions and organizing tactics really work in that situation.”

Finally, Progressive activists point to how well Progressive issues resonate across party labels. Mahke argued: “When you have the right values that are people-oriented and toward people who feel left out and left behind, that resonates across ideological lines.”

## ***THE FUTURE OF THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY***

### **The Positives of 2020**

For the most part, Progressive activists do not think that the 2020 elections significantly altered the Party’s status in Vermont. While Progressives Lieutenant Governor Zuckerman and Senator Tim Ashe lost at the statewide level, there were new Progressive leaders elected to the Vermont State Legislature. Representative Mulvaney Stanak argued, “In Burlington, we are winning across the city.” Jackson also pointed out that at the state level, the newly elected Progressives “back filled” the positions lost by other Progressives.

Progressives point to the 2020 political conditions as an extreme aberration from the norm. Prine argued that we have to “put aside” Zuckerman’s governor’s race because “it was impossible to beat Phil Scott when he did and continues to do a good job on the pandemic.” Similarly, Representative Mulvaney Stanak commented, “There are a whole lot of reasons why up-ticket they lost. We are living through a pandemic with a psychotic racist, sexist and we have a Republican governor who looks pretty tame. It was a referendum on Scott not killing us during the pandemic.” However, despite this relatively positive reaction to the recent 2020 elections, Progressive activists see a number of looming decisions and potential pitfalls for the Party.

## **A Deepening Rural and Urban Divide?**

Progressives have been strongest in Chittenden county where Burlington is located and where the Progressive Party began. However, the Party has historically made a concerted effort to expand to other areas of the state. Senator Pearson, pointed out, “We recruited and won three rural seats...And it really put Progressives in the map in Montpelier.” Many Progressive activists feel that, in recent years, the Party’s focus has migrated back to Burlington. Polyte stated, “Anthony Pollina’s connections with being a founder of NOFA and work with Bernie gave him credibility with rural Vermonters. I don’t see that as continuing for very much into the future. Those connections are getting weaker and weaker.” As a result, some activists, like Representative Vyhovski believe that, “one of the biggest decisions to be made is if we want to continue to funnel primarily into Burlington or if [we] truly wants to be a statewide party.”

Senator Pearson sees this as an opportunity for the Party: “The Progressives could play a really important role. Rural Vermont and rural U.S. are more impacted by economic issues and that is our bread and butter. If we could build bridges there it could have great impact. It would prove that the left should not ignore rural districts and concerns.” Other Progressives, however, do not feel that a concentration in Burlington is necessarily a bad thing. Representative Colburn pointed out that Chittenden County “tends to be the more left leaning county in the state... [however] If you put your leader from a pretty purple district, you are forcing them to choose between pushing the Party position on platform and doing what is the right thing for their district.” To Colburn, Progressives should be led by someone from who has the freedom to advance unabashedly progressive social issues.

## **What Issues Should The Progressive Party Focus On?**

Some Progressive activists argue that the Party has been and is moving too far to the left and is leaving behind the key economic argument that they believe cemented Bernie's success. In contrast to the traditional economic focus, Prine argued, "issues number 1, 2, and 3 for younger folks is climate, climate, climate." Mahnke is concerned that young Progressives are not considering the basic values of economic justice, instead "there is beginning to be this frame that the radical progressive party is going to lead Burlington back into trouble the way that Bob Kiss did. We spent years rebuilding the progressive brand in Burlington." Prine suggested that Progressives "figure out a way to bridge the gap between the older and younger Progressives" and that "we are not even talking the same language in rural areas." In contrast, Neubiser, who is part of the younger generation, argued:

*"Our motivation and our ideology is a pure one. I do think that we know these issues are the right thing to do in this point in history. These issues are the right solutions and I fundamentally believe that they are going to win the day." – Carter Neubiser*

## **Challenging Democrats or Pulling Them Far Enough Left**

Two of the elected Progressives from the second generation, Zuckerman and Pearson both mentioned the possibility of the Democratic Party absorbing the Progressive Party if the Democratic Party were to fully adopt Progressive values. Zuckerman said, "Progressives are often accused of wanting to take down the Democratic party. I come back with, if the Democratic Party was more progressive we wouldn't need to exist... It may be that the Progressive Party disappears when the electoral body passes progressive issues." Similarly, Pearson argued if the Democratic party focused more on progressive issues, "there would be no need or appetite for the Progressive Party." It is important to note that neither elected official

indicated that they believed that this would happen. Nonetheless, their mentioning it demonstrates that they would consider the merging of the parties.

Other, younger, Progressive activists describe a much more adversarial future for the Progressive and Democratic Parties. Neubiser and Wronski both indicated that their goal would be for Progressives to be the most prominent alternative candidates to Democrats in the state. Neubiser envisions: “In the next 20 years [the Progressive Party] will challenge the Republicans as the second biggest party in the state.” Similarly, Wronski argued, “I can see how we could have 30-40 house seats [in the Vermont legislature] and could really be a player.”

This represents a significant difference between these two groups of activists. This could stem from a generational divide. However, it could also stem from the fact that the two elected officials, Lt. Governor Zuckerman and Senator Pearson run as under both party labels. In contrast, Neubiser ran as a Progressive in Burlington and Wronski has not run for office.

### **Who Will Lead The Party?**

With the 2020 losses for key Progressives: Lieutenant Governor Zuckerman in his campaign for governor, Senator Ashe in his campaign for lieutenant governor, and former party leader Representative Robin Chestnut Tanagerman, some Progressive Party activists feel that there is a leadership vacuum in the Progressive Party. As Polyte bluntly said: “I don’t know who the next Progressive leader is going to be.” Progressive activists want to be deliberate in looking for that leadership but have different focuses. Hitgen argued, “You need people at the top as characters that people can latch on to.” Other activists pointed to the need for diversity. For instance, Colburn pointed out, “There is a real appetite for women leaders, for women of color.” Whereas Abbott wanted to continue the current leadership trend, she wanted the Progressive

Party to find leaders who can identify with rural voters like Lieutenant Governor Zuckerman, who is also a farmer, and Senator Bernie Sanders whose integrity and economic message resonates in rural areas.

### **Celebrating and Pushing for More Diversity**

One segment of Progressive activists wants to celebrate the diversity already achieved by the Party. Another segment is concerned that not enough has been done. Jeremy Hansen celebrated the recent 2020 election of the Progressive Vermont “squad”: “The fact that we have this squad of freshman legislators coming in is significant. The fact that it is a majority LGBTQ is something to celebrate. To show that Progressives walk the talk.” Members of the Squad, however, are not as positive about the amount of diversity in the Progressive Party. Mulvaney Stanak argued the Party needs “to be putting BIPOC people in homes [in the Progressive Party] and not just unseen labor.” Similarly, Colburn stated the Progressive Party should “start to change the face of who the Progressive leadership is in ways that help us be true to our vision that the voices who have not been heard are at the table.” Finally, Vyhovski believes that the Progressive Party “needs to be really thoughtful about welcoming underrepresented voices and minority voices.”

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Is the Progressive Party A Third Party?**

The first and most important question that this research must address is the question: What is a third party? In literature about third parties, they are distinct entities from the two major parties. The reality for the Progressive Party in Vermont is more complicated.

Since Bernie's election in 1981, Progressives have controlled the mayor's office for almost three decades, Democrats controlled it for nine years, and Republicans for two. The makeup of the Burlington City Council similarly points to a Progressive vs. Democrat Party system in the city. It is clear that, at the local level in Burlington, a critical realignment has occurred. The Progressive Party is no longer a third party in Burlington, but has supplanted the Republicans as a major party.

In contrast to Burlington, the Progressive Party is almost inextricably linked to the Democratic party at the state level. While some individuals have been elected to the state legislature as pure Progressives, no current Progressive elected official is. In the Vermont legislature, the Progressive Party's representation relies heavily on fusion candidate laws and the Democratic primary. Were it not for the Progressive Party's prominence in Burlington, an argument could be made that the Progressive Party is not as much an independent third party but a subsidiary of the Democratic Party. This may become even more true if, as some Progressive activists predict, the Vermont Democratic party continues to adopt progressive issues. As we move forward with the study of third parties, it is important to recognize that the lines between parties as third parties emerge may not be as clear cut as scholarly work has typically laid out.

### **Both Typical and Atypical Third Party Success**

Traditionally, third parties have been successful by forcing major parties to adopt their positions. Progressives in Vermont have succeeded in this way around key progressive issues such as: raising the minimum wage, paid family leave, cannabis reform, and marriage equality. These victories demonstrate strong parallels third party successes throughout American history including, "the abolition of child labor, limitation of work hours, establishment of minimum



wages and graduated income taxes, broadening access to public education, expansion of suffrage to previously excluded groups, institution of direct election of U.S. senators, use of public referenda”<sup>121</sup> and more. A key difference between the successes of other third parties and the Vermont Progressive Party is that issue-focused success has been in addition to and likely significantly aided by electoral victories.

### **The Unlikely Path To Success**

***Winner-Take-All Systems:*** Progressive activists believe that winner-take-all plurality elections continue to be a hurdle to the Party’s success. Many mentioned the dangers of being seen as a spoiler. They feel caught: if they run in the Democratic primary they are accused of hijacking the Democratic Party; if they run in the general they are labeled as “spoilers.” Many also speak with concern and regret of the very few times in recent elections when Progressives have “damaged” the party’s reputation by running as a third candidate in a general election that resulted in a Republican victory.<sup>122</sup> Progressive activists feel that political conditions in Vermont help mitigate this spoiler effect and offer alternatives. For instance, they can run fusion and personally connect and build relationships with the voters in their communities outside of party labels. This is also true for the Working Families Party in New York and elsewhere.

***Legitimacy:*** Many activists feel that while Sanders helped the party with that initial boost, the Party has now developed legitimacy of its own. However, Hitgen is an outlier. He believes that Sanders’ success is still inextricably linked to the Party’s success. When Sanders

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<sup>121</sup> Martin, *Empowering Progressive Third Parties in the United States*, 5.

<sup>122</sup> While this does not occur often, in 2016 four Progressive candidates ran in the Democratic primary and, after losing in the primary, used the Progressive nomination to run in the general. In one of these cases, the Republican won by fewer votes than the Progressive received. Media reported that the Progressive “cost the Democrats a seat in the House. (John Walters, “Two Bites of the Apple” *The Vermont Political Observer*, October 27, 2016, <https://thevpo.org/2016/10/27/two-bites-of-the-apple/> and John Walters, “Two-Biters Bites Again” *The Vermont Political Observer*, November 10, 2016, <https://thevpo.org/2016/11/10/two-biter-bites-again/> )

ends his tenure in office, an investigation of the path taken by the Progressive Party could resolve this question.

**Media:** As local media disappears around the country,<sup>123</sup> fewer third parties are able to demonstrate legitimacy through the media, receive earned media, or afford paid media. Progressive activists believe, as scholars have pointed out, that the local news environment in Vermont, and especially Burlington, has helped boost the Progressive Party. Progressives are frequently covered in local news. The Progressive mayoral candidate was substantially covered.<sup>124</sup> Progressives at the statewide level are frequently mentioned in local news.<sup>125</sup> It seems that the local news environment in Burlington has continued to aid the Progressive Party in establishing and maintaining legitimacy.

**Institutional Hurdles:** Progressive activists acknowledge that there were and are fewer institutional hurdles present in Vermont. They point to the relative ease of ballot access and the ability to run as fusion candidates. However, Progressive activists are well aware of the continued institutional hurdles. A clear example is Polyte's concern that, "in two years if the Progressives don't find someone to run on the statewide ticket to get 5% that will be a problem" due to ballot laws. Similarly, many Progressive activists feel that fusion candidacies are an important stepping stone but also stop the party from being fully autonomous at the state level. It is clear that institutional hurdles still for third parties even once they establish legitimacy.

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<sup>123</sup>Clara Hendrickson, "Local journalism in crisis: Why America must revive its local newsroom," *Brookings Institution*, November 12, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/local-journalism-in-crisis-why-america-must-revive-its-local-newsrooms/>.

<sup>124</sup>Courtney Lamdin, "Can Max Tracy Ride the City's Progressive Wave to Become Burlington's Next Mayor?" *Seven Days*, February 3, 2021, <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/can-max-tracy-ride-the-citys-progressive-wave-to-become-burlingtons-next-mayor/Content?oid=32242023>.

<sup>125</sup>For instance, the Progressive agenda was mentioned by Kit Norton in his "Final Reading" stating "The House Progressive Caucus on Tuesday outlined an ambitious set of policy priorities it plans to push this biennium, sending the message that it intends to move the Democratic majority as far left as possible." (Kit Norton, "Final Reading: Progs lay out ambitious agenda," *VT Digger*, February 10, 2021, <https://vtdigger.org/2021/02/10/final-reading-progs-lay-out-an-ambitious-agenda/>).

## Who Are Progressives?

As mentioned in the literature review, there seems to be a relative consensus among scholars that third parties are made up of “agitators,” “idealists,” or even “purists” rather than “administrators” and that this makeup works to the third parties’ detriment. In this analysis of the Progressive Party, it is clear that the younger generation of Progressives fit far more closely into the “agitator” or “activist” category described by Lasswell.<sup>126</sup> For example, statements by Neubiser and Wronski were more combative toward the Democratic Party. In contrast, those in the older generation were much more likely to fall into the “administrator” category.<sup>127</sup> These older Progressives frequently mentioned the need for Progressives to be pragmatic and appeal to working class individuals. However, Sanders’ success is seen as being a combination of these two characteristics: “[Bernie’s] socialist ideology was still attractive to the true believers who did the nitty-gritty work, but the administration’s policies were often pure pragmatism.”<sup>128</sup>

In 2020 the Progressive Party held a primary for the mayor’s race between two prominent Progressives: City Council President Max Tracy, the ultimate winner, and City Councilor Brian Pine. The narrative in the primary described the contest as an “‘Ideologue’ vs. ‘bridge builder.’”<sup>129</sup> In addition, following Tracy’s primary victory, former Progressive Mayor, Peter

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<sup>126</sup>Lasswell states: “the agitator... is enough agitated about public policy to communicate his excitement to those around him. He idealizes the magnitude of the desirable social changes which are capable of being produced by a specific line social action... The agitator easily infers that he who disagrees with him is in communion with the devil, and that opponents show bad faith or timidity... The agitator is willing to subordinate personal considerations to the superior claims of principle.” (Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics*, 78).

<sup>127</sup> Lasswell states: “administrators are distinguished by the value which they place upon the co-ordination of effort in continuing activity.” (Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics*, 263).

<sup>128</sup> Guma, *The People’s Republic*, 92.

<sup>129</sup> Grace Elletson, “‘Ideologue’ vs. ‘bridge builder’: What kind of Progressives are Pine and Tracy?” *VT Digger*, November 25, 2020, <https://vtdigger.org/2020/11/25/ideologue-vs-bridge-builder-what-kind-of-progressives-are-pine-and-tracy/>.

Clavelle, endorsed the incumbent Democrat, rather than the Progressive.<sup>130</sup> This may indicate an “agitator” versus “administrator” split within the Burlington Progressive Party.

If, as scholars suggest, the success of a third party is linked to pragmatism and a willingness to compromise on issue purity, the Vermont Progressive Party is a perfect point of analysis. Currently, Progressive activists describe a decision point about the focus of the Party: with older generations wanting to pull Progressive focus back to rural communities, economic issues, and pragmatism, and younger generations wanting a greater focus on climate and social justice issues. Future research may be able to look at a correlation between pragmatism and success for the Progressive Party as it evolves from this decision point. For the moment, however, the near-victory for the “ideologue” Burlington mayoral candidate, Max Tracy,<sup>131</sup> the emergence and success of young Progressive activists on the Burlington City council and activists like Progressive Representative Taylor Small, the first openly transgender member of the Vermont Legislature, demonstrate that individuals in the Progressive Party that Lasswell would likely deem “agitators” are able to succeed electorally.

## CONCLUSION

The Vermont Progressive Party has done something that no modern third party has been able to do: maintain four decades of success as a third party. Research on how the Party has achieved this success, the individuals that it has drawn to the party, and where the Progressive Party’s path will lead into the future allows us to learn more about the potential for other third parties across the country. The Progressive Party’s experience tells us where our current theories

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<sup>130</sup> Pat Bradley, “Clavelle Endorses Weinberger,” *WAMC Northeast Public Radio*, January 14, 2021, <https://www.wamc.org/post/clavelle-endorses-weinberger>.

<sup>131</sup> Grace Elletson, “Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger narrowly wins fourth term,” *VT Digger*, March 2, 2021, <https://vtdigger.org/2021/03/02/burlington-mayor-miro-weinberger-narrowly-wins-fourth-term/>.

are correct, where they fail to fully address the reality for the Vermont Progressive Party, and how other third parties across the country could potentially replicate this success.

The experience of the Vermont Progressive Party confirms a number of scholarly theories around third parties: specifically, both the hurdles and optimal environmental conditions for third party development and success. Strong local media, proof of concept and legitimacy sparked by Bernie's election, low ballot requirements, small populations, and the availability of fusion candidacies have helped Vermont Progressives.

Scholarly work, however, usually treats third parties as either outside of the two-party system with little or no chance of substantial electoral success, or as part of a realignment where the third party will ultimately supplant or be taken over by one of the major parties. This research and the experience of the Vermont Progressive Party demonstrates that there is a lack of scholarly theories about a third option: limited but substantial sustained success. The Vermont Progressive party has achieved a realignment in Burlington, but has remained a consistent third party option at the state level.

Scholarly work has also largely categorized third parties as replete with ideologues and purists, pointing to this as one of the reasons for lack of electoral success. The interviews with Progressive activists demonstrate that there is a range of individuals attracted to the Vermont Progressive Party from pragmatists to idealists and that candidates from both sides of the party have been able to be successful. Therefore, in other states and nationally, ideological passion is not necessarily a damning attribute for members of third party. However, mimicking the Vermont Progressive Party's combination of pragmatists and idealists could be a boon.

For members of third parties across the country, the Vermont Progressive Party also presents some guidance for a potential path towards and political environment that would allow

third parties to overcome barriers, gain electoral success, and maintain that success. For instance, institutional barriers should continue to be fought, local media should be supported, and fusion candidacies can be used as a stepping stone. Finally, the Vermont Progressive Party demonstrates that combining pragmatism with idealism could develop long-lasting third party legitimacy across the country.

# CHAPTER 3: THE SUCCESSES, FAILURES, AND FUTURE OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY AND TOWN MEETINGS IN VERMONT

## INTRODUCTION

Every year, on the first Tuesday in March, Vermonters come together in their local municipalities for town meeting day, an opportunity to vote on all kinds of local- and state-wide issues. Whether it is a presidential election year, like 2020, or not, Vermont votes on local issues like the school budget, whether the town will buy a new ambulance, or which local officials will represent them in the year to come. Vermont's version of the town meeting is distinct from other states, including those in other parts of New England that employ similar structures like representational town meetings. In many rural towns across the state, Vermonters physically come together at town meetings to debate, discuss, and vote on these issues.

Direct democracy in the form of town meetings is generally considered one of the purest forms of democracy. In 1838, Alexis De Tocqueville described that in New England town meetings, "the principle of popular sovereignty is not, as in certain nations, hidden or sterile; it is recognized by mores, proclaimed by laws. It expands with freedom's expansion and meets no obstacle on the way to its ultimate ends."<sup>132</sup> Modern New Englanders, Vermonters included, are still proud of this direct democracy.

The town meeting has been a mainstay in the area's politics before Vermont was a state. The Secretary of State's "A Citizen's Guide to Vermont Town Meeting" proudly describes that:

*"Vermont town meeting is a tradition dating back to before there was a Vermont. The first town meeting was held in Bennington in 1762, 15 years before Vermont was created."*

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<sup>132</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, 62.

*In the late 1700s, as today, town citizens in Vermont held meetings so that they could address the problems and issues they faced collectively. Popular matters of legislation in earlier town meetings included whether or not to let pigs run free or whether smallpox vaccinations should be allowed in the town (some thought vaccinations were dangerous). Voters also decided what goods or labor could be used as payment for taxes... Town meeting also served a social function (as it does today), bringing people together who might not otherwise know each other. This can strengthen social ties within a town and help people work together to tackle community problems.”<sup>133</sup>*

However, the history of Vermont town meetings has not been as straightforward as the Office of the Vermont Secretary of State suggests. While many rural towns maintain town meeting day in its original form, many others have transitioned towards hybrid systems that combine a town meeting or a town meeting-like informational meeting with government-organized ballot voting (also called the Australian ballot), while other towns and the few cities in Vermont solely use Australian ballots. One town, Brattleboro, uses representative democracy in its town meetings.<sup>134</sup> Other New England states have experienced similar changes, updates, and migrations away from the traditional in-person town meeting. Like Brattleboro, many towns in Massachusetts are now using a representative town meeting: In his book, *Local Government in Rural America*, published in 1957, Clyde Snider described that, “several of the more populous towns of Massachusetts and occasional towns in other states have found it expedient to abandon the town meeting in its traditional form in favor of the representative or limited meeting.”<sup>135</sup>

The future of town meetings in Vermont and across New England is being questioned. As attendance falls and some towns grow, many are questioning whether town meetings—and direct democracy—have a future in America and Vermont. One book on the Vermont town meetings argued that, “This generation of Vermonters will choose whether to keep or to lose town

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<sup>133</sup> Office of the Vermont Secretary of State, “A Citizen’s Guide to Vermont Town Meeting.”

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Clyde Snider, *Local Government in Rural America* (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1957), 205.



meeting. Will the democratic inheritance of our brave little state be passed on to the next generation intact? The decision is in our hands.”<sup>136</sup>

This chapter specifically investigates town meetings in Vermont through the eyes of town clerks. These clerks are some of the individuals most intimately connected with town meetings. In 1930, John Fairfield described town clerks in his book, *Town Government in Massachusetts 1620-1930*: “Every town has a clerk. In many respects he is the most important local official—if not in dignity, at least in general service.”<sup>137</sup> This is still true today in Vermont where clerks post the town meeting warning,<sup>138</sup> attend, and keep record of each town meeting throughout the state. They are intimately acquainted with the benefits as well as with the struggles and weaknesses of this form of democracy. This research seeks to investigate whether the current system still reflects the various aspects of town meetings though the centuries that scholars have both praised and criticized, what the future of town meetings in Vermont might hold, and, were they to disappear, what Vermonters could lose.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly writing about town meetings in New England is extremely broad in historical scope, but also shallow in terms of more recent investigations into the various elements of town meetings. This is especially true for town meetings specifically in Vermont. Town meetings and

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<sup>136</sup> Susan Clark and Frank Bryan, *All Those In Favor: Rediscovering the Secrets of Town Meeting and Community* (Burlington: RavenMark Inc., 2005), 84.

<sup>137</sup> John Fairfield, *Town Government in Massachusetts (1620 –1930)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 157.

<sup>138</sup> A town meeting warning is the official name for the notice that, by law, must be posted and published within the town to let town residents know about the upcoming town meeting and the measures upon which the town residents will be voting. (Vermont League of Cities & Towns, “Town Meeting Help, 2019,” Last modified 2019, <https://www.vlct.org/town-meeting-2019-help>.)

the notion of direct democracy have been mentioned in a number of sources throughout the history of this country, but few modern scholars have done extensive research on the subject.

A broad amount of scholarly work on town meetings describes the function of town meetings in great detail but comes to few conclusions about the benefits, negatives, or even the future of town meetings. These descriptions generally start with how the warning is posted for the meeting, the roles of town clerks and moderators, and even what issues are generally discussed in town meetings. The best example of this sort of literature specifically related to Vermont is the Secretary of State's "Citizen's Guide to Vermont Town Meeting."<sup>139</sup> Similarly, Nuquist's *Town Government in Vermont* explains the nuances and structure of town meetings in Vermont<sup>140</sup> and *All Those in Favor* explains the Vermont town meeting in logistical depth even including guidance for town moderators in addition to advice about, "ten things you can do over time to improve your town meeting"<sup>141</sup> Other work looks specifically looks at other states like Massachusetts: *Town Government in Massachusetts (1620-1930)* describes the development of the structure of town meetings in Massachusetts from the 1600s through to 1930.<sup>142</sup> Additional scholarly works describe town meetings across all New England states. *The New England Town Meeting: Democracy in Action* is the best example of this broad-scope logistical outline of town meetings.<sup>143</sup> It specifically includes the intricate logistics differences between town meetings in each of the New England states.<sup>144</sup> While the more modern works like *All Those in Favor* and "Citizen's Guide to Vermont Town meeting" give a relatively good picture of the current state of

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<sup>139</sup> Office of the Vermont Secretary of State, "A Citizen's Guide to Vermont Town Meeting."

<sup>140</sup> Andrew Nuquist, *Town Government in Vermont* (Essex Junction: Essex Publishing Company, Inc., 1964).

<sup>141</sup> Clark and Bryan, *All Those In Favor*, 65 and 73.

<sup>142</sup> Fairfield, *Town Government in Massachusetts (1620–1930)*.

<sup>143</sup> Joseph Zimmerman, *The New England Town Meeting: Democracy in Action* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999).

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

town meeting logistics in Vermont, much of this work is dated with information that does not still apply to town meetings in the areas that it describes.

Scholarly work is not limited to purely descriptive work, however. It also extends to scholarly work that comes to conclusions about town meeting days including work that is largely theory-focused. This theory-focused scholarly work largely falls into three categories: the notion of direct democracy as the “purest” form of democracy, the pride in participation that comes with being a part of this type of government, and the educational value of discussing issues in an open setting with peers. Many historical scholars were the first to use these theories when discussing town meetings, however, are not the only ones who use these arguments and theories today. Despite centuries between these historical scholars and today’s academic research, these themes continue to emerge in modern works praising the direct democracy of a town meeting.

Some historical scholars, like Thomas Jefferson in 1782, describe direct democracy in town meetings as a “purer” entity that will best reflect the will and serve the needs of the people it represents: “Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves therefore are its only safe depositories.”<sup>145</sup> In fact, Jefferson laments that the American governmental system is less perfect than he believes the American people deserve: “the people [of America] have less regular control over their agents, than their rights and their interests required.”<sup>146</sup> Similarly, much of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s writings on town meetings fits into this same category. Emerson describes the town meeting with language that approximates adoration for facilitating the direct connection between government and the governed: “in this open democracy, every opinion had an utterance, every objection, every fact, every acre of land,

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<sup>145</sup> Paul Ford, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 4 (New York: G.P Putnam’s Sons, 1894), 64.

<sup>146</sup> Saul Padover, ed. *Democracy by Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1939), 63.

every bushel of rye, its entire weight.”<sup>147</sup> Like both Emerson and Jefferson, Alexis De Tocqueville is highly impressed with the direct connection between the people and their government. De Tocqueville recognizes that there are some defects to the system, but he praises it for the strong connection between the people and the decisions being made in government: “Though the government is not without its defects, indeed, it is easy to point them out, they do not strike the eye, because the government really does emanate from the governed, and as long as it continues to struggle its way forward, it will be protected by a sort of paternal pride.”<sup>148</sup>

Modern scholarly work also points to direct democracy in town meetings as an ideal form of government. In their book, *All Those In Favor*, Susan Clark and Frank Bryan reiterate the same argument that Jefferson used two centuries prior, that:

*“In town meeting governments, no elected representatives intervene between the citizen and what the government says or how it acts... In a Vermont town every citizen is a legislator. In a Vermont town the government truly is by and of the people... They are legislatures operated by ordinary citizens who don’t leave their lawmaking to someone else.”*<sup>149</sup>

Similarly, more modern scholars argue that, “the moral basis for [deliberative democracy] is common to many concepts of democracy. Persons should be treated not merely as objects of legislation as passive subjects to be ruled, but as autonomous agents who take part in the governance of their own society, directly or through their representatives.”<sup>150</sup> Thus, even centuries later, scholars continue to point to deliberative democracy and town meetings as one of the purest and best forms of democracy. In fact, Clark and Bryan take this argument one step

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<sup>147</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Seattle: Pacific Publishing Studio, 2018), 125.

<sup>148</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, 76-77.

<sup>149</sup> Clark and Bryan, *All Those In Favor*, 15.

<sup>150</sup> Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3.

farther, arguing that, “Vermonters still practice (and practice most thoroughly) the planet’s single best example of the single best way to live in peace [- the town meeting.]”<sup>151</sup>

The connection between the participants and the government is also a frequent argument put forth by scholars for the benefits of town meetings and direct democracy. The argument states that because citizens are able to participate, debate, and discuss issues that directly affect their government and their lives, they feel more strongly connected to the government and its decisions than they would otherwise. In Donald Robinson’s book *Town Meeting: Practicing Democracy in Rural New England*, Robinson describes that, “this book is about the practice of democracy. It focuses on Ashfield, Massachusetts, a rural town of about two thousand inhabitants in the foothills of the Berkshires, in western New England.”<sup>152</sup> While Robinson acknowledges that some of the decisions made by the town are not perfect, he argues that this form of direct democracy is eminently laudable for his community.<sup>153</sup>

De Tocqueville specifically described this aspect of the town meeting in regards to New Englanders: “The New Englander is attached to his town because it is strong and independent; he takes an interest in it because he helps direct its affairs, he loves it because it gives him no reason to complain about his lot in life.”<sup>154</sup> Similarly, Emerson describes that, “general contentment is the result [of town meetings.] And the people truly feel that they are lords of the soil. In every winding road, in every stone fence, in the smokes of the poor-house chimney, in the clock on the church, they read their own power, and consider, at leisure, the wisdom and error of their judgement.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Clark and Bryan, *All Those In Favor*, 13.

<sup>152</sup> Donald Robinson, *Town Meeting: Practicing Democracy in Rural New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, 77.

<sup>155</sup> Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 126.

Some modern scholars also point to this consensus building as a benefit of town meetings and deliberative democracy. Rebecca Townsend's article, "Town Meeting as a Communication Event: Democracy's Act Sequence, Research on Language and Social Interaction" specifically investigates the ways in which norms and rules dictate how democracy functions within Amherst's town hall and how that can benefit the community as a whole.<sup>156</sup> In addition, Susan Clark and Frank Bryan praise this aspect of town meetings: they argue that town meetings increase community and comradeship because, "face to face participation teaches forbearance and tolerance. It teaches respect for others' views. It teaches citizenship"<sup>157</sup> and in addition to this comradeship, residents respect the town meeting decisions more because of the process: "[b]y allowing citizens actually to fashion the laws themselves, it creates a sense of "ownership" of the town's business not present when decisions are made by others."<sup>158</sup> Similarly, Archon Fung, in his book *Empowering Democracy*, argues, "even when some participants disagree with group deliberations, they may be more easily reconciled to the outcomes because others have justified the bases of their positions in good faith."<sup>159</sup> Thus, for centuries, scholars have argued that the process of deliberative democracy facilitates acceptance and buy-in to the ultimate outcome.

The final most prominent argument for the benefits of town meetings is the educational benefit. Many of the historical scholars also point to the process of deliberative democracy as an educational process. They argue that the people who attend and engage in town meetings have the opportunity to discuss, debate, and change minds. Jefferson and De Tocqueville both speak

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<sup>156</sup> Rebecca Townsend, "Town Meeting as a Communication Event: Democracy's Act Sequence," *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, Volume 42:1 (2009).

<sup>157</sup> Clark and Bryan, *All Those In Favor*, 38.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Archon Fung, *Empowering Participation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 17.

to this in their descriptions of town meetings.<sup>160</sup> In addition, a political observer in the 1890s, Lord James Bryce, described that, “the primary assembly is admittedly the best. It is the cheapest and most efficient; it is the most educative of the citizens who bear a part in it. The Town Meeting has been not only the source but the school of democracy.”<sup>161</sup> Clark and Bryan argue that, “[t]own meetings allow citizens to hear ‘both sides of the story.’ It builds an appreciation for the complications often involved in the simplest policies”<sup>162</sup> In his book, Archon also points to the fact that, “citizens themselves may become wiser and more understanding and accepting of different views and preferences after encountering them in discourse”<sup>163</sup> Thus, these scholars – both historic and more modern – point to the educational benefits of direct democracy in the form of town meetings.

While each of the characteristics listed above is valid and, obviously, long lasting arguments, they are also largely theoretical and observational rather than the result of methodological research. These scholars speak about the “ability” of everyone to participate in generalities. They rarely acknowledge that participation is not universal or address other criticisms of town meetings.

Less favorable descriptions have emerged in scholarly work that focuses on specific tangibles and measurables in town meetings. Many scholars have described and investigated town meetings’ low attendance rates, the ability for factions to emerge, and the creation of a setting where some might feel more empowered than others to participate.

The most pervasive concern raised by scholars about town meetings is low attendance. Even those who think very highly of town meetings acknowledge that this is an issue. In their

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<sup>160</sup> See: Padover ed., *Democracy by Thomas Jefferson*; and Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*.

<sup>161</sup> James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1891), 591.

<sup>162</sup> Clark and Bryan, *All Those In Favor*, 38.

<sup>163</sup> Fung, *Empowering Participation*, 17.

book, whose goal is to make a strong case for the benefits of town meetings, Clark and Bryan acknowledge that, “while it is doubtful that there was ever a ‘golden era’ of town meeting when nearly everyone turned out every year, attendance was much higher in the early days than today. Even well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was much higher than it is now.”<sup>164</sup> In his book *Town Government in Vermont*, Andrew Nuquist speaks about how these low attendance rates call the future of town meetings into question: “It is the widespread nature of this abstinence from town affairs that causes many of the fears about the future of the town system of government.”<sup>165</sup> Similarly, in his book *The New England Town Meeting: Democracy in Action*, Joseph Zimmerman explains the results of low attendance, in that, “the relatively small percentage of registered voters who attend town meetings, with the exceptions of towns with very small populations, raises the question whether the participants are representative of the electorate at large.”<sup>166</sup> Victor DeSantis and David Hill use a survey of Massachusetts registered voters to test theories of political participation in town meetings in their article “Citizen Participation in Local Politics: Evidence from New England Town Meetings” and ultimately confirm low attendance rates.<sup>167</sup> Thus, these scholars describe and argue that while everyone has the “ability” to attend, universal attendance is far from the reality of town meetings and this can distort what would have or could have otherwise been a democratic outcome.

A result of low attendance also leads to the capacity for certain self-selected factions or specific individuals to emerge and control the outcome of town meetings. Case studies and recent data have demonstrated this to be the case: Jenkins, Roscoe, and Borges’ article “Voters in

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<sup>164</sup> Clark and Bryan, *All Those In Favor*, 27.

<sup>165</sup> Nuquist, *Town Government in Vermont*, 19.

<sup>166</sup> Zimmerman, *The New England Town Meeting*, 10.

<sup>167</sup> Victor DeSantis and David Hill, “Citizen Participation in Local Politics: Evidence from New England Town Meetings,” *State & Local Government Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004): 166-173.



Representative Town Meetings” analyses the town meeting in Dartmouth, Massachusetts and its representativeness as compared to the larger population and find it to be less than perfect with more educated and elderly groups over-represented.<sup>168</sup> James Madison was one of the first to criticize town meetings for this. In *Federalist Number 58*, he argues that in direct democracies like town meetings, “a single orator, or an artful statesman, was generally seen to rule with as complete a sway as if a scepter had been placed in his single hand.”<sup>169</sup>

Almost two decades later, in the 1980s, Jane Mansbridge visited a small town in Vermont to put together a case study for how this specific town conducted its town meeting and how the townspeople participated and felt about this form of government. She found that, “[t]he poorer, less-educated townspeople not only participate less than the rich but also are significantly less likely to feel that they have any say in the town.”<sup>170</sup> Mansbridge argues that the elite dominance at the town meeting disrupts the idea of a town meeting as a pure or perfect form of democracy: “The idea that participation created entitlement ignores the problem of representation. When interests differ, the underlying principles of adversary democracy require that the interest of the citizens be represented in proportion to their number”<sup>171</sup>

In his book, *Government in Rural America*, Lancaster Lane describes that in some town meetings, “Factions multiply, minority groups become insistent, and meetings come to be tumultuous, unrepresentative and the sport of wire-pullers”<sup>172</sup> In his book written in the 1950s, *Local Government in Rural America*, Clyde Snider blames specific groups for this factionalism:

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<sup>168</sup> Shannon Jenkins, Douglas Roscoe, and David Borges, “Voters in Representative Town Meetings,” *New England Journal of Political Science*, 9, no. 2, (September 2016): 134-163, [https://c62a1cd8-e60b-4682-b2c5-a937642d5637.filesusr.com/ugd/7d6421\\_32bc900557c046f88fc938aa571fdc79.pdf](https://c62a1cd8-e60b-4682-b2c5-a937642d5637.filesusr.com/ugd/7d6421_32bc900557c046f88fc938aa571fdc79.pdf)

<sup>169</sup> James Madison, “Federalist 58,” *Congress.gov Resources*, 1788.

<https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers#TheFederalistPapers-58>

<sup>170</sup> Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1980), 109.

<sup>171</sup> Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, 118.

<sup>172</sup> Lane Lancaster, *Government in Rural America* (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1952), 42.

“European immigration...has introduced population elements unaccustomed to democratic institution and especially in industrial communities, has fostered factionalism.”<sup>173</sup> A more modern scholarly article found that specifically in Dartmouth, an elite and informed faction emerged: “the less engaged and informed fall off as elections provide less and less information, leaving the remaining group smaller but fairly engaged and informed.”<sup>174</sup> However, these scholars also argued that this may not necessarily be a bad thing because bringing “in more voters to make the electorate broader is likely to bring in people with less information and engagement, which may potentially undermine representation of the public’s preferences even more,”<sup>175</sup> they do acknowledge, however, that this does “not approach the democratic ideal.”<sup>176</sup>

Thus, for as long as people have been praising town meetings because they allow everyone the “ability” to participate, critics have also pointed to some of the negative effects of the folks and factions who do participate.

Some scholars also question whether the study of town meetings as a “pure” or the “purest” form of democracy is accurate because it is not scalable to larger groups of individuals. While town meetings can work well in New England, the specific town meeting form of government only works well in small autonomous towns. Even Jefferson questions the capacity for the New England town meeting to be expanded beyond the townships in which it was formed: “Such a government is evidently restrained to very narrow limits of space and population. I doubt if it would be practicable beyond the extent of a New England township.”<sup>177</sup> Similarly, although Nuquist is not favorable towards the Australian ballot, stating that, “it

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<sup>173</sup> Clyde Snider, *Local Government in Rural America* (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1957), 199.

<sup>174</sup> Shannon Jenkins, Douglas Roscoe, and David Borges, “Voters in Representative Town Meetings,” *New England Journal of Political Science*, 9, no. 2, (September 2016): 134-163, [https://c62a1cd8-e60b-4682-b2c5-a937642d5637.filesusr.com/ugd/7d6421\\_32bc900557c046f88fc938aa571fdc79.pdf](https://c62a1cd8-e60b-4682-b2c5-a937642d5637.filesusr.com/ugd/7d6421_32bc900557c046f88fc938aa571fdc79.pdf).

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Padover ed., *Democracy by Thomas Jefferson*, 61.

destroys the chief characteristic of the gathering,”<sup>178</sup> and that it “has resulted in less competent voting,”<sup>179</sup> he does acknowledge that, “the old town meeting is not possible where towns have hundreds or even thousands of voters. There is no structure in many of these towns to accommodate all who might wish to come and the Australian ballot must be used.”<sup>180</sup>

In addition, scholars have found that the less autonomy a town government has in a more complex governmental structure, the less interest townspeople have in the town meeting. In *Government in Rural America*, Lancaster describes that, “After a certain point has been passed in population growth and density—say 5,000 persons in the relatively limited area of an average town – questions of administration come to grow more difficult and such questions do not lend themselves to solution by general discussion.”<sup>181</sup> In, *Citizen Participation in Local Politics: Evidence from New England Town Meetings*, Victor DeSantis and David Hill argue that rather than the simplicity of a town meeting, “more complex government structures that incorporate the notion of division of labor are necessary for modern democracy.”<sup>182</sup> Mansbridge also explains that, “Since the eighteenth century, and at a more accelerated pace since reapportionment of the state legislature in 1965, Vermont towns have lost to the state government many of their traditional power over roads, schools, police welfare and zoning.”<sup>183</sup> Ultimately, these critics argue that once a certain threshold has been reached, town meetings and other forms of direct democracy are not feasible.

The research in this chapter follows the path of much of the scholarly research done on town meetings by investigating each of the aspects of town meetings described above—both by

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<sup>178</sup> Nuquist. *Town Government in Vermont*, 161.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Nuquist. *Town Government in Vermont*, 162.

<sup>181</sup> Lancaster, *Government in Rural America*, 42.

<sup>182</sup> DeSantis and Hill, “Citizen Participation in Local Politics.”

<sup>183</sup> Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, 43.

analyzing responses in terms of the more theoretical approaches like connection to the government as well as the more tangible characteristics like participation rates.

## METHODOLOGY

After developing the goals of this research, a questionnaire was written to answer the key research questions. Meetings were then set up with two Vermont clerks to ensure that the questionnaire would fulfill its goal. Barre City Clerk, Carol Dawes, and Montpelier City Clerk John Odum were both interviewed. Each suggested some adjustments to the survey which were implemented. The clerks of Burlington and Essex Junction were also contacted but were not interviewed due to the Burlington clerks' recent retirement and calendar conflicts.

A list of all Vermont clerks, their town, and contact information was procured from the Vermont Secretary of State's website.<sup>184</sup> The emails from this list were used to disseminate the survey to all Vermont town clerks. The survey was sent to each of Vermont's 248 clerks prior to the workday on January 7, 2020. The first email read:

[NAME],

*I hope you are doing well and had a wonderful holiday season.*

*My name is Colleen Jackson. I am currently getting my Master's Degree in Government from Johns Hopkins University. My Master's thesis is specifically about what makes Vermont – my home state – unique and different politically.*

***I am reaching out to ask if you would be willing to take a survey about town meeting day.***

*Please click on this link to take the survey: <https://forms.gle/BXeVCEXyPASWkC8G9>*

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<sup>184</sup> Office of the Vermont Secretary of State. "Guide to Vermont's Town Clerks, Treasurers & County Clerks," last modified, March 22, 2021, <https://sos.vermont.gov/media/8d88cbe434ced0e/2020townclerkguide.pdf>.

*Few people in political academia write about Vermont politics these days, but I believe that we have so much to offer and to teach them about a modern form of American democracy that has been a part of American politics for centuries.*

*I am so excited and curious to hear what you have to think about town meeting day.*

*My plan is to share the results in the aggregate with all town clerks once I have compiled all the findings. This way, you can all see the results but they will not be linked to any specific individual in the report.*

*Thank you for your willingness to participate and please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions about this survey. My email is [cjack109@jhu.edu](mailto:cjack109@jhu.edu) and my phone number is (802) 735 4884. Alternatively, my advisor, Dr. Dorothea Wolfson can be contacted at [dorotheawolfson@jhu.edu](mailto:dorotheawolfson@jhu.edu).*

*Sincerely,  
Colleen Jackson*

Fifty-five Vermont town clerks responded to the survey following this initial email. Three days later, on January 10, a reminder email was sent to the clerks who had not yet responded. The reminder email included the same information as the original email with an added first paragraph:

*“So far, 55 town clerks in Vermont have participated in this survey about town meeting day, **would you be able to join them?**”*

Following this reminder email, one hundred and six clerks in total had responded to the survey. On January 16, a final reminder was sent to the clerks who had not yet responded. Once again, the same information was included in the email but initial paragraph as adjusted to read:

*“The outpouring of support from the clerks of Vermont for this survey has been incredible! As of this morning, **106 clerks** around Vermont have participated in this survey about town meeting day, **would you be able to join them?**”*

The survey was ultimately completed by 127 town clerks in Vermont representing 52% of Vermont's townships. The full survey topline can be found in **Appendix E**. The vast majority of these surveys were completed online while two clerks asked and were provided with the questions in a follow up email upon request. Unbeknownst to this researcher at the time, Clerk Carol Dawes, who was interviewed by this researcher about the questionnaire and who also serves in the Vermont Municipal Clerks & Treasurers Association, communicated about the legitimacy of research through the Vermont clerks list serve and encouraged the other Vermont clerks to complete the survey after it was first sent out. This likely resulted in the higher-than-expected response rate for the survey.

The results from the survey were then compiled and communicated to four clerks from a range of towns throughout the state with whom this researcher conducted in-depth interviews to ascertain more qualitative information about the findings and these clerks' reactions to the survey results in addition to a couple additional questions about the future of town meeting in light of the new rules and regulations put into place during the coronavirus pandemic (which began after the administration of the clerks survey.) Finally, the PowerPoint was sent to all Vermont town clerks with a note that comments and questions were encouraged to facilitate this researcher's understanding of the results and answers.

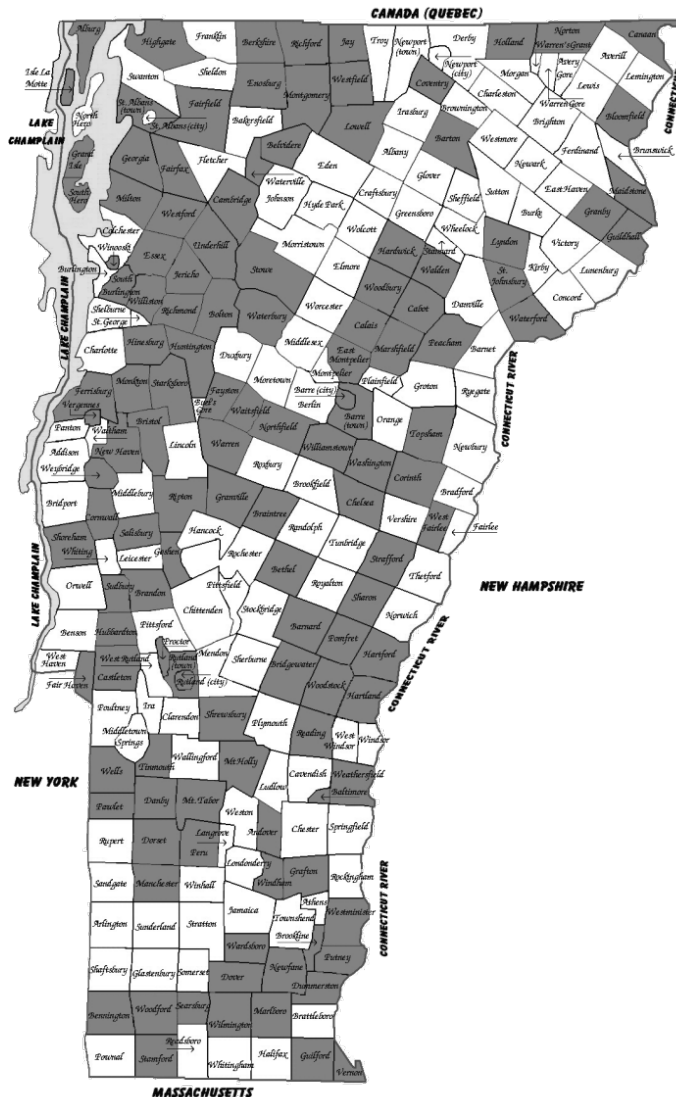
## **RESULTS**

One hundred and twenty-seven of Vermont town clerks responded to this survey. Together, they represent 52% of towns in Vermont and 57% of all Vermonters. The towns from which this researcher received a survey were:

Alburgh, Andover, Barnard, Barre City, Barre Town, Barton, Belvidere, Bennington, Berkshire, Bethel, Bolton, Braintree, Brandon, Bridgewater, Bristol, Brookline, Cabot, Calais, Cambridge, Canaan, Castleton, Chelsea, Corinth, Cornwall, Coventry, Danby, Dover, Dummerston, East Dorset, East Montpelier, Enosburg, Essex, Fair Haven, Fairfax, Fairfield, Fayston, Ferrisburgh, Georgia, Goshen, Grafton, Granby, Grand Isle, Granville, Guildhall, Guilford, Hardwick, Hartford, Hartland, Highgate, Hinesburg, Holland, Hubbardton, Huntington, Ira, Isle La Motte, Jay, Jericho, Lowell, Lyndon, Maidstone, Manchester, Marlboro, Marshfield, Milton, Monkton, Montgomery, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, New Haven, Newfane, Northfield, Norton, Pawlet, Peacham, Peru, Pomfret, Proctor, Putney, Reading, Richford, Richmond, Ripton, Rutland City, Rutland Town, S Burlington, Salisbury, Searsburg, Sharon, Shoreham, Shrewsbury, South Hero, St Johnsbury, St. Albans Town, Stamford, Starksboro, Stowe, Strafford, Sudbury, Tinmouth, Topsham, Underhill, Vergennes, Vernon, Waitsfield, Walden, Wardsboro, Warren, Washington, Waterbury, Waterford, Waterville, Weathersfield, Wells, West Fairlee, Westfield, Westford, Westminster, Weybridge, Williamstown, Williston, Wilmington, Windham, Windsor, Winooski, Woodbury, Woodford, and Woodstock.

The map in **Figure 1**, seen on the next page, highlights the towns from which each of the completed surveys originated and demonstrates that results originated from areas across the state in both rural (northern, eastern, and southern areas of Vermont) and urban areas (towns near Burlington and Rutland.)

**Figure 10: Map of Survey Responses by Town**



Not all town meetings in Vermont are the same. Specifically, town meetings in Vermont can vary significantly by voting system. The town clerks who responded to the survey represented a variety of these town meeting systems. Twenty percent of clerks who responded represented towns that solely held open town meetings where the only form of voting on the town meeting day warning agenda items is in-person. Sixty-one percent of clerks represented towns with hybrid voting systems that combined in person town meetings with Australian ballot voting. Finally, twenty percent of clerks represented towns with solely Australian ballot voting.



The clerk from Brattleboro, the only town meeting in Vermont that uses a representative voting system, did not respond to the survey. These numbers track well with the Vermont Secretary of State data that records that 20% of towns use only Australian ballots, 19% do not use Australian ballots at all, and 61% use a combination.<sup>185</sup> This also tracks well with the number of Vermonters who live vote in each system in Vermont. Just over half of Vermonters live in towns with hybrid systems, over a third live in towns with Australian ballots, and just over one in ten live in towns with open town meetings only.<sup>186</sup>

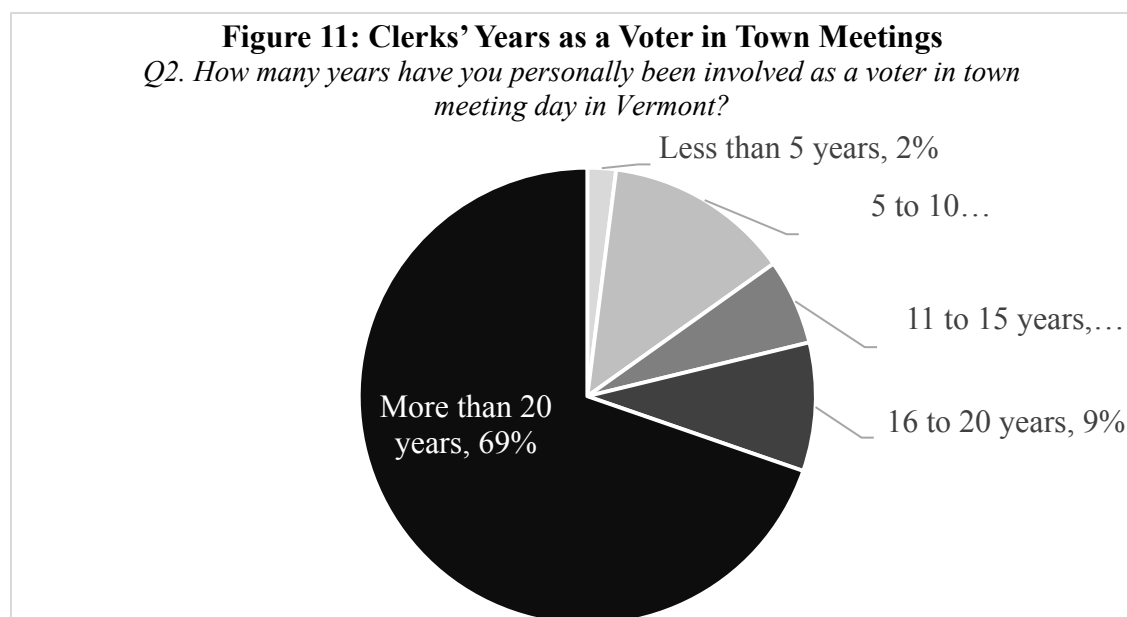
### **Town Clerks and The Town Meeting Experience**

Town clerks have been involved in town meetings for substantial time. **Figure 11** shows the breakdown of how many years clerks have been involved as a voter in town meeting day. Sixty-nine percent of the clerks who responded to this survey have been involved as a voter in town meeting day for more than two decades. Only two percent have been involved for less than 5 years. This corroborated the assumption made by this researcher that these clerks are a repository of knowledge about town meetings in their towns. Their time in office varies slightly by the type of voting system employed in the town on town meeting day. Australian ballot and hybrid system clerks have higher percentages of clerks (72% and 71% respectively) who have been involved as a voter in town meeting day for more than 20 years than clerks from towns with open town meetings (60%).

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<sup>185</sup> Vermont Secretary of State, “How Does Your Town Vote?” accessed December 10, 2019, <http://storymaps.stone-env.net/howdoesyourtownvote/>.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, and United States Census, “City and Town Population Totals: 2010-2019,” accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-total-cities-and-towns.html>.



The town clerks surveyed, on average, have spent over a decade (11.6 years) serving their towns as clerks. In a post-survey interview, a town clerk from a town with a hybrid voting system commented that she felt this demonstrated a dangerous precipice in the future of town meeting day organization. When her predecessor was ready to retire, she described that she had been at the office every day, ready and willing to take over the role. However, now that she herself is ready to retire after more than 20 years in the office, nobody has come to her to request the position or even to learn more about what it would be like. She is unsure of who will take the role of town clerk once she leaves and is concerned that there is no longer enthusiasm, willingness, or even ability to take on the role (especially with more drug use and abuse in her community, which she believes suppresses the pool of possible successors.)

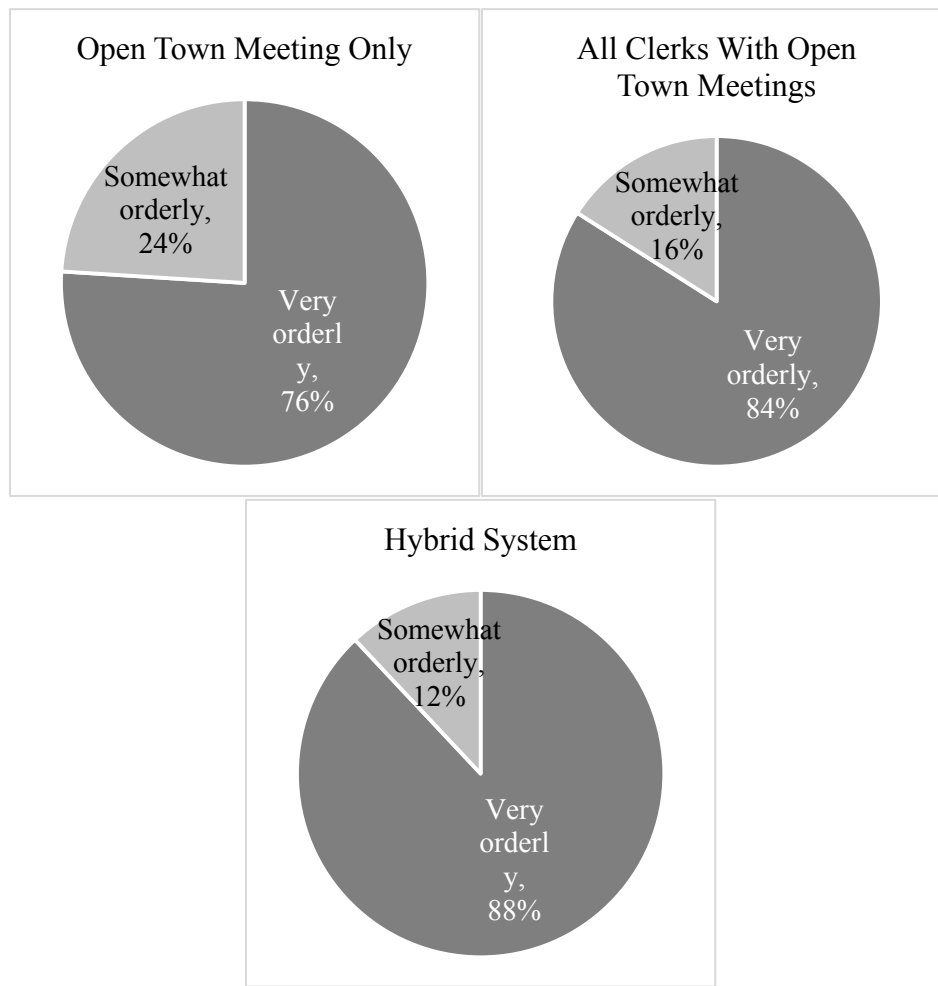
Tenures in office also differs slightly by the voting system. Clerks serving towns with hybrid systems (12.5) have, on average, served longer than town clerks for towns with only open town meetings (11.3) and only Australian Ballots (9.1).

Thirty one percent of clerks have served under 6 years as a town clerk, while 69% have served 6 years or more. Throughout the rest of this analysis, clerks who have served less than six years will be referred to as clerks with “less experience” while those who have served six years or more will be referred to as clerks with “more experience.” This distinction was made by this researcher to specifically see if whether the conflict between the theoretical versus practical emerges between clerks who have had less experience with town meetings and thus might rely on theory and a more idealistic approach to town meetings and clerks who have had more experience with the practical realities of town meetings.

A number of the questions in the survey were designed to get a better understanding of the average town meeting experience in Vermont. Good decorum at town meetings is frequently described in the literature. This survey asked clerks whether that was still something that rang true. Ultimately, no town clerk whose town holds open town meetings described the process as disorderly and **Figure 12** shows the breakdown of the rest of the results. Eighty-four percent of clerks in towns with open town meetings (including only those with hybrid systems and those with just open town meetings) said that town meetings were very orderly and 16% said they were somewhat orderly. Clerks from towns with hybrid systems were more likely to describe the process as very orderly (88%) than those from towns with only open town meetings (76%).

**Figure 12: Orderliness of Open Town Meetings by System**

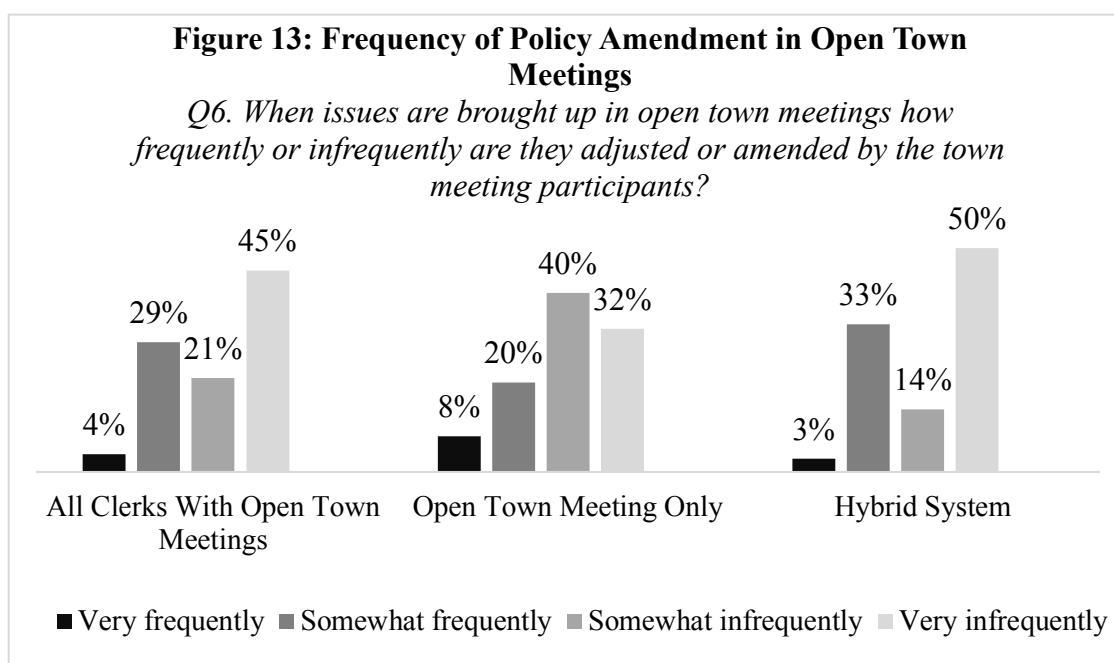
*Q5. In the last 3-5 years, which of the following best describes attending an open town meeting in your town?*



Another element of open town meetings which is often praised by scholars is the idea that it is “democracy in process” and that individuals discuss, learn about and amend articles during the town meeting process. This survey tested this assertion by asking how frequently articles are amended at town meetings **Figure 13** shows those results. Thirty-four percent of town clerks from towns with open town meetings reported that issues are frequently adjusted or amended by town meeting participants either very frequently (4%) or somewhat frequently (29%). Clerks

with hybrid systems report a higher frequency of amendment (36%) than those with open town meetings only (28%).

In contrast, sixty-six percent of town clerks report that articles are infrequently amended either very infrequently (45%) or somewhat infrequently (21%). Clerks with only open town meetings were more likely than those from towns with hybrid systems to say that articles were amended both somewhat or very infrequently. However, clerks from towns with hybrid systems were more likely than clerks with only open town meetings to say that articles were amended very infrequently.



With the emergence of the Australian ballot and the hybrid town meeting system, some scholars have heralded the end of the town meeting system and “true democracy”: “the Australian ballot is worse than deadly [for open town meetings], because it doesn’t kill town meetings quickly... the reality is that it poisons it and lets it die slowly, parading the executioner the moment of death and the acceptance of responsibility. It leaves the town with neither a

legislature nor a town meeting.”<sup>187</sup> Others see the emergence of the Australian ballot as a way for more voters to be able to participate in towns where traditional town meetings are no longer logistically viable due to population size: “In a considerable number of towns, however, particularly among those in urban communities, use is now made of the Australian ballot.”<sup>188</sup> These two different perspectives demonstrate the two perspectives that pull town meetings in opposing directions: facilitating the participation rates as possible, versus facilitating negotiation and community engagement.

Overall, when clerks were asked the importance of each of these two themes, there was very little difference between how all clerks rated the importance of achieving the highest participation rates as possible (an average of 8.5/10) and facilitating negotiation and community engagement (8.4/10).

This result shifted when looking specifically at clerks from towns with the different town meeting systems, as shown in **Table 8**. Clerks from towns with Australian ballots had the most deviation between their rating the importance of achieving the highest participation rates (8.9) and facilitating negotiation and community engagement (7.8). However, there may be an element of subjectivity in these scores from towns with only Australian ballots. In an in-depth interview, a clerk from an Australian ballot only town acknowledged that clerks who preside over Australian ballot only towns may be more inclined to believe that participation is more important because that has been the goal of their own work on town meeting day.

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<sup>187</sup> Clark and Bryan, *All Those In Favor*, 36.

<sup>188</sup> Snider, *Local Government in Rural America*, 198.

<b>Table 8: The Importance of Participation and Negotiation</b> <i>Q21. In your opinion, on a scale of 0-10 where 10 is extremely important and 0 is not important at all how would you rate the importance of the following: a) Achieving the highest participation rates as possible on town meeting day, b) Facilitating negotiation and community engagement on town meeting day</i>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>Open Town Meeting</b>	<b>Australian Ballot</b>	<b>Hybrid System</b>
Achieving the highest participation rates as possible	8.5	8.8	8.9	8.3
Facilitating negotiation and community engagement	8.4	9.0	7.8	8.5
Difference	0.1	0.2	1.1	0.2

When looking specifically at the differences between clerks who have spent longer and shorter times serving as clerks, clerks who have more experience rated achieving the highest participation rates as possible as slightly higher (8.5) than facilitating negotiation (8.3). In contrast, clerks with less experience rated facilitating negotiation (8.8) slightly higher than achieving the highest participation rates (8.6). This aligns with the thesis that clerks with more experience are more focused on the practical, rather than theoretical, aspects of town meetings.

### **Town Meeting Turnout**

Town meeting turnout, or lack of high-turnout, has been a constant theme for scholars. Even those who level significant praise on town meetings acknowledge that, “it is doubtful that there was ever a ‘golden era’ of town meeting when nearly everyone turned out every year.”<sup>189</sup> Thus, this survey investigated what the recent turnout has been at town meetings across Vermont. The clerks in this survey reported that the average number of people who participate in town meeting day across all categories is 352. However, this varies significantly by type of town meeting system.

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<sup>189</sup> Clark and Bryan, *All Those In Favor*, 27.

Clerks from towns with only open town meetings report average attendance of just 112 people. This is both the lowest numeric turnout at the lowest percentage turnout (12%) when calculated based on town population. In contrast, clerks from towns with a hybrid system report almost double that numeric (222) but a similar percentage turnout based on town population (13%). Clerks from towns with only Australian ballots report almost ten times as many people participating (982) than towns with only open town meetings. In addition, clerks from Australian ballot only towns also report a higher percent turnout by town size (18%). This corroborates the idea that Australian ballots facilitate participation. However, the town clerks interviewed warn that simply looking at the numbers does not fully illustrate what happens and argue that methods of facilitating participation not only changes how many people but who participates. One clerk pointed to the fact that the Australian ballot allowed for more age diversity because parents with children at home or those who work at nights are able to quickly cast an Australian ballot but are not able to attend open town meetings that can take hours.

In order to gain a full idea of the range of participation on town meeting day, this survey also asked clerks to give both the average highest and lowest turnouts in the last 3-5 years. **Table 9** shows the results from this question. Clerks from towns with only open town meetings reported 135 as the average highest attendance and 89 as the average lowest attendance. Clerks from towns with hybrid systems reported 394 as the average highest attendance and 153 as the average lowest attendance. While clerks from towns with only Australian ballots reported 1,522 as the average highest attendance and 649 as the average lowest attendance. Ultimately, participation rate in towns with only open town meetings is much more consistent (5% variation in turnout) than participation in hybrid systems (11% variation) and towns with only an Australian ballot (16% variation).



<b>Table 9: Average, Highest and Lowest Turnout by Town Voting System</b> <i>Q11. Thinking about the last 3-5 years, what would you say is the average, the highest and the lowest numbers of people who have participated in town meeting day in your town?</i>			
	Average Highest Participation	Average Normal Participation	Average Lowest Participation
Open Town Meeting Only	135 (14%)	112 (12%)	89 (9%)
Hybrid System	394 (21%)	222 (13%)	153 (10%)
Australian Ballot Only	1,522 (28%)	982 (18%)	649 (12%)

In addition to looking at the average, highest, and lowest turnout rates for each type of town meeting, this survey investigated the driving elements behind higher turnout. **Tables 10, 11, and 12** shows these results. Clerks from towns with only open town meetings report that education issues and funding (28%), especially school district consolidation and merging, and local elections (24%) have prompted the highest turnout on town meeting day.

<b>Table 10: Issues Prompting Highest Turnout in Open Town Meetings Only</b> <i>Q12. What specific issue or topic do you think has prompted the highest turnout on town meeting day?</i>	
	Open Town Meetings Only
Education issues and funding	28%
Local elections	24%
"Big ticket" purchases	12%
Budget and bond issues	8%
Infrastructure	8%
ATVs and snowmobiles on town roads	8%
None	8%
Taxes	4%
Don't know/Other	20%

Twenty nine percent of clerks from towns with hybrid voting systems report that, like towns with only open town meetings, education issues and funding drive turnout. Over one in five (22%) also mentioned budget and bond issues.

<b>Table 11: Issues Prompting Highest Turnout in Towns with Hybrid System Only</b> <i>Q12. What specific issue or topic do you think has prompted the highest turnout on town meeting day?</i>	
	<b>Hybrid System Town Meetings</b>
Education issues and funding	29%
Budget and bond issues	22%
Presidential primary elections	17%
"Big ticket" purchases	14%
Local elections	12%
Infrastructure	8%
Taxes	8%
None	3%
ATVs and snowmobiles on town roads	1%
Don't know/Other	10%

In contrast to towns with only open town meetings and hybrid systems, clerks from towns with only Australian ballots report that elections drive turnout. Forty eight percent of these clerks mentioned that the presidential primary elections drive high turnout while 24% mentioned local elections. One in five mentioned education issues and funding.

<b>Table 12: Issues Prompting Highest Turnout in Towns with Australian Ballots Only</b> <i>Q12. What specific issue or topic do you think has prompted the highest turnout on town meeting day?</i>	
	<b>Australian Ballot Only Town Meetings</b>
Presidential primary elections	48%
Local elections	24%
Education issues and funding	20%
Budget and bond issues	12%
"Big ticket" purchases	8%
Taxes	4%
Don't know/Other	8%

### **The Predictive Power of Town Meetings**

Town meeting are hailed by many scholars as environments where citizens can freely express their concerns and their thoughts about their town. This gives us an opportunity to investigate whether issues and concerns begin within the local community and rise to the state

and national level, or not. If this is the case, losing in-person open town meetings could rob Vermont of an environment for the development of political ideas.

To investigate this question, each of the clerks from towns with open town meetings was asked, “What issues, if any, were being raised in open town meetings 5-10 years ago that have now become a bigger part of the issue debates in Vermont or national politics?” Ultimately, E\education issues, specifically around funding and taxes, and climate change and renewable energy were the two issues that clerks mentioned that had been raised 5 to 10 years ago in town meetings that have now become a bigger part of issue debates in Vermont and in national politics. However, there were also a significant number of clerks who indicated that there were no such issues.

The clerks who mentioned education as an issue that was raised 5-10 years ago in town meetings that is now more prominent at the state and national level specifically mentioned the cost of education for their communities and the taxes that go with that school spending. Many also mentioned school mergers as a point of issue that has since gained momentum around Vermont.

*“The runaway train of education expenses is always discussed, and we always pass the budget but the State and Federal unfunded mandates make for very tricky budgeting.” – Hybrid System Town Clerk*

Many of the clerks who mentioned climate change and the environment as issues raised previously that have recently gained momentum simply mention “climate change” or “global warming” but others specifically reference town renewable energy or “green” projects like solar

arrays, energy conservation, and wind power. One clerk described a town policy on a potential pipeline and tar sands:

*“There was to be a natural gas pipeline running through [our town] that was discussed and voted on at town meeting. Voted on a resolution to ask the government to stop tar sands oil from coming through the State of Vermont.” – Open Town Meeting Only Town Clerk*

Clerks from towns with only open town meetings were much more likely to mention climate change (28%) than those with hybrid systems (18%). While clerks with hybrid systems were more likely to mention taxation (20%) than those with open town meetings only (8%).

It is important to also recognize that 22% of clerks mentioned that there were no issues that had been mentioned 3-5 years ago that had risen to state- or national-level politics. Some of the clerks interviewed were also hesitant to fully support the predictive power of town meetings. A clerk from a town with a hybrid system expanded on the difficulties in bringing issues that could rise to state- or national-level issues to town meetings. She described that a group in her own town were concerned about the effects of some local education policies that they wanted to rise to the state-level for consideration but had difficulty placing the issue on the warnings in towns in the area (due to legal issues around what can go on a town meeting warning) and were also hitting a road block with state-level laws that restricted the local town meeting from changing the policy even if the town voted to change it. **Table 13** summarizes all of the issues that clerks mentioned as issues that have risen to state and national politics.

<b>Table 13: Issues Being Raised 5-10 Years Ago that Have Risen to State and National Politics</b> <i>Q7. What issues, if any, were being raised in open town meetings 5-10 years ago that have now become a bigger part of the issue debates in Vermont or national politics?</i> <i>*Only asked of towns with open town meeting only or hybrid system.</i>			
	<b>Clerks w/ Open Town Meetings</b>	<b>Open Town Meeting</b>	<b>Hybrid System</b>
Education issues (funding, taxes)	24%	24%	25%
Climate change and renewable energy	21%	28%	18%
None	22%	24%	22%
Taxation	17%	8%	20%
Infrastructure	10%	8%	11%
Budgets and funding issues	8%	8%	8%
Citizens United	6%	4%	6%
Cost of living (housing and wages)	6%	0%	8%
Healthcare and healthcare costs	5%	4%	5%
Nuclear power	3%	0%	5%
Other	10%	8%	11%

To facilitate future research into the theory of the predictive power of town meetings, each of the clerks from towns with open town meetings was also asked: “What issues, if any, that have been brought up in recent open town meetings that you believe are likely to be raised up in Vermont- or national-level politics?” Ultimately, 29% of clerks with open town meetings said that they thought that climate change is an issue currently being raised in open town meetings that will likely become a larger part of Vermont and national politics. Clerks with only open town meetings were more likely to mention climate change (36%) than those with hybrid systems (26%).

Interestingly, once again, the second most frequent answer overall was that no issues being raised at town meetings currently will become a larger part of state or national politics.

The third most frequent answer for clerks with open town meeting only was education issues (28%). **Table 14** summarizes all of these results.

<b>Table 14: Issues That Clerks Believe May Rise to State and National Politics in the Future</b> <i>Q8. What issues, if any, that have been brought up in recent open town meetings that you believe are likely to be raised up in Vermont- or national-level politics?</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Open Town Meeting</b>	<b>Hybrid System</b>
Climate change	29%	36%	26%
None	22%	24%	22%
Education	21%	28%	18%
Taxes	9%	4%	11%
Infrastructure	9%	4%	11%
Healthcare access and costs	7%	4%	8%
Aging population	4%	0%	6%
Cannabis marketplace	3%	4%	3%
Cost of living	3%	4%	3%
Budget Issues	3%	0%	5%
Other	12%	4%	15%

When diving into the specific wording of the answers given by clerks, once again, the town clerks mentioned “climate change” and “global warming” in general terms. However, some spoke to some direct action that their towns have recently taken to formalizing the towns commitment to addressing the issue and to pressure the state government.

*“The voters discussed a non-binding resolution on encouraging the state to meet its 50% renewable energy promise by 2050.” – Open Town Meeting Only Clerk*

*“We passed a voter petitioned renewable energy article two years ago with very detailed wording, but with an entirely volunteer taskforce, nothing has been done.” - Hybrid System Town Clerk*

While “None” was the second most given answer for a current issue with the potential for momentum, education was the third most prominent answer. Once again, the cost of education, taxes to fund schools, and issues with school consolidations were the most prominent issues related to education. Some clerks also mentioned the decreasing school-aged population in Vermont.

Once again, the town clerks interviewed were hesitant to fully support the idea of the predictive power of town meetings. A couple pointed to the coronavirus as an example that it is sometimes difficult to predict what will emerge in future politics.

Taking all of this into account, the results about whether town meetings have the ability to predict future state- and national-level politics is mixed. The predictive power of town meetings seems to be limited to issues like climate change and education that are political issues both at the local and national level. Even then, some of the logistical aspects of what can go on at a town meeting warning can hinder the ability of open town meetings to predict.

### **The Future of Town Meetings**

Much of the scholarly discussion around the future of town meetings has mentioned the participation rates in town meetings. Some observers have noted that, “commencing with Madison’s derision of direct democracy, however, town meeting government has been criticized primarily for low attendance by registered voters and the alleged domination of the meetings by special interest groups.”<sup>190</sup> Since Madison’s criticisms, the future of open town meetings has become more and more linked with town meeting participation. The question emerges: Are town meetings still “direct democracy” or even an effective form of government if participation is low.

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<sup>190</sup> Zimmerman, *The New England Town Meeting*, 2-3.

This emerges in two ways. In towns where the population has increased, open town meetings are criticized for not allowing for enough individuals to participate in meaningful ways.

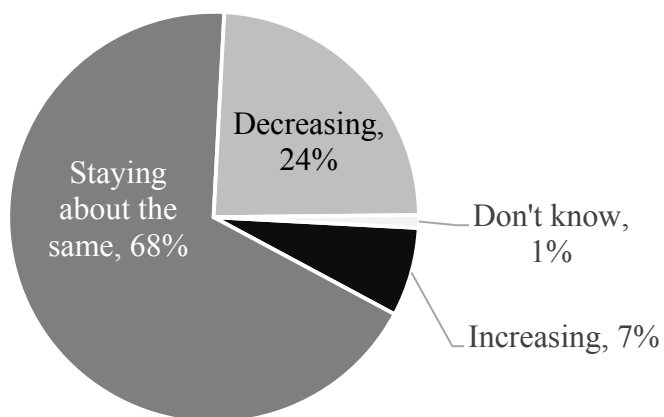
Alternatively, in towns where participation is simply low, town meetings are criticized because non-elected individuals make decisions for the town as a whole.

To first gain a broader picture of how town clerks experience the participation rates in their towns, all clerks were asked about the general trends they are experiencing around participation: “Thinking about the town you serve, compared to 3-5 years ago, would you say that the number of people participating in town meeting day (either physically attending town meetings or voting in the Australian ballot) is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same?”

As shown in **Figure 14**, sixty eight percent of town clerks reported that the number of people participating in town meeting day in their town was staying about the same. Twenty four percent indicated that the number was decreasing. While only 7% of clerks reported that the number of people participating was increasing. One percent said they were not able to judge.

**Figure 14: Change in Town Meeting Participation Rates Compared to 3-5 Years Ago**

*Q10. Thinking about the town you serve, compared to 3-5 years ago, would you say that the number of people participating in town meeting day (either physically attending town m*

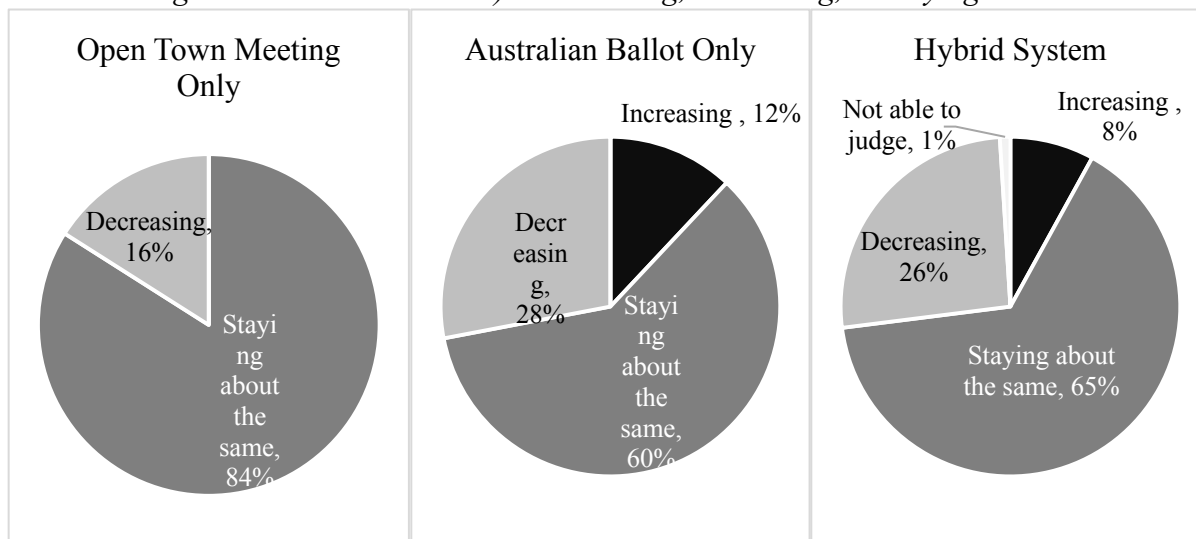




How many clerks say a town's town meeting day participation is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same varies by the type of town meeting system in place. Clerks from towns with open town meetings only report that participation in towns is either staying the same (84%) or decreasing (16%). In contrast, fewer clerks from towns with Australian ballots only and hybrid systems say that town meeting participation is staying the same (60% and 65% respectively). In these two systems, over a quarter of town clerks report that participation is decreasing (28% and 26% respectively.) In addition, 12% of clerks in towns with Australian ballots only and 8% of clerks from towns with hybrid systems report that participation is increasing. These results are visualized in **Figure 15**.

**Figure 15: Change in Town Meeting Participation Rates By Town Meeting Voting System**

*Q10. Thinking about the town you serve, compared to 3-5 years ago, would you say that the number of people participating in town meeting day (either physically attending town meetings and/or voting in the Australian ballot) is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same?*



In addition to participation rates, this survey also investigated the upper limits of town meeting participation. Each of the clerks from towns with systems that included open town meetings was asked, “What would you say is the maximum number of registered voters your town could have before you think it would be necessary to move to solely an Australian ballot?”

On average, clerks felt that a population of just under 4,000 registered voters would be the maximum number before it would be necessary to move to solely an Australian ballot.

Town clerks with only open town meetings, on average, felt that the maximum number of registered voters for a town to move to solely an Australian ballot was 1,376 while those with hybrid systems indicated that they felt that their town could reach just under 5,000 residents on average before needing to move to solely an Australian ballot. The exact numbers can be seen in **Table 15**.

<b>Table 15: Maximum Number of Registered Ballots Before Australian Ballots Are Needed by Town Meeting Voting System</b> <i>Q9. What would you say is the maximum number of registered voters your town could have before you think it would be necessary to move to solely an Australian ballot?</i>		
<b>All Clerks with Open Town Meetings</b>	<b>Clerks with Open Town Meetings Only</b>	<b>Hybrid System Clerks</b>
3,782	1,376	4,752

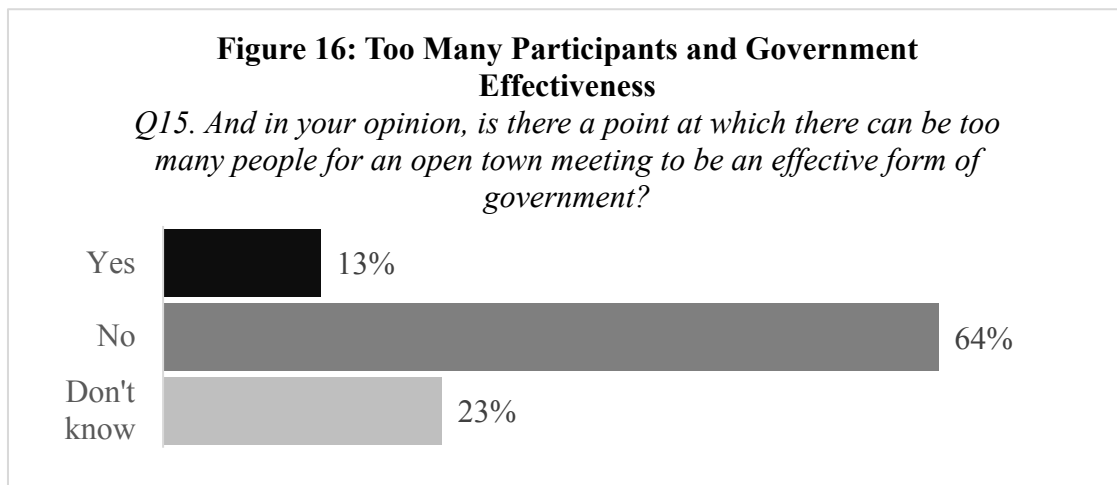
In addition to the differences between types of voting system on this question, there was also difference in how clerks answered this question by experience level. Clerks with more experience felt that a population of just over 3,000 registered voters would be the maximum number before it would be necessary to move to solely an Australian ballot. This is in stark contrast to clerks with less experience who, on average, felt that a population of just over 5,000 registered voters would be the maximum. This fits well with the idea that clerks with less experience may be more idealistic and theory-driven than those with more experience. However, some of the difference may be due to slightly more clerks from towns with open town meetings being included in clerks with more experience. Twenty two percent of clerks with more experience were from towns with open town meetings only in contrast to only 15% of clerks with less experience. **Table 16** outlines these results.

**Table 16: Maximum Number of Registered Ballots Before Australian Ballots Are Needed by Clerk Experience**

*Q9. What would you say is the maximum number of registered voters your town could have before you think it would be necessary to move to solely an Australian ballot?*

All Clerks with Open Town Meetings	Clerks with More Experience	Clerks with Less Experience
3,782	3,274	5,042

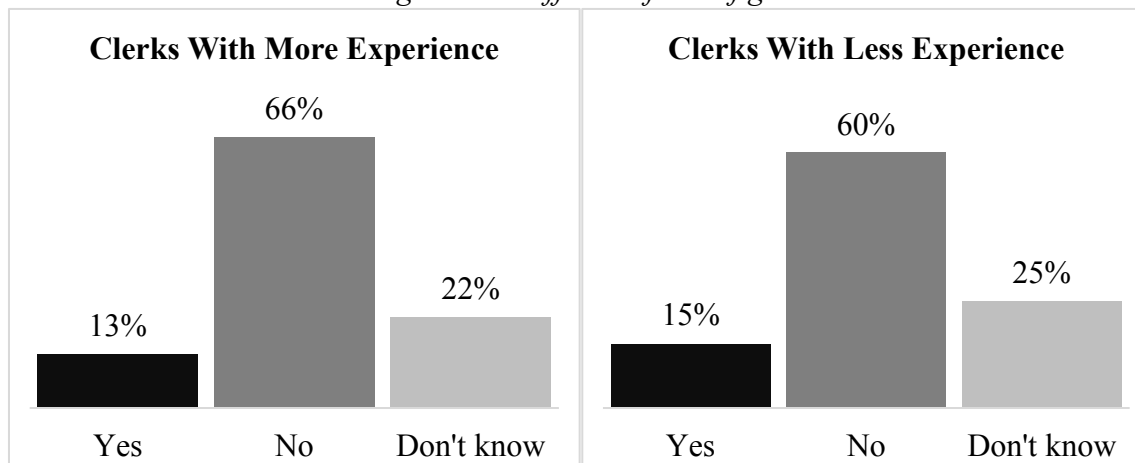
Maintaining the theme of participation and effective governance, clerks were also asked, “And in your opinion, is there a point at which there can be too many people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government?” Ultimately, 64% of town clerks said that there cannot be a point at which there can be too many people participating in an open town meeting for it to be an effective form of government. Once again, this may be due to some subjectivity in that most of these clerks have dedicated significant portions of their lives to town meetings. Only thirteen percent of clerks said that there can be a point at which there can be too many people and twenty three percent of clerks said they do not know. **Figure 16** shows these results.



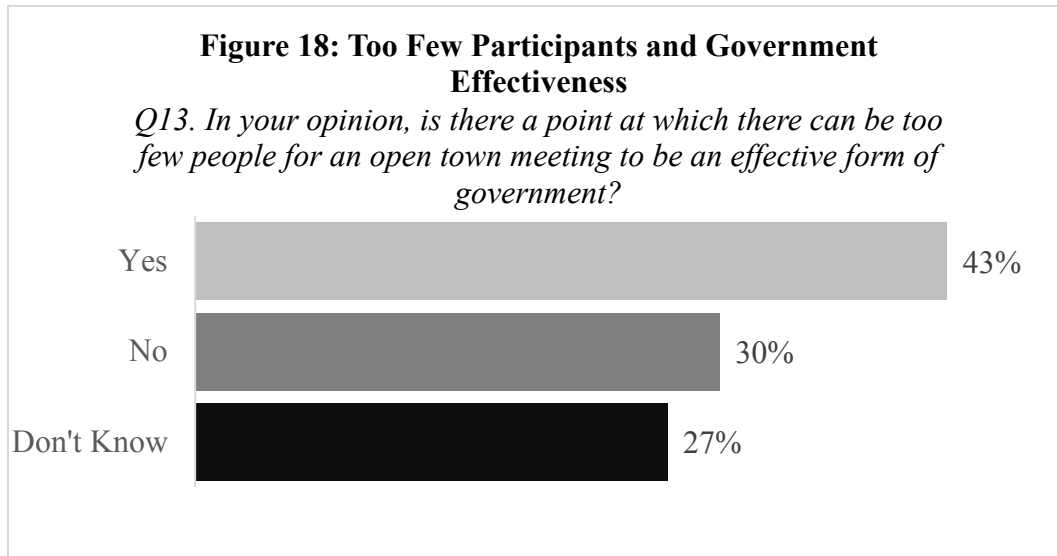
On average, the clerks who answered “yes” that there was a point when there could be too many people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government said that just over 400 people would be the largest number of people who could attend an open town meeting and still have it be an effective form of government.

As shown in **Figure 17**, clerks with more experience were slightly more likely to say there is not a point at which there can be too many people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government (66%), than clerks with less experience (60%).

**Figure 17: Too Many Participants and Government Effectiveness by Clerk Experience**  
*Q15. And in your opinion, is there a point at which there can be too many people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government?*



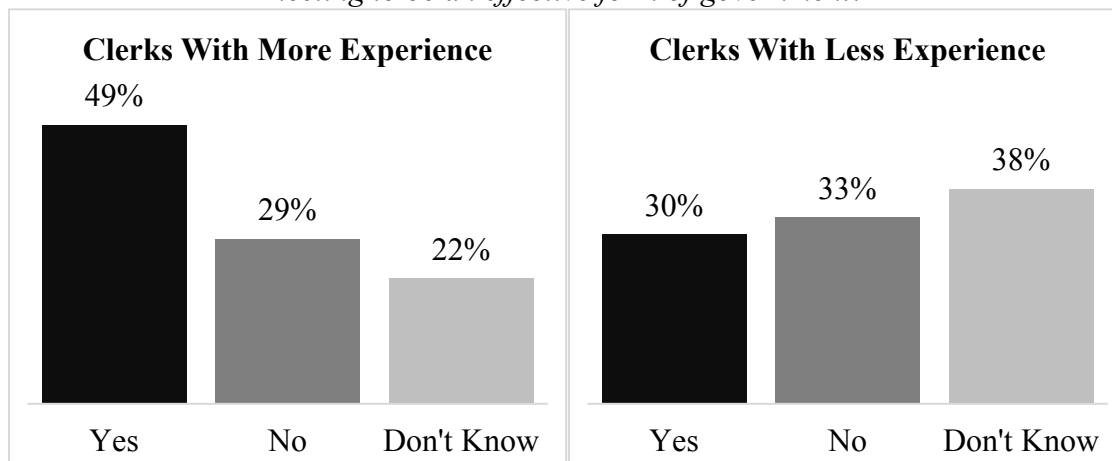
Conversely, in order to investigate the lower limits of town meeting participation, each of the clerks was asked “In your opinion, is there a point at which there can be too few people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government?” The results, shown in **Figure 18**, were more even: forty three percent of town clerks say that there can be a point at which there can be too few people participating in an open town meeting for it to be an effective form of government. Thirty percent say that there cannot be too few participants, while 27% said they didn’t know.



Clerks from towns with only open town meetings were more likely to say that there could be too few people (52%) than those from towns with hybrid systems (42%) and Australian ballots (40%). On average, the clerks who answered yes said that 7% was the minimum percentage of registered voters who can attend an open town meeting and still have it be an effective form of government.

**Figure 19** demonstrates that clerks with more experience are much more likely to say that there is a point where there can be too few people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government (49%) than those with less experience (30%). Clerks with less experience were more likely to say no and that they don't know.

**Figure 19: Too Few Participants and Government Effectiveness by Clerk Experience**  
*Q13. In your opinion, is there a point at which there can be too few people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government?*

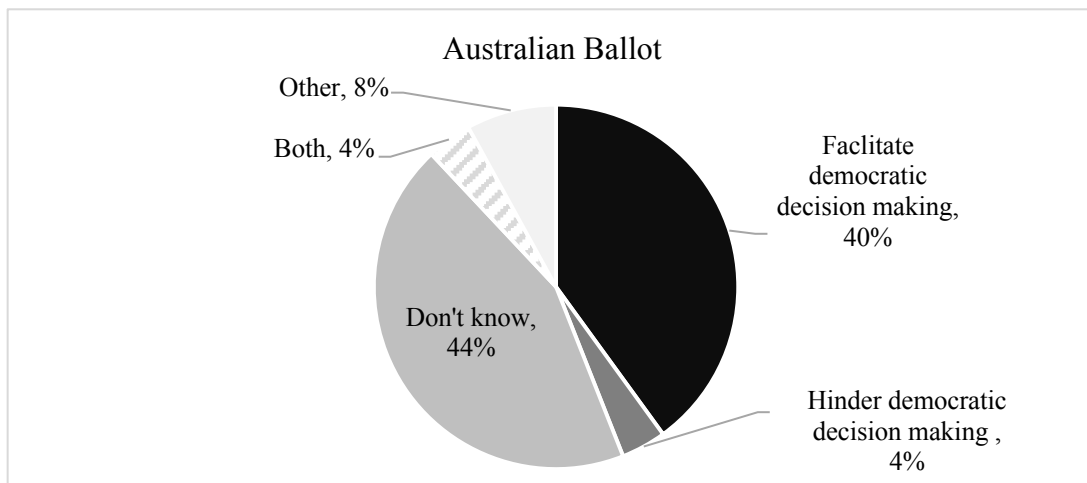
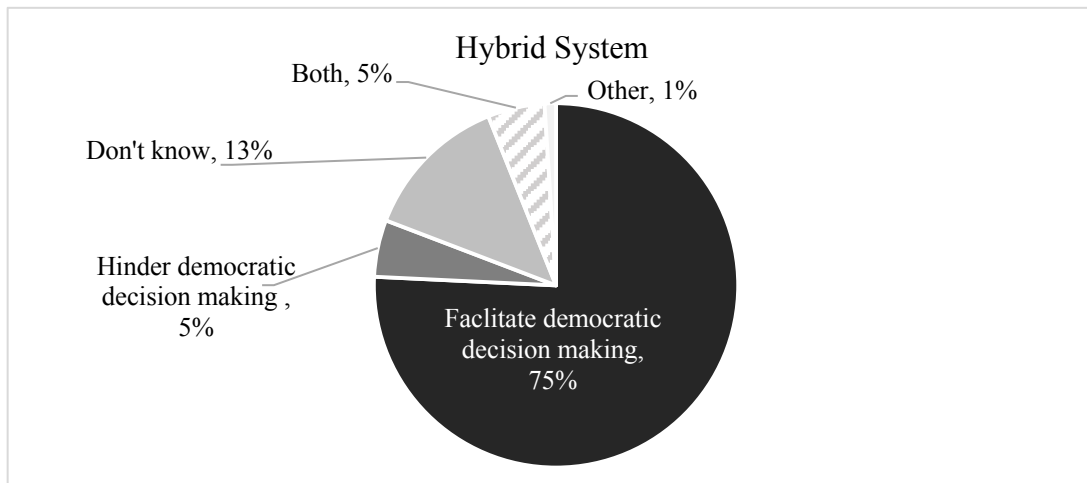
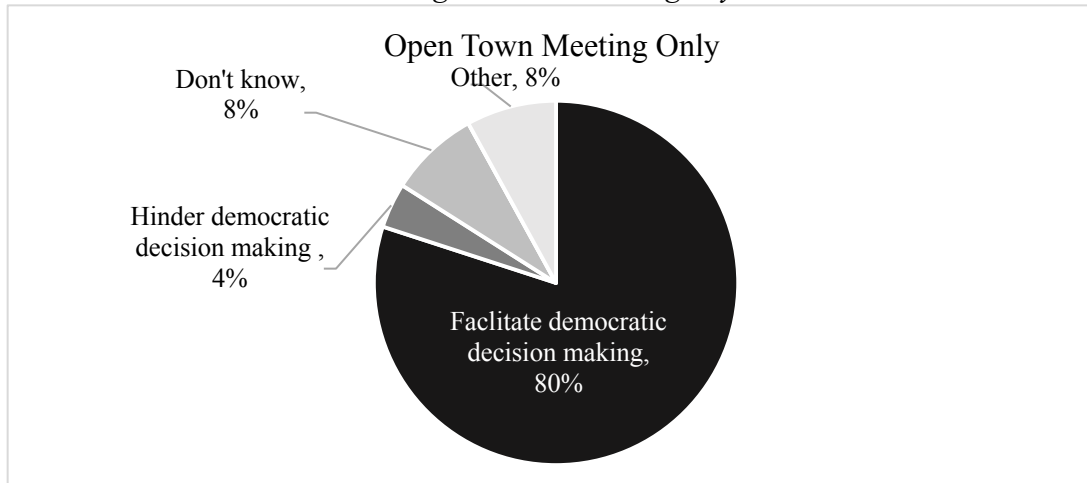


## The Strengths and Weaknesses of Town Meetings

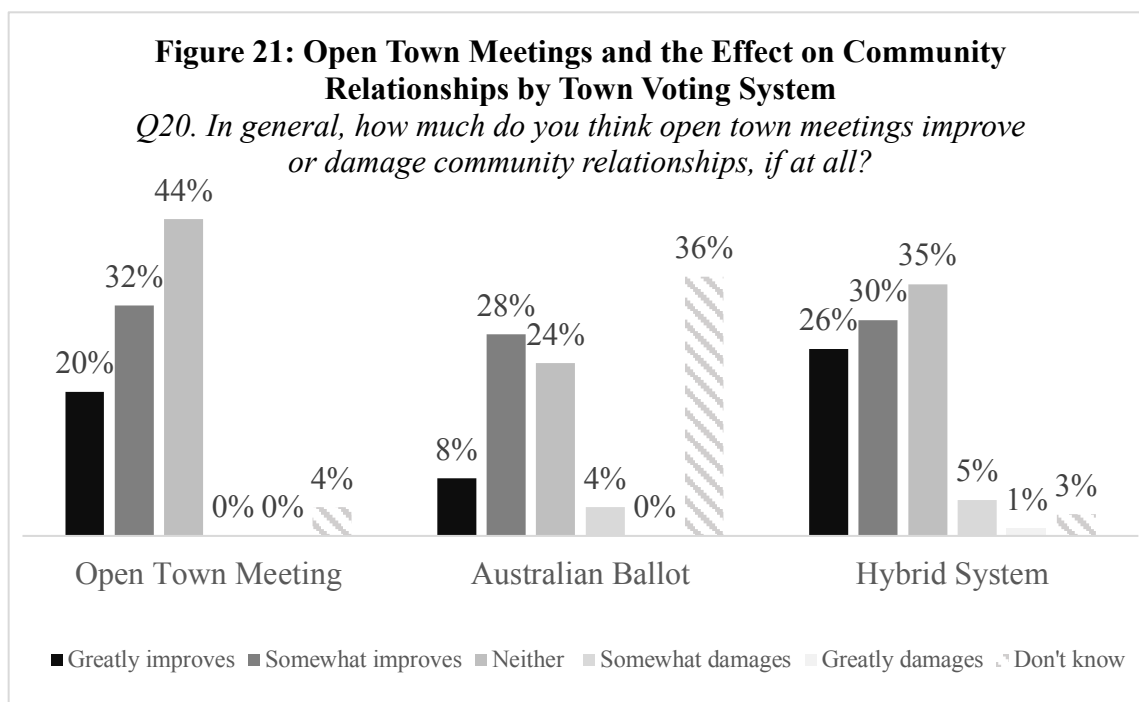
Scholars from the earliest American government to modern scholarly work have discussed the strengths and weaknesses of town meetings. This survey investigated those strengths and weakness from the perspective of those who organize, attend, and participate in town meetings every year: town clerks.

To begin with, each clerk was asked, “Which best describes how you feel about the decision-making process in open town meetings on town meeting day?” **Figure 20** shows these results. The majority of clerks from towns with some form of open town meeting, both the towns with only open town meetings (80%) and hybrid systems (75%) felt that open town meetings facilitate democratic decision making. In contrast, the plurality (44%) of clerks from towns with only Australian ballots did not know whether open town meetings facilitate or hinder democratic decision making and only 40% felt that open town meetings facilitate democratic decision making.

**Figure 20: The Decision-Making Process in Open Town Meetings by Town Voting System**  
*Q19. Which best describes how you feel about the decision-making process in open town meetings on town meeting day?*



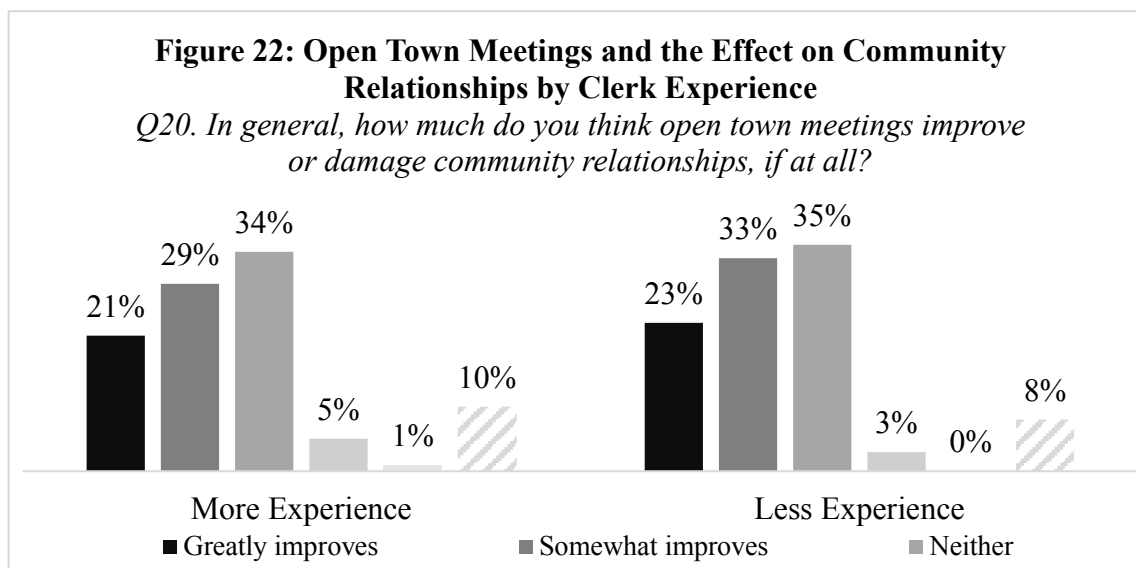
In order to get a better understanding of whether clerks agree with much of the scholarly conversation about town meetings helping to bring communities together, clerks were asked, “In general, how much do you think open town meetings improve or damage community relationships, if at all?” These results are recorded in **Figure 21**. Ultimately, clerks from towns with only open town meetings (52%) and hybrid systems (56%) were more likely than clerks from towns with only Australian ballots (36%) to say that open town meetings either greatly or somewhat improve community relationships. There is likely an element of subjectivity in these answers, however, due to the system of which each type of clerk presides. Clerks from towns with Australian ballots were most likely to say they don’t know (36%).



In contrast to the distinction between clerks from towns with the various voting systems, there was little difference on this question between clerks with more and less experience. However, clerks with more experience were slightly less likely to say that open town meetings



either greatly or somewhat improve community relationships (49%) than clerks with less experience (55%). **Figure 22** shows these slight differences.



Finally, to truly distill clerks’ opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the different forms of town meetings, each of the clerks were asked in an open-ended format the strengths and weaknesses of open town meetings and Australian ballots.

When answering the strengths of open town meetings, 39% of town clerks mention giving voters a “voice” and a chance to state an opinion as the greatest strength of open town meetings, followed by the discussion and debate that occurs about each element brought forward at the meeting (31%).

Clerks whose towns hold only open town meetings (44%) and hybrid systems (43%) were more likely to give the answer – giving the voters a “voice” – than those with only Australian ballot (20%). Those with hybrid systems were much more likely to point to the ability to amend proposals (22%), bring the community together (19%), and inform voters (19%) as the greatest strengths of open town meetings compared to clerks from towns with other forms of voting systems. These results can be seen in **Table 17**.

<b>Table 17: Greatest Strengths of Open Town Meetings by Town Voting System</b> <i>Q17. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the open town meetings as a form of government?</i>				
<i>*Only Strengths</i>	<b>All</b>	<b>Open Town Meeting</b>	<b>Australian Ballot</b>	<b>Hybrid System</b>
A "voice" and a chance to state opinion	39%	44%	20%	43%
Discussion and debate	31%	36%	32%	30%
Reasoning and arguments presented	18%	20%	16%	18%
Brings the community together civilly	17%	16%	12%	19%
Creates informed voters	17%	12%	12%	19%
Ability to amend	17%	4%	12%	22%
Builds acceptance of outcome	3%	0%	8%	3%
Other	8%	8%	16%	5%

There were also significant differences based on experience, as seen in **Table 18**. Clerks with less experience were more likely to say that giving the voters a voice was the greatest strength (43%), discussion and debate (38%), and bringing the community together (23%) than clerks with more experience (37%, 29%, and 15% respectively). In contrast, clerks with more experience were more likely to say that the ability to present reasons and arguments for and against policies and town decisions (20%) was the greatest strength than clerks with less experience (15%). These results demonstrated differentiation between possible reliance on idealism as opposed to practicality.

<b>Table 18: Greatest Strengths of Open Town Meetings by Clerk Experience</b> <i>Q17. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the open town meetings as a form of government?</i>			
<i>*Only Strengths</i>	<b>All</b>	<b>More Experience</b>	<b>Less Experience</b>
A "voice" and a chance to state opinion	39%	37%	43%
Discussion and debate	32%	29%	38%
Reasoning and arguments presented	18%	20%	15%
Brings the community together civilly	17%	15%	23%
Creates informed voters	17%	16%	18%
Ability to amend	17%	16%	18%
Builds acceptance of outcome	3%	5%	3%
Other	8%	10%	3%

The survey also investigated clerks' thoughts about the greatest weaknesses. **Table 19** shows that, when speaking about the greatest weaknesses of open town meetings, a quarter of town clerks pointed to low participation and low interest as open town meetings' greatest weakness. Clerks from towns with open town meetings only were much more likely to mention the fact a few people have an outsized say (20%) and peer pressure (20%) than clerks from towns with a hybrid system (14%, 6%) or only Australian ballots (4%, 0%).

<b>Table 19: Weaknesses of Open Town Meetings by Town Meeting Voting System</b> <i>Q17. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the open town meetings as a form of government?</i>				
<i>*Only Weaknesses</i>	<b>All</b>	<b>Open Town Meeting</b>	<b>Australian Ballot</b>	<b>Hybrid System</b>
Low participation and low interest	25%	36%	24%	22%
A few people have an outsized say	13%	20%	4%	14%
Work schedules and inability to attend the meeting	13%	16%	8%	13%
Peer pressure	8%	20%	0%	6%
Less nuance and sometimes inaccurate information	6%	0%	4%	8%
Disruption and disagreement	4%	4%	0%	5%
Lack of efficiency	4%	4%	4%	4%
None	2%	0%	4%	3%
Other	2%	4%	4%	0%

There were also differences by experience. Clerks with more experience were more likely to say that lower participation rates and low interest were the greatest weakness of open town meetings as a form of government (29%) than clerks with less experience (18%). In contrast, clerks with less experience were more likely to say that peer pressure (13%) was the greatest weakness than clerks with more experience (6%).

<b>Table 20: Weaknesses of Open Town Meetings by Clerk Experience</b>			
<i>Q17. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the open town meetings as a form of government?</i>			
<i>*Only Weaknesses</i>	<b>All</b>	<b>More Experience</b>	<b>Less Experience</b>
Low participation and low interest	25%	29%	18%
A few people have an outsized say	13%	14%	13%
Work schedules and inability to attend the meeting	13%	11%	15%
Peer pressure	8%	6%	13%
Less nuance and sometimes inaccurate information	6%	7%	3%
Disruption and disagreement	4%	6%	0%
Lack of efficiency	4%	2%	8%
None	2%	2%	3%
Other	2%	2%	0%

Following the questions about open town meetings, each of the clerks was then asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the Australian ballot. When specifically speaking about the strengths of the Australian ballot, 39% of clerks pointed to a greater ability to participate as the greatest strength of the Australian ballot. A quarter (26%) of clerks also pointed to anonymity of the vote. Interestingly, clerks from systems that have either only open town meetings (44%) and only Australian ballot (44%) were more likely to point to this reason than those from towns with a hybrid system (35%).

Clerks from towns with hybrid systems (25%) and Australian ballots only (24%) were more likely to say that higher participation rates and therefore more being represented as a strength than clerks from towns with open town meetings only (12%). These results are shown in **Table 21**.

<b>Table 21: Strengths of the Australian Ballot by Town Voting System</b> <i>Q18. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of an Australian Ballot as a form of government?</i>				
<i>*Only Strengths</i>	<b>All</b>	<b>Open Town Meeting</b>	<b>Australian Ballot</b>	<b>Hybrid System</b>
Greater ability to participate	39%	44%	44%	35%
Anonymity	26%	24%	28%	26%
Higher participation & more people represented	22%	12%	24%	25%
Logistically easier to manage	6%	8%	4%	6%
Other	7%	12%	12%	4%

There were also differences based on experience. Clerks with more experience were more likely to say that greater ability to participate was the greatest strength of an Australian ballot (40%) than clerks with less experience (35%). In contrast, clerks with less experience were slightly more likely to say anonymity (30%) and the ballots being easier to logistically manage (10%) than clerks with more experience (24% and 5%).

<b>Table 22: Strengths of the Australian Ballot by Clerk Experience</b> <i>Q18. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of an Australian Ballot as a form of government?</i>			
<i>*Only Strengths</i>	<b>All</b>	<b>More Experience</b>	<b>Less Experience</b>
Greater ability to participate	39%	40%	35%
Anonymity	26%	24%	30%
Higher participation & more people represented	21%	22%	23%
Logistically easier to manage	6%	5%	10%
Other	7%	7%	8%

When speaking about the weaknesses of town meetings, lack of debate and discussion (28%) was the most cited weakness for Australian ballots. Forty percent of clerks from towns with Australian ballots mentioned this as a weakness. These clerks were more likely to mention lack of debate and discussion than clerks from towns with only open town meetings (32%) and hybrid systems (23%). In contrast, clerks from towns with only open town meetings (24%) and hybrid systems (22%) were more likely to mention less-informed voters as a weakness than clerks from towns with only Australian ballots (0%). **Table 23** shows these results.

<b>Table 23: Weaknesses of the Australian Ballot by Town Voting System</b> <i>Q18. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of an Australian Ballot as a form of government?</i>				
<i>*Only Weaknesses</i>	<b>All</b>	<b>Open Town Meeting</b>	<b>Australian Ballot</b>	<b>Hybrid System</b>
Lack of debate and discussion	28%	32%	40%	23%
Less informed voters	18%	24%	0%	22%
No ability to amend/ voter input	9%	8%	4%	12%
Less understanding of the results	5%	8%	12%	1%
Less community feel	4%	8%	0%	4%
None	4%	0%	12%	3%
Logistical challenges	3%	0%	0%	5%
Other	6%	12%	4%	5%

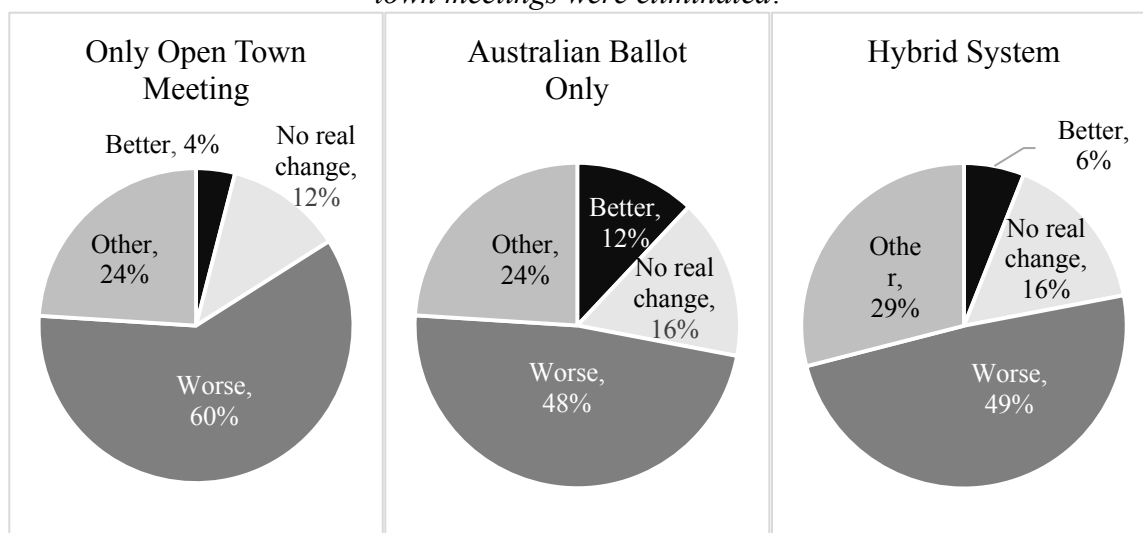
In addition to differences by voting system, there were also differences by experience. Clerks with more experience were more likely to say that less informed voters are the greatest weakness of an Australian ballot form of government (22%) than clerks with less experience (10%). In contrast, clerks with less experience were more likely to mention lack of debate and discussion (35%) and no ability to amend or consider voter input (15%) as the greatest weakness of Australian ballots than clerks with more experience (25% and 7% respectively). These results are summarized in **Table 24**.

<b>Table 24: Weaknesses of the Australian Ballot by Town Voting System</b> <i>Q18. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of an Australian Ballot as a form of government?</i>			
<i>*Only Weaknesses</i>	<b>All</b>	<b>More Experience</b>	<b>Less Experience</b>
Lack of debate and discussion	28%	25%	35%
Less informed voters	18%	22%	10%
No ability to amend/ voter input	9%	7%	15%
Less understanding of the results	5%	5%	5%
Less community feel	4%	5%	3%
None	4%	6%	0%
Logistical challenges	3%	2%	5%
Other	6%	7%	5%

After establishing the current strengths and weakness of the various forms of town meetings, the clerks were then asked, “In what ways do you think town policy formation would be better or worse if open town meetings were eliminated.” A plurality of clerks from all three town meeting voting systems feel that town policy formation would be worse if open town meetings were eliminated.

Clerks from towns with only open town meetings were the most likely to believe that town policy formation would be worse (60%), while clerks from towns with only Australian ballots were the most likely to believe that town policy formation would be better (12%) if open town meetings were eliminated. These results are shown in **Figure 23**.

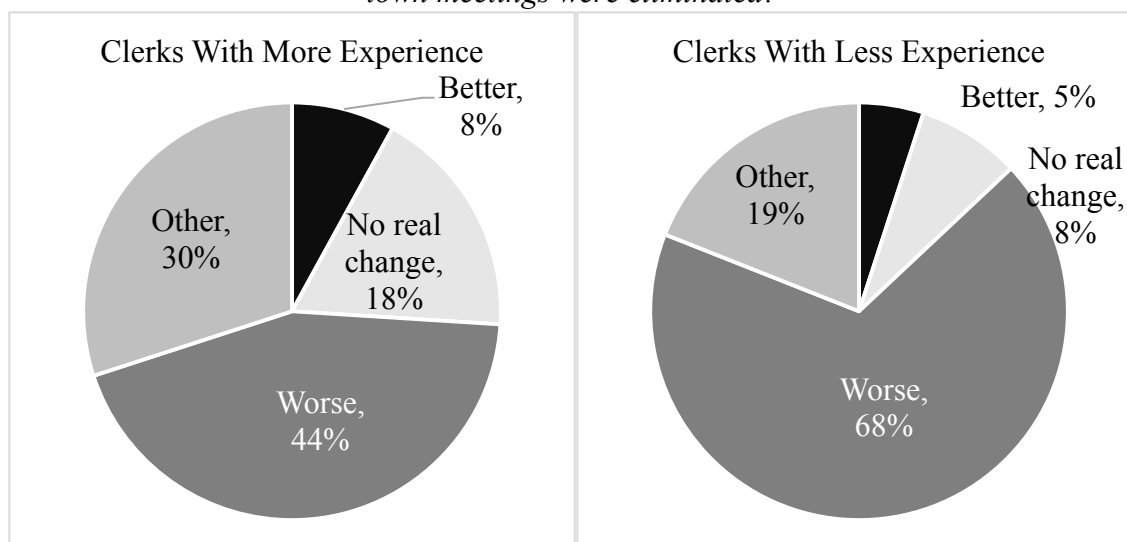
**Figure 23: Better or Worse Policy Formation by Town Meeting Voting System**  
*Q23. In what ways do you think town policy formation would be better or worse if open town meetings were eliminated?*



There were also differences by experience. Clerks with less experience were much more likely to say that town policy formation would be worse if open town meetings were eliminated (68%) than clerks with more experience (44%). In contrast, clerks with more experience were

more likely to say that there would be no real change in town policy formation if town meetings were eliminated (18%) than clerks with less experience (8%). **Figure 24** shows these results.

**Figure 24: Better or Worse Policy Formation by Clerk Experience**  
*Q23. In what ways do you think town policy formation would be better or worse if open town meetings were eliminated?*



Each of the clerks was then asked, “In what ways do you think town policy formation would be better or worse if open town meetings were eliminated?” Thirty percent of clerks said that eliminating open town meetings would lead to less discussion and voter input in decisions if open town meetings were eliminated. Clerks from towns with only open town meetings were the most likely to mention this (36%).

Clerks from towns with only Australian ballot were the most likely to say that eliminating open town meetings would lead to a less informed electorate (24%) than either open town meeting (12%) or hybrid system (4%) clerks. These results are summarized in **Table 25**.

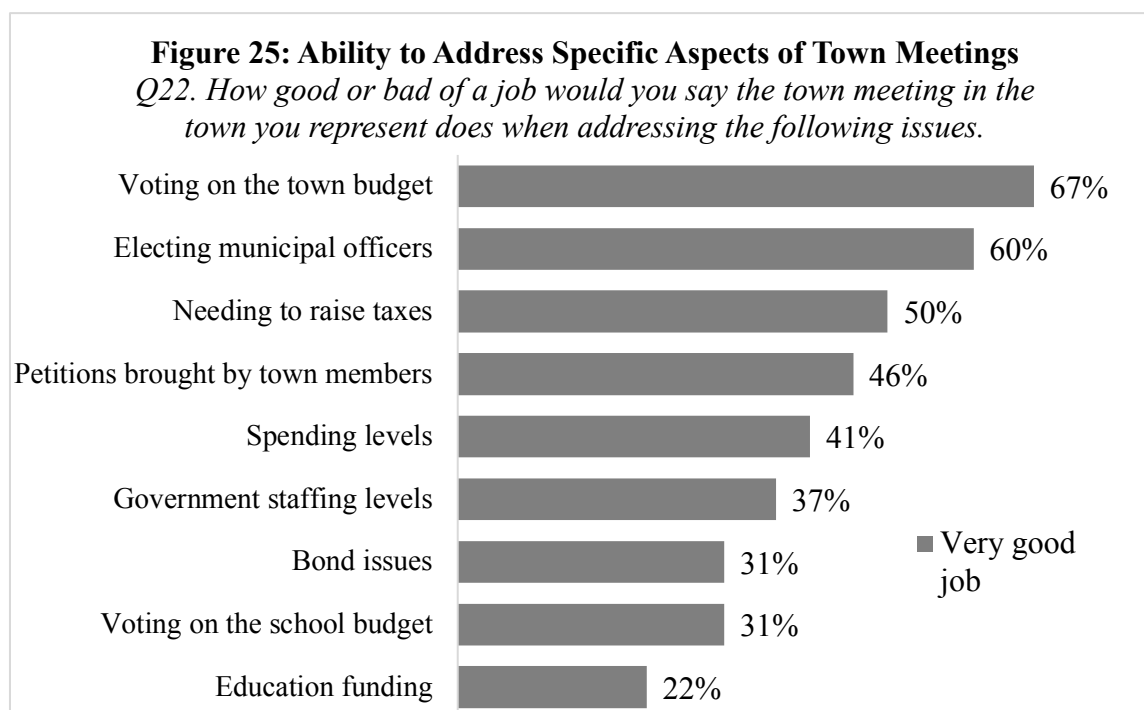


<b>Table 25: Ways in Which Policy Formation Would Be Better or Worse if Open Town Meetings Were Eliminated by Town Meeting Voting System</b> <i>Q23. In what ways do you think town policy formation would be better or worse if open town meetings were eliminated?</i>				
	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System
Less discussion and voter input into decisions	30%	36%	28%	29%
Less accountability for elected officeholders	13%	16%	4%	16%
Less informed electorate	9%	12%	24%	4%
Loss of community engagement and participation	9%	16%	8%	5%
Less democracy	5%	0%	0%	8%
Don't know	15%	12%	12%	17%
Other	10%	8%	16%	9%

There were also differences based on experience. Clerks with less experience were more likely to say that policy formation would be worse because there would be less discussion and voter input into decisions (38%) and less accountability for elected officeholders (20%) than clerks with more experience (26% and 10% respectively). Clerks with more experience were more likely to be unsure (18%) than those with less experience (8%). **Table 16** outlines these results and differences by experience.

<b>Table 26: Ways in Which Policy Formation Would Be Better or Worse if Open Town Meetings Were Eliminated by Clerk Experience</b> <i>Q23. In what ways do you think town policy formation would be better or worse if open town meetings were eliminated?</i>			
	All	More Experience	Less Experience
Less discussion and voter input into decisions	30%	26%	38%
Less accountability for elected officeholders	13%	10%	20%
Less informed electorate	9%	8%	13%
Loss of community engagement and participation	9%	7%	13%
Less democracy	5%	3%	8%
Don't know	15%	18%	8%
Other	11%	11%	8%

Finally, the clerks were asked about some specific aspects of town meetings. Overall, the majority of town clerks felt that their town does a good job of handling all issues asked about in the survey. Some differences did emerge, however, when looking specifically at which issues clerks felt town meetings did a “very” good job at addressing. These differences are shown in **Figure 25**. Over half of town clerks felt that town meetings in their town do a very good job at addressing the following issues: voting on the town budget (67%), electing municipal officers (60%), and needing to raise taxes (50%).



Clerks from towns with a hybrid system were more likely to say that town meetings do a very good job of addressing the town budget (70%) and needing to raise taxes (55%) than clerks from towns with only open town meetings (64% and 44% respectively) and clerks from towns with only Australian ballots (60% and 44% respectively.) Clerks from towns with an Australian ballot only were more likely to say town meetings do a very good job of voting on the school

budget (44%) than clerks from towns with only open town meetings (24%) or hybrid (29%) systems. While clerks from towns with only open town meetings were the least likely to say that town meetings do a very good job addressing bond issues (8%) compared with clerks from towns with only Australian ballots (40%) and hybrid (35%) systems. These differences by system are shown in **Table 27**.

<b>Table 27: Ability to Address Aspects of Town Meetings by Town Meeting Voting System</b> <i>Q22. How good or bad of a job would you say the town meeting in the town you represent does when addressing the following issues.</i>			
<i>Only “Very Good Job”</i>	<b>Open Town Meeting</b>	<b>Australian Ballot</b>	<b>Hybrid System</b>
Voting on the town budget	64%	60%	70%
Electing municipal officers	52%	52%	65%
Needing to raise taxes	44%	44%	55%
Petitions brought by town members	40%	44%	48%
Government staffing levels	40%	32%	38%
Spending levels	36%	44%	42%
Voting on the school budget	24%	44%	29%
Education funding	20%	20%	23%
Bond issues	8%	40%	35%

There were also differences based on experience. Clerks with more experience were more likely to think that town meetings do a very good job electing municipal officers (64%), needing to raise taxes (52%), and addressing petitions brought by town members (48%) than clerks with less experience (50%, 48%, 40% respectively). In contrast, clerks with less experience were more likely to think that town meetings do a very good job addressing spending levels (45%) than clerks with more experience (39%). **Table 28** outlines these differences based on experience.

<b>Table 28: Ability to Address Specific Aspects of Town Meetings by Clerk Experience</b> <i>Q22. How good or bad of a job would you say the town meeting in the town you represent does when addressing the following issues.</i>		
<i>Only “Very Good Job”</i>	<b>More Experience</b>	<b>Less Experience</b>
Voting on the town budget	67%	68%
Electing municipal officers	64%	50%
Needing to raise taxes	52%	48%
Petitions brought by town members	48%	40%
Government staffing levels	36%	40%
Spending levels	39%	45%
Voting on the school budget	32%	28%
Education funding	24%	18%
Bond issues	30%	33%

## DISCUSSION

The results of this survey corroborate both the praise and criticism of open town meetings. Elements and evidence of both can be found throughout the survey and even when asked about these contradictions, clerks are open to admitting that both are synonymously true. It turns out that those who are closest to town meetings in Vermont (with some slight bias and subjectivity towards the system that they directly preside over) see the various town meeting voting systems for both their qualities and deficiencies.

One of the most prominent theoretical descriptions of open town meetings is the notion of direct democracy as the “purest” form of democracy where all voters have a say and participate in the process. The results of this survey do seem to demonstrate that clerks agree with the fact that there is widespread ability to participate and that people ultimately do participate in meaningful ways during the open town meetings. When asked about how frequently articles are amended during town meetings, a third of clerks indicated that when issues are brought up in open town meetings they are either very or somewhat frequently amended. Similarly, when asked about how open town meetings and the democratic process, over three quarters of town

clerks from towns with open town meetings felt that open town meetings facilitated the democratic decision-making process.

There is also ample evidence that people engage in constructive debate and discussion at open town meetings. Clerks from towns with only open town meetings were more likely to say that open town meetings are only somewhat orderly, indicating that a significant amount of heated debate and discussion can emerge, but when asked how much town meetings improve or damage community relationships, a majority of clerks from both towns with only open town meetings and hybrid systems say that open town meetings either greatly or somewhat improve community relationships. Town clerks also indicate that this direct democracy would be lacking under systems without open town meetings. When asked about the greatest weaknesses of the Australian ballot as a form of government, town clerks most mentioned “Lack of debate and discussion” as the greatest weakness. Those who are most intimately aware of the Australian ballot process were the most likely to mention this weakness.

The pride that many scholars point to in the participation that comes with being a part of this type of government is also clearly evident in these clerks’ descriptions of town meeting day. This emerged most clearly in the tone and tenor of the in-depth interviews conducted with clerks to gather more qualitative research on the data. However, it is also evident in the clerks’ long tenure in office which has consistently been a tenant of open town meetings in New England: in 1952 Lane Lancaster wrote that, “[e]ven today there are numerous cases on record of clerks who have served twenty, thirty, or even forty years, and there are a few cases in which father and son between them have held the office for nearly a century.”<sup>191</sup> This tenure in office speaks to the position and the participation in this form of democracy as more than just a job.

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<sup>191</sup> Lancaster, *Government in Rural America*, 39.

Finally, the educational value of discussing issues in an open setting with peers also clearly emerges in the data. When asked about the strengths of open town meetings, the fact that reasoning and arguments are given an opportunity to be presented, and that it, “creates informed voters” were each mentioned unprompted by two-in-ten clerks. Many of these clerks also linked this educational value to the fact that these debates and the education that comes from understanding the other side, builds acceptance of the outcome. In addition, when asked about the weaknesses of the Australian ballot, clerks from both towns with only open town meetings and hybrid systems mentioned that using Australian ballots means less informed viewers. Some clerks also mentioned that this led to less understanding of the results on the part of the town leadership; for instance, one clerk from a town with only an Australian ballot stated that it is sometimes hard to know why something fails to pass under an Australian ballot system because they don’t know the context of why people voted no: “was it too much money? Was it too little money? What would the voters have liked instead?”

Some of the less favorable characteristics described by scholars are also evident in this survey research. First and foremost, low open town meeting participation is clearly evident. The lowest average, lowest highest, and lowest participation rates for town meeting day are reported by towns with only open town meetings. In fact, the average highest participation rate for towns with only open town meetings (14%) is only slightly higher than the average lowest participation rate for towns with Australian ballots only (12%). There are, however, some mixed results in terms of trends in participation. The vast majority of clerks from towns with only open town meetings report that the number of people participating on town meeting day is staying about the same and about one-in-six clerks from only open town meeting towns say that it is decreasing. In contrast, the answers from clerks from towns with only Australian ballots varies much more.

More of these clerks (28%) say that participation is decreasing, but more also say that participation is increasing (12%). The same is true for clerks from towns with hybrid voting systems. Thus, it seems that participation in towns with open town meetings is lower but more consistent, whereas participation in towns with Australian ballots or hybrid systems are higher but more volatile and changing.

The danger of the outsized say of factions was also evident in the data (although the term “faction” was not broadly used by clerks.) The fact that, “a few people have an outsized say” was the second most frequently mentioned weakness of open town meetings. In addition, clerks from towns with only open town meetings, who are most familiar with this system, were the most likely to mention this as a weakness, followed by clerks from towns with hybrid voting systems. In contrast, one of the greatest strengths mentioned in relation to Australian ballots was the fact that more people are represented in the voting process. Clerks from towns with Australian ballots only and hybrid systems were the most likely to point to this greater representation. When asked in in-depth interviews, clerks were both proud of but concerned about the fact that a dedicated group of townsfolk could successfully bring forward issues to be placed on the warning to be discussed at the open town meetings.

Similarly, the concern that open town meetings can create a setting where some might feel more empowered than others to participate also emerged in the survey question about the strengths and weaknesses of the two different systems. One of the most mentioned weaknesses of open town meetings was that work schedules make it so that some have an inability to attend the meeting. In an in-depth interview, a clerk from a town with an Australian ballot only system described exactly how this empowers some over others because the time when town meetings are designated to be held affects who is able to come: when they are held in the middle of the day,

the elderly feel safer and more able to attend, whereas when they are held in the evenings, younger folk and those who work feel more able to come. In addition, clerks also mentioned peer pressure in open town meetings as a weakness which aligns well with Jane Mansbridge's findings that education level and membership in certain town "groups" are a driving factor in who believes their voice has a right to be heard.<sup>192</sup> Clerks from towns with only open town meetings were the most likely to mention both of these weaknesses.

### **The Predictive Power of Town Meetings**

This survey also investigated something that few scholars have discussed over the years: the predictive power of town meetings. The results, as with the praise and criticisms of open town meetings, were relatively mixed. While some clerks did indicate that there were issues that were raised in town meetings 5-10 years ago that have now become a greater part of state and national level politics, a significant number of clerks felt that no such issues existed and the clerks who participated in the in-depth interviews were hesitant to commit to this theory. In order to gain a more definitive answer on this question, more research would need to be done into where and how the issues that clerks reported that rose from local to state- and national-level politics emerged. An investigation of town meeting minutes from 5-10 years ago on climate change might give us a better picture of this evolutionary process. Similarly, this research collected information on the issues brought up in town meetings today that many clerks think will become greater parts of state- and national-level politics. Further research in 5-10 years will be able to determine whether these clerks are accurate in their predictions.

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<sup>192</sup> Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*.



## The Future of Town Meetings in Vermont

This research was originally designed to be able to analyze the potential future of open town meetings in Vermont based on the opinions of town clerks and the participation and changes in participation rates of the varying types of town meeting voting systems. Absent other considerations, the low participation rates in towns with only open town meetings, paired with rural exodus in Vermont<sup>193</sup> already painted a shaky future for open town meetings in Vermont. While some politicians have spoken about the need to expand broadband to encourage growth in small rural towns,<sup>194</sup> little has been successfully done at the state level and struggling small towns have been unsuccessful at drawing more young populations. In fact, the remaining factor driving the continuation of open town meetings in Vermont was largely described by clerks in the in-depth interviews to be Vermonters' stubbornness about tradition rather than anything else.

The population trends, lowering participation rates, and Vermont stubbornness, however, are not the only consideration now when analyzing the future of town meetings in Vermont. Between conducting this survey and the writing of this analysis, the COVID-19 pandemic has spread across the globe and impacted lives and politics here in Vermont. Following the pandemic's appearance in the state, a bill was proposed in the Vermont House of Representatives, H.681, that "would allow Vermont towns and school districts to forgo floor meetings and instead adopt Australian ballot voting for 2020."<sup>195</sup> It was passed into law as Act 92. With these options in place for the near future, it is unclear whether they will also will become the norm moving forward in Vermont for small towns or whether this will be merely a

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<sup>193</sup> Erin Petenko, "As Vermonters leave small towns, Burlington region grows," *VT Digger*, October 3, 2019, <https://vtdigger.org/2019/10/03/as-vermonters-leave-small-towns-they-flock-to-burlington-region/>.

<sup>194</sup> Taylor Dobbs, "Another Vermont Pol Promises Broadband. Could It Work This Time?" *Seven Days*, July 25, 2018, <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/another-vermont-pol-promises-broadband-could-it-work-this-time/Content?oid=18421305>.

<sup>195</sup> Tim Camerato, "Vermont bill may mean mail-in, drive-by voting for Town Meeting," *Valley News*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.vnews.com/Vermont-Makes-Town-Meeting-Changes-33551810>.

passing deviation from traditional open town meetings in towns across the state. On the whole, the clerks interviewed by this researcher were unsure about this future, but the two clerks from towns with only Australian ballot voting systems were more sure of this being a critical and significant step towards more Australian ballot voting in Vermont and the decline of open town meetings.

## **CONCLUSION**

Both praise and criticism have been consistently leveled at open town meetings in Vermont and across New England – from the writings of our founding fathers like Thomas Jefferson and scholars like Alexis De Tocqueville, to much more recent academic works on modern Vermont politics. This research finds that town clerks today offer examples of both the praise and criticisms and agree with the underlying sentiments in both. Clerks believe in the benefits of the direct democracy, negotiation, education, and community building that comes with open town meetings. However, they also acknowledge the detriments of low participation rates, factions, and peer pressure that can emerge in open town meetings.

Ultimately, the findings in this research around participation rates at open town meetings combined with rural exodus demographic data and the more recent policies enacted during the coronavirus that are pulling towns away from in-person voting do not favor the continued strong existence of open town meetings in Vermont. The findings also indicate that expansion of direct democracy to other states would not come in the form of open town meetings. However, if direct democracy were tried in other forms in Vermont and across the country, this research on open town meetings indicates that positives would result from forms of direct democracy that includes

community input and buy-in, educational opportunities, and the public's ability to amend or adjust the proposals.

Direct democracy in the form of open town meetings is not likely to expand to other areas around the country. In fact, there is a real possibility of its disappearance in New England and Vermont. However, the benefits of this form of direct democracy in Vermont can give us insight into how direct democracy could be at its best in future electoral environments.

## THESIS CONCLUSION

Vermont is consistently a “blue” state at the national level. Its delegation is led by Senator Leahy and Senator Bernie Sanders. Senator Leahy is the longest serving Democrat in the Senate, and Senator Sanders, while an Independent, is known for his unapologetically left political positions. On election night especially, and in many other instances, Vermont is not paid much attention. However, the paucity of Vermont’s electoral votes camouflages fascinating and unique aspects of the political environment in Vermont.

This thesis has investigated three separate unique aspects of Vermont’s political environment: the prevalence of split ticket voting, the existence of the most successful third party in the country, and town-meeting-style, direct democracy. By investigating Vermont, we are able to understand: Why Vermont has been able to foster these three attributes, whether they fit the theories and ideals put forward by academics, and how these attributes could be expanded to other states and the nation.

### **Split Ticket Voting**

The first chapter in this thesis investigated the high rates of split ticket voting in the 2018 Vermont election. Vermont’s high levels of split ticket voting stands in stark contrast to split-ticket voting across the rest of the country.

Nationally, split-ticket voting has declined significantly in recent years. The 2018 midterms and 2020 elections were no exception to this trend.<sup>196</sup> However, decreasing split ticket

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<sup>196</sup> Phillip Bump, “2020 Saw The Least Split Ticket House Voting In Decades,”; Note: there are many ways to define and investigate split ticket voting. This article specifically investigates split ticket voting between the House races and the Presidential race, whereas the first chapter in this thesis specifically looks at split ticket voting between House and Senate races and statewide races in Vermont.

was not universally the case. In both 2018 and 2020, Vermont experienced significant split-ticket voting in the form of Democratic defection. In 2018 Vermont elected Independent, and self-proclaimed Democratic Socialist, Senator Bernie Sanders, Democrat Representative Peter Welch, and Progressive Democrat Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman, as well as a veto proof majority for Democrats and Progressives in the Vermont State Legislature. In 2020, Vermonters elected Democratic President Joe Biden, re-elected Democrat Representative Peter Welch, and a majority of Democrats and Progressives in the Vermont State Legislature. However, in both elections, Vermont voters also elected Republican Governor Phil Scott with substantial margins. In 2018, Governor Scott received 55.2% of the vote and in 2020, he received 68.5%.

The first chapter of this thesis begins by investigating possible answers to the question: Why does split ticket voting happen? A review of academic theories on split-ticket voting demonstrates that scholars hold a wide variety of views concerning possible split-ticket voting motivations. However, only a few theories are strongly upheld by the results in this chapter. In interviewing Vermont split-ticket voters, it is clear that Vermont split-ticket voters are voting sincerely when they select more liberal members of Congress and down-ticket state legislature races in addition to a Republican governor. They agree with the vast majority of the more liberal-leaning policies that the legislature was considering in 2018. However, they are also ultimately concerned about their own bottom line when it comes to the Vermont economy and their state taxes. In addition, despite Governor Scott's being a Republican, these split-ticket voters felt connected to Governor Scott, they believed in him, they disassociated him with other national Republicans, and were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt.

The research in this chapter demonstrates that there is no one straightforward answer about why voters split their tickets. Instead, voters offer a number of different motivations. In Vermont, a substantial element of split-ticket voting is derived from the voters' feelings that they know their elected representatives. The Vermonters' sense of community helps them overcome partisanship to vote across party lines when they think an elected individual is acting in a sincere and genuine way. This stands in stark contrast to how these split ticket voters spoke about Republicans, who they did not know personally, at the national level.

Taking a broad analytic approach to what this research has demonstrated: Split ticket voting in Vermont is largely due to the personal relationships and the community feel that is prevalent in a state with under 650,000 residents. This allows voters to feel that they personally know the individuals representing them, and therefore allows them to put aside party label when voting. Therefore, to increase split ticket voting in other areas of the country, this research suggests creating smaller voting districts in which candidates could spend more time organizing door-to-door and getting to know their constituents.

For candidates in districts that favor other parties, but who want to increase split ticket voting, this research indicates that creating and communicating some issue-based separation from national political figures could be a boon. Governor Scott has separated himself from national Republican figures and the national Republican party on certain issues which split ticket voters frequently point to. That being said, split ticket voters trust that he is honest about diverging from party line policies because they first feel that they know and like him. Thus, the first priority for candidates should be creating a sense of community and personal communication with voters on a personal level.

As this country grapples with more polarized partisanship and the villainizing of opposing parties, working toward solutions that encourage split ticket voting by using more one-on-one personal communication and issue-based separation from the party line may have overarching and lasting positive effects nationwide.

### **The Vermont Progressive Party**

The second chapter in this thesis investigated the success of the Vermont Progressive Party. This party has done something that no modern third party has been able to do: maintain success as a third party. For years, academics to activists have been calling for this type of successful third party across the country and within state and local governments. Many justify their reasoning by pointing to declining satisfaction rates with both of the two parties and growing numbers of voters who identify as Independents.<sup>197</sup>

The research in this chapter confirms a number of scholarly theories around third parties: specifically, both the hurdles and optimal environmental conditions for third parties. Strong local media, the legitimacy begun by then-Mayor Bernie Sanders' election, low ballot requirements, small populations, and the availability of fusion candidacies have helped Vermont Progressives.

Academic work, however, usually treats third parties as either outside of the two-party system with little or no chance of substantial electoral success, or as part of a realignment where the third party will ultimately supplant or be taken over by one of the major parties. This research and the experience of the Vermont Progressive Party demonstrates that there is a lack of scholarly theories about a third option: limited success in terms of accessing major party status at the state level, but substantial success at the local level. The Vermont Progressive party has

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<sup>197</sup> Gallup, "Party Affiliation," accessed March 23, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/15370/party-affiliation.aspx>.

achieved a successful realignment in Burlington, but has remained a minor party at the state level for the last forty years.

Academic work to date has also largely categorized third parties as replete with ideologues and purists, pointing to this as one of the reasons for lack of electoral success. The interviews with Progressive activists demonstrate that there is a range of individuals attracted to the Vermont Progressive Party from pragmatists to idealists and that candidates who fit both of these characteristics have been able to be successful.

For members of third parties across the country, the Vermont Progressive Party presents some clear guidance, on how to overcome barriers to gain electoral success and to maintain that success. Like with split ticket voting, personal relationships, community-building, and on-the-ground communication with voters help third party candidates break voters out of their traditional voting patterns, and even out of the binary major party choices. With third parties, however, there are some added logistical and legislative hurdles that should be addressed in states outside of Vermont to encourage third-party voting. First and foremost, parties must look to establish a “proof of concept.” In this political climate, getting small percentages in statewide or national races are not covered in the media as, or seen by voters as being proof of legitimacy. Instead, starting small in local districts where personal relationships can be made and then growing into more prominent political positions is a more plausible option for third party success outside of Vermont.

To further help third-party legitimacy and name recognition expand, local media should be encouraged and supported. The Vermont Progressive Party has benefitted by substantial local media coverage that has legitimized the party in the eyes of many voters. This is something that other third parties around the country could benefit from as well. In addition, third parties can



benefit from low ballot access requirements, fusion candidate options, ranked choice voting, and potentially following the Vermont Progressive Party's lead in combining both idealists and pragmatists within the party ranks.

This research on the Vermont Progressive Party offers a roadmap for ambitious third parties around the country to emulate as they attempt to break into the two-party system. This research and the experience of the trail-blazing Vermont Progressive Party demonstrates that, with key legislation and political environments, a multiparty system is possible in America. As a result, more Independents may come to feel better represented, and better heard, and may be galvanized to participate by a party outside of our current two-party system.

### **Town Meetings and Direct Democracy**

Direct democracy in the form of town meetings has existed in New England for longer than the United States of America has been a country. Throughout the last two hundred years, both substantial praise and criticism have been leveled at direct democracy in the form of open town meetings in Vermont and across New England. In many ways, this form of town-meeting democracy is upheld as an ideal form of government. The reality, however, is much more complicated.

The research in the third chapter of this thesis investigates town meeting day in Vermont from the perspective of the individuals who operate and execute town meeting day: town clerks. The research finds that town clerks today offer examples of both the praise and criticisms and agree with the underlying sentiments in both. In their world, there is no theoretical ideal, but a need to deal with both the inevitable issues and benefits of this form of government. Town clerks believe in the benefits of the direct democracy negotiation, issue education, and community

building that come with open town meetings. However, they also acknowledge the detriments of low participation rates, factions, and peer pressure that can emerge. Clerks who preside over hybrid systems and Australian ballot systems feel similarly about their systems.

Like split-ticket voting and third-party success, direct democracy's success is linked to low populations: small towns mean small town meetings, and more opportunity for communal education, participation, and floor time. This research suggests that in order to maintain direct democracy in Vermont and even to expand it to other states, towns, districts, or any voting bloc would need to have under 500 in-person voters. This small population size would also be, as clerks and scholars have warned, potentially vulnerable to factions and low turnout. Therefore, while the creation of a sub-local government that could accommodate town-meeting style direct democracy in the United States is an interesting concept, this researcher believes it to be logistically infeasible.

Unlike split ticket voting and third party success, this research indicates that there are few clear paths forward for expanding town-meeting style direct democracy to other states. The findings in this research around participation rates at open town meetings, combined with rural exodus demographic data, and the more recent policies enacted during the coronavirus that are pulling towns away from in-person voting do not favor the continued strong existence of open town meetings in Vermont. Similarly, while direct democracy in the form of town meetings has been lauded as one of the purest forms of democracy in the world, this research seems to indicate that there is no clear path towards a resurgence of town-meeting style direct democracy at the national level.

That said, there are other potential avenues for increasing direct democracy including ballot initiatives. While these initiatives were not studied in this thesis, the research indicates that

proponents of these democratic avenues should take heed to encourage voter education and community buy-in when implementing direct democracy.

Together, these three chapters delve into some of the unique aspects that set Vermont's political system and democracy apart. These chapters produce key insights into three frequently lauded solutions to growing partisanship and political dissatisfaction.

Each of these political attributes, or the underlying theories behind them, are pointed to by academics, pundits, and the general public as potential solutions to some of the most pressing political issues in our nation. For instance: split ticket voting is seen as a solution to hyper-partisanship; third parties are viewed as a solution to the growing discontent with the two major parties; direct democracy is perceived as a better way to ensure that the average citizen's wants and needs are heeded. This research allows those who want to work towards a better democracy across the country a spark of hope for the potential that could be. Vermont's experience with split ticket voting, third parties, and direct democracies demonstrates that other states and the nation can take tangible steps outlined above to potentially help address some of the ills in our current system.

It is important to note, however, that Vermont is not a perfect representation of the United States as a whole. Vermont is one of the smallest states, one of the most rural states, and one of the whitest states. Split ticket voting, direct democracy, and the success of the Progressive Party may be due, in part, to some of these features that separate Vermont from other states. The findings certainly indicate that small community-based politicking supports both split ticket voting and the Progressive Party indicates that Vermont's small population size, at least, does contribute. One could argue that systemic racism in other states may add additional barriers to

third parties, against split ticket voting, or direct democracy in various instances. However, Vermont's lack of demographic diversity and therefore this researchers inability to contrast and compare places this outside of the scope of this research.

Research limitations aside, the implications for encouraging third parties and split ticket voting could shift the way that Americans view their participation in politics. Currently, most voters currently see their political options as a binary choice between two less-than ideal options. Creating an environment where a third party, or even a multiparty system can flourish, and where split ticket voting is more encouraged and prevalent, would shift the current political paradigm. Voters would no longer face the "spoiler effect" and instead be able to vote for candidates of various parties that fit with their political ideologies, rather than against one party or for the lesser of two bad choices. Voting, and splitting tickets, for different candidates and multiple parties could galvanize voting across the country and reverse the current trend of fewer people identifying with the parties. In implementing this vision, policies like ranked choice voting could encourage the idea that every vote matters and that every voter can vote for a party that voices their true vision for the country.

Shifting from the current binary, hyper-partisan, approach to democracy could also have positive implications for our lawmakers. Rather than the current oppositional relationship that exists in our legislatures, splitting tickets and the prevalence of third parties would encourage cooperation and negotiation when putting together legislation. The goal for legislators could shift from impeding progress when the opposing party is in power, to finding commonalities with smaller parties to pass legislation where priorities overlap. Here in Vermont, Democrats and Progressives work together, Progressives and Republicans have even worked together, and in some instances, like trying to unseat Bernie as mayor of Burlington, Democrats and Republicans

have worked together. Rather than binary options between two parties and issues, encouraging third parties and split ticket voting could inspire greater coalition building and more negotiation in our democratic process.

Vermont is not a perfect democracy. There are plenty of issues throughout the state and the country that have a grasp here. Neither is this research perfect. However, there are elements of the system in Vermont that demonstrate that better representation and democracy could be possible here and across the country. As our nation grapples with growing partisanship, this research into three of Vermont's unique political attributes has taught us more about the ideals that we strive for, their complexities, and what may be possible on a national level. Vermont could show us a path forward to a better democracy.

## APPENDIX A: Vermont Split-Ticket Voter/Democratic Defector

### Survey Toplines

#### Vermont Split-Ticket Voter/Democratic Defector IVR Survey Topline

Interactive voice response survey

Field Dates: Aug. 16 – Aug. 21, 2019

*Goal: To identify Democratic defecting, split-ticket voters in Vermont for further research*

Q1. To start... Did you happen to vote in the 2018 mid-term election? Or, did things come up that kept you from voting?

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Yes, voted	100%	100%
No, did not vote	0%	0%

Q2. Would you say that Vermont is headed in the right direction or off on the wrong track?

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Right direction	46%	61%
Wrong track	42%	27%
No opinion	12%	12%

Q3. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a...

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Republican	29%	0%
Independent	34%	48%
Democrat	28%	43%
Progressive	10%	9%

Q4. Would you say that you are an independent who leans Republican, an independent who leans Democrat, or a strong Independent?

*\*Asked only of those who thought of themselves as "Independent"*

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	169	100
Lean Democrat	35%	45%
Strong Independent	39%	55%
Lean Republican	26%	0%

Q5. Would you say you are strong Democrat or a not so strong Democrat?

*\*Asked only of those who thought of themselves as "Democrat"*

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	140	88
Strong Democrat	69%	68%
Not so strong Democrat	31%	32%

Q6a. Have you heard of Bernie Sanders?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Yes	99%	100%
No	1%	*%

Q6b. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Bernie Sanders?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of Bernie Sanders*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	312	206
Favorable	76%	71%
Unfavorable	19%	22%
No opinion	5%	7%

Q7a. Have you heard of Peter Welch?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Yes	96%	96%
No	4%	4%

Q7b. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Peter Welch?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of Peter Welch*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	303	198
Favorable	83%	82%
Unfavorable	9%	11%
No opinion	8%	8%

Q8a. Have you heard of Patrick Leahy?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Yes	98%	97%
No	2%	3%

Q8b. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Patrick Leahy?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of Leahy*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	309	201
Favorable	82%	78%
Unfavorable	15%	20%
No opinion	3%	2%



Q9a. Have you heard of Phil Scott?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Yes	97%	98%
No	3%	2%

Q9b. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Phil Scott?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of Phil Scott*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	307	202
Favorable	50%	77%
Unfavorable	34%	12%
No opinion	16%	11%

Q10a. Have you heard of David Zuckerman?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Yes	85%	86%
No	15%	14%

Q10b. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of David Zuckerman?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of David*

*Zuckerman*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	269	177
Favorable	59%	49%
Unfavorable	21%	28%
No opinion	20%	24%

Q11a. Have you heard of TJ Donovan?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Yes	74%	73%
No	26%	27%

Q11b. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of TJ Donovan?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of TJ Donovan*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	232	151
Favorable	56%	61%
Unfavorable	17%	17%
No opinion	27%	22%

Q12a. Have you heard of Rebecca Holcombe?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Yes	49%	46%
No	51%	54%

Q12b. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Rebecca Holcombe?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of Rebecca Holcombe*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	154	96
Favorable	31%	30%
Unfavorable	21%	25%
No opinion	49%	45%

DEMS/INDS: “Have you heard of...?” Summary Table(Q6a-12a)

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

N=315	Yes	No
Bernie Sanders	99%	1%
Peter Welch	96%	4%
Patrick Leahy	98%	2%
Phil Scott	97%	3%
David Zuckerman	85%	15%
TJ Donovan	74%	26%
Rebecca Holcombe	49%	51%

SPLIT-TICKET VOTERS: “Have you heard of...?” Summary Table (Q6a-12a)

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

N=207	Yes	No
Bernie Sanders	100%	1%
Peter Welch	96%	4%
Patrick Leahy	97%	3%
Phil Scott	98%	2%
David Zuckerman	86%	14%
TJ Donovan	73%	27%
Rebecca Holcombe	46%	54%

DEMS/INDS: “Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of...?” Summary Table (Q6b-12b)

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of the candidate*

	N=	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
Bernie Sanders	312	76%	19%	5%
Peter Welch	303	83%	9%	8%
Patrick Leahy	309	82%	15%	3%
Phil Scott	307	50%	34%	16%
David Zuckerman	269	59%	21%	20%
TJ Donovan	232	56%	17%	27%
Rebecca Holcombe	154	31%	21%	49%

SPLIT-TICKET VOTERS: “Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of...” Summary  
Table (Q6b-12b)

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters and had heard of the candidate*

	N=	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
Bernie Sanders	206	71%	22%	7%
Peter Welch	198	82%	11%	8%
Patrick Leahy	201	78%	20%	2%
Phil Scott	202	77%	12%	11%
David Zuckerman	177	49%	28%	24%
TJ Donovan	151	61%	17%	22%
Rebecca Holcombe	96	30%	25%	45%

Q13. As you may know, in 2018 Republican Phil Scott and Democrat Christine Hallquist were running for Governor of Vermont. Who did you vote for Governor? Phil Scott, Christine Hallquist, someone else, or did you not vote for Governor?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Phil Scott	46%	70%
Christine Hallquist	41%	22%
Someone else	8%	4%
Did not vote for Governor	5%	4%

Q14. As you may know, Phil Scott may be running for Governor again in the 2020 general election. How likely or unlikely would you say you are to vote for Phil Scott for Governor 2020?

*\*Asked only of those who qualified as potential split-ticket voters*

	Dems/Inds	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	315	207
Very likely	24%	36%
Somewhat Likely	28%	43%
Somewhat Unlikely	23%	15%
Very Unlikely	23%	6%
Do not plan to vote	2%	*%

Q15. Now, some short demographic questions to make sure we are talking to a good cross section of people. Would you describe yourself as male, female, or would you describe yourself in some other way?

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Male	47%	43%
Female	51%	54%
Other	2%	3%

Q16. In political terms, do you consider yourself a progressive, liberal, moderate, conservative, or libertarian?

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Progressive	15%	14%
Liberal	24%	33%
Moderate	29%	40%
Conservative	27%	9%
Libertarian	4%	4%

Q17. May I ask your age? Are you...

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Under 30 years of age	4%	2%
30-39 years old	5%	4%
40-49 years old	10%	8%
50-59 years old	20%	19%
60-69 years old	24%	29%
70 years old or older	38%	38%

Q18. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Some High School	2%	1%
Graduated High School	17%	16%
Some college/university	19%	21%
Graduated college/university	33%	29%
Post-graduate degree	29%	32%

Q19. What is your work status?

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Full Time	33%	30%
Part Time	7%	10%
Self-employed	11%	11%
Looking for work/unemployed	3%	3%
Stay at home parent	2%	1%
Student	1%	1%
Retired	44%	43%

Q20. How would you describe your economic circumstances? Are you poor, working class, middle class, upper middle class, or well-to-do?

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Poor	8%	7%
Working class	28%	27%
Middle class	44%	43%
Upper middle class	15%	17%
Well-to-do	4%	5%

Q21. Are you married, widowed, separated, divorced, single and never been married, or are you unmarried and living with a partner?

	Total	Split-Ticket Voters
N=	503	207
Married	61%	61%
Widowed	15%	16%
Separated	2%	1%
Divorced	11%	11%
Never been married	7%	6%
Unmarried and living with a partner	5%	4%

## Vermont Split-Ticket Voter/Democratic Defector Follow-up Interviews Topline

### Individual Phone Interviews

Field Dates: Aug. 26 - Sept. 17, 2019

*Goal: To collect both qualitative and quantitative data on democratic defecting split-ticket voters in Vermont. (Note: qualitative information only briefly summarized in this topline)*

Q1. To make sure I am talking to the right person, generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a...?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Republican	1%
Independent	41%
Democrat	41%
Progressive	8%
No preference	9%

First, let's talk about how you voted in 2018.

Q2. As you may know, in 2018 Independent Bernie Sanders and Republican Lawrence Zupan were running for one of Vermont's U.S. Senate seats. Who did you vote for U.S. Senate? Bernie Sanders, Lawrence Zupan, someone else, or did you not vote for U.S. Senate?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Bernie Sanders	86%
Lawrence Zupan	9%
Someone else	3%
Did not vote	3%

Q3. As you may know, in 2018 Democrat Peter Welch and Republican Anya Tynio were running for Vermont's U.S. House of Representatives seat. Who did you vote for U.S. House Representative? Peter Welch, Anya Tynio, someone else, or did you not vote for U.S. House of Representatives?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Peter Welch	91%
Anya Tynio	5%
Someone else	0%
Did not vote	4%

QIVR. As you may know, in 2018 Republican Phil Scott and Democrat Christine Hallquist were running for Governor of Vermont. Who did you vote for Governor? Phil Scott, Christine Hallquist, someone else, or did you not vote for Governor?

*\*This question was asked in the IVR survey but results for only the 78 respondents shown below.*

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Phil Scott	72%
Christine Hallquist	26%
Someone else	0%
Did not vote	0%

Q4. As you may know, in 2018 Progressive Democrat David Zuckerman and Republican Don Turner Jr. were running for Lieutenant Governor of Vermont. Who did you vote for Lieutenant Governor? David Zuckerman, Don Turner Jr., someone else, or did you not vote for Lieutenant Governor?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
David Zuckerman	77%
Don Turner Jr.	15%
Someone else	1%
Did not vote	6%



Q5. As you may know, in 2018 Democrat TJ Donovan and Republican Janssen Willhoit were running for Attorney General of Vermont. Who did you vote for Attorney General? TJ Donovan, Janssen Willhoit, someone else, or did you not vote for Attorney General?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
TJ Donovan	83%
Janssen Willhoit	4%
Someone else	6%
Did not vote	6%

Q6. In general, how satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the way things are going in the United States at this time?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Very satisfied	12%
Somewhat satisfied	3%
Somewhat unsatisfied	14%
Very unsatisfied	72%
Don't know	0%

Q7. And in general, how satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the way things are going in Vermont at this time?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Very satisfied	24%
Somewhat satisfied	49%
Somewhat unsatisfied	13%
Very unsatisfied	13%
Don't know	1%

Q8. What would you say your top political priorities are for Vermont? [OPEN END]

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
The economy, high taxation, and the need for jobs	59%
Healthcare and better access to healthcare	29%
The environment, climate change, and cleaning up Lake Champlain	15%
Gun control	12%
Education	9%
Women's issues	4%
Other	9%
Don't know	6%

Q9. I'm going to list a number of proposals that may be or are being considered by the Vermont State Legislature. Please let me know how much you support or oppose these issues.

Q9a. Ensuring that the government does not raise taxes

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>54%</b>
Strongly support	33%
Somewhat support	21%
Somewhat oppose	26%
Strongly oppose	15%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>41%</b>
Don't know	5%

Q9b. Implementing an education voucher program in Vermont

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>46%</b>
Strongly support	26%
Somewhat support	21%
Somewhat oppose	12%
Strongly oppose	21%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>32%</b>
Don't know	22%

Q9c. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>82%</b>
Strongly support	59%
Somewhat support	23%
Somewhat oppose	8%
Strongly oppose	9%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>17%</b>
Don't know	1%

Q9d. Passing paid family leave

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>77%</b>
Strongly support	55%
Somewhat support	22%
Somewhat oppose	6%
Strongly oppose	9%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>15%</b>
Don't know	6%

Q9e. Legalizing the sale of a small amount of marijuana for personal use

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>71%</b>
Strongly support	50%
Somewhat support	21%
Somewhat oppose	6%
Strongly oppose	15%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>22%</b>
Don't know	8%

Q9f. Increasing access to broadband throughout Vermont

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>91%</b>
Strongly support	74%
Somewhat support	17%
Somewhat oppose	3%
Strongly oppose	3%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>3%</b>
Don't know	4%

Q9g. Investing in renewable energy

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>91%</b>
Strongly support	74%
Somewhat support	17%
Somewhat oppose	3%
Strongly oppose	3%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>5%</b>
Don't know	4%

Q9h. Improving water quality in Lake Champlain

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>94%</b>
Strongly support	81%
Somewhat support	13%
Somewhat oppose	1%
Strongly oppose	3%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>4%</b>
Don't know	3%

Q9i. Providing financial incentives to workers who move to Vermont

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>40%</b>
Strongly support	8%
Somewhat support	32%
Somewhat oppose	29%
Strongly oppose	17%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>46%</b>
Don't know	14%

Q9j. Passing a 24-hour waiting period for handgun purchases

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>88%</b>
Strongly support	83%
Somewhat support	5%
Somewhat oppose	0%
Strongly oppose	8%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>8%</b>
Don't know	4%

Q9k. Reducing the state's prison inmate population

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>78%</b>
Strongly support	45%
Somewhat support	33%
Somewhat oppose	4%
Strongly oppose	5%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>9%</b>
Don't know	13%

Q9l. Providing free tuition at Vermont State Colleges and Universities

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>73%</b>
Strongly support	51%
Somewhat support	22%
Somewhat oppose	10%
Strongly oppose	15%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>26%</b>
Don't know	1%

Q9m. Addressing the opioid crisis

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>88%</b>
Strongly support	77%
Somewhat support	12%
Somewhat oppose	0%
Strongly oppose	4%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>4%</b>
Don't know	8%

Q9n. Adding abortion rights to the Vermont Constitution

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>74%</b>
Strongly support	62%
Somewhat support	13%
Somewhat oppose	5%
Strongly oppose	14%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>19%</b>
Don't know	6%

Q9o. Passing a four-year term for governor

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>76%</b>
Strongly support	47%
Somewhat support	28%
Somewhat oppose	8%
Strongly oppose	6%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>14%</b>
Don't know	10%

Q9p. Implementing a fuel or gas tax to fund projects to decrease energy consumption

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>44%</b>
Strongly support	22%
Somewhat support	22%
Somewhat oppose	18%
Strongly oppose	29%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>47%</b>
Don't know	9%

Q9q. Expanding access to healthcare

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>90%</b>
Strongly support	76%
Somewhat support	14%
Somewhat oppose	0%
Strongly oppose	4%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>4%</b>
Don't know	6%

Q9r. Appointing a Vermont director for LGBTQ equity

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
<b>Total support</b>	<b>60%</b>
Strongly support	32%
Somewhat support	28%
Somewhat oppose	8%
Strongly oppose	18%
<b>Total oppose</b>	<b>26%</b>
Don't know	14%

## SUMMARY TABLE: Legislative proposals

*Continued on next page*

<i>N</i> = 78	<b>Total Support</b>	Strongly support	Somewhat support	<b>Total Oppose</b>	Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	Don't know
<i>Improving water quality in lake Champlain</i>	<b>94%</b>	81%	13%	<b>4%</b>	3%	1%	3%
<i>Investing in renewable energy</i>	<b>91%</b>	74%	17%	<b>5%</b>	3%	3%	4%
<i>Increasing access to broadband throughout Vermont</i>	<b>91%</b>	69%	22%	<b>3%</b>	1%	1%	6%
<i>Expanding access to healthcare</i>	<b>90%</b>	76%	14%	<b>4%</b>	4%	0	6%
<i>Passing a 24-hour waiting period for handgun purchases</i>	<b>88%</b>	83%	5%	<b>8%</b>	8%	0	4%
<i>Addressing the opioid crisis</i>	<b>88%</b>	77%	12%	<b>4%</b>	4%	0	8%
<i>Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour</i>	<b>82%</b>	59%	23%	<b>17%</b>	9%	8%	1%
<i>Reducing the state's prison inmate population</i>	<b>78%</b>	45%	33%	<b>9%</b>	5%	4%	13%
<i>Passing paid family leave</i>	<b>77%</b>	55%	22%	<b>15%</b>	9%	6%	6%
<i>Passing a four year term for governor</i>	<b>76%</b>	47%	28%	<b>14%</b>	6%	8%	10%
<i>Adding abortion rights to the Vermont Constitution</i>	<b>74%</b>	62%	13%	<b>19%</b>	14%	5%	6%
<i>Providing free tuition at Vermont State Colleges and Universities</i>	<b>73%</b>	51%	22%	<b>26%</b>	15%	10%	1%
<i>Legalizing the sale of a small amount of marijuana for personal use</i>	<b>71%</b>	50%	21%	<b>22%</b>	15%	6%	8%

<i>Appointing a Vermont director for LGBTQ equity</i>	<b>60%</b>	32%	28%	<b>26%</b>	18%	8%	14%
<i>Ensuring that the government does not raise taxes</i>	<b>54%</b>	33%	21%	<b>41%</b>	15%	26%	5%
<i>Implementing an education voucher program in Vermont</i>	<b>46%</b>	26%	21%	<b>32%</b>	21%	12%	22%
<i>Implementing a fuel or gas tax to fund projects to decrease energy consumption</i>	<b>44%</b>	22%	22%	<b>47%</b>	29%	18%	9%
<i>Providing financial incentives to workers who move to Vermont</i>	<b>40%</b>	8%	32%	<b>46%</b>	17%	29%	14%

Q10. Which of the following statements best describes how you generally support candidates in Vermont. Would you say...

<i>N = 78</i>	<b>Split-Ticket Voters</b>
I support candidates who focus on progressive values and economic justice	26%
I lean towards supporting candidates who focus on progressive values and economic justice	21%
I lean towards supporting candidates who focus on issues like the economy and balancing the state budget	14%
I support candidates who focus on issues like the economy and balancing the state budget	24%
Both [VOL]	15%



Q11. Do you want the candidates that are elected to office to make compromises to gain consensus on legislation, or stick to their campaign positions even if that means no consensus on legislation?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Make compromises to gain consensus on legislation	77%
Stick to their campaign positions even if that means no consensus on legislation	15%
It depends [VOL]	4%
Don't know	4%

Q12. In thinking about how the Governor candidates in 2020 approach issues like economic opportunity, health care, climate change, and college affordability, which of the following comes closer to describing the candidate you prefer...

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Someone who proposes larger scale policies that cost more and might be harder to pass into law, but could bring major change on these issues	26%
Someone who proposes smaller scale policies that cost less and might be easier to pass into law, but will bring less change on these issues.	65%
It depends [VOL]	5%
Don't know [VOL]	4%

Q13. During our other phone survey, you said that you were favorable to Phil Scott. Could you please tell me some of the specific reasons why you are favorable to him?

<i>N</i> = 60	Split-Ticket Voters
Good demeanor, intelligent, hardworking, true to his word	45%
Supported Democratic positions/ Not a real Republican	33%
Willing to compromise	27%
He is doing a “good job”	23%
Cares about Vermont and all Vermonters	20%
His position on budget and taxation	12%
Needed change from Democratic Governor, Need to balance government	12%
Is a moderate	10%
He is a businessman and understands blue collar workers	7%
No good Democratic candidates	3%
Don’t know	7%

Q14. During our other phone survey, you said that you voted for Phil Scott in 2018. Could you please tell me some of the specific reasons why you voted for him?

<i>N</i> = 57	Split-Ticket Voters
Specific policy agreement	33%
Budget and taxation policy	18%
Christine Hallquist was not a good candidate	25%
Incumbency benefits: name recognition, solid performance, no big bad changes	16%
He is a good guy	14%
Willing to compromise	5%
Able to balance the Democrats in the legislature	4%
Don’t know	19%

Q15. During our other phone survey, you said that you would vote for Phil Scott in 2020. Could you please tell me some of the specific reasons why you would vote for him?

<i>N</i> = 58	Split-Ticket Voters
Depends on who is running against Scott	28%
Specific policy agreement	26%
Budget and taxation policies	9%
He has done a good job so far in the office	24%
Compromises and works with Democrats	9%
He has a good character	7%
Don't know	14%

Q16. As you may know, a number of Vermont Democrats, Independents, and Progressives voted for Phil Scott in the 2018 election. If you were giving anonymous advice to a Democratic candidate running for governor in 2020, what would advise them to say or do to appeal to those people who voted for Phil Scott?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Focus on the economy, employment, and lowering taxes	26%
Focus on specific policies (environment/climate change, healthcare, education, raising the minimum wage, gun control, the opioid crisis)	24%
Be more moderate, realistic, and avoid "fringe issues"	21%
Be truthful and honest	18%
Listen to "every day" Vermonters	17%
Compromise and work with the legislature to accomplish something	13%
They need a good track record and experience	9%
Nothing; I am voting for Phil Scott	9%
Don't know	10%

Q17. Thinking about the primary for Vermont Governor next year. Would you vote in the Democratic primary, the Republican Primary, or would you wait to vote in the General Election?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Democratic Primary	46%
Republican Primary	4%
Wait until the general election	27%
Don't know	23%

Q18. As you may know, there are a number of Progressive and Democratic politicians in Vermont who may run for the Democratic nomination for Governor in 2020. Which candidate would you be most likely to vote for in the primary?

<i>N</i> = 38	Split-Ticket Voters
David Zuckerman	26%
TJ Donovan	24%
Rebecca Holcombe	18%
Brenda Siegel	3%
Don't know	29%

Q19. How frequently would you say you pay attention to politics in Vermont, if at all?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Every day	46%
At least once a week	31%
Once every couple weeks	13%
Once every couple months	3%
Only during elections	3%
I do not pay much attention to politics	5%

Q20. Where do you primarily get your information about Vermont politics?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Local newspapers	62%
Local television	59%
Local Radio	33%
Family and friends	6%
Social media	4%

Q21. This is the end of our survey. Would you be willing to be contacted once or twice more about the 2020 election for us to listen and learn more about what you think about the 2020 election?

<i>N</i> = 78	Split-Ticket Voters
Yes	96%
No	4%

## APPENDIX B: Precinct Calculation Steps

### Precinct Calculation Steps

Performed using Vermont Secretary of State Data on 2018 voting.

First, the absolute difference in precinct vote totals for Sanders, Zuckerman and Welch were calculated. **Appendix B - Table 1** shows Vermont precincts ranked by lowest absolute difference for each candidate's vote totals as compared to Scott's vote totals.

**Appendix B - Table 1**

	SANDERS	SCOTT			ZUCKERMAN	SCOTT			WELCH	SCOTT	
Sudbury	60.70%	60.70%	0%	Tinmouth	54.32%	54.32%	0%	Sudbury	60.70%	60.70%	0%
Saint Johnsbury	59.51%	59.63%	0%	Roxbury	54.68%	54.68%	0%	Northfield	64.37%	64.43%	0%
Burke	60.88%	60.59%	0%	Cabot	54.96%	54.96%	0%	Sailsbury	65.57%	65.15%	0%
Brookfield	61.20%	61.50%	0%	Whitingham	51.67%	51.47%	0%	Ludlow	56.92%	57.36%	0%
Panton	61.39%	61.06%	0%	Rutland City	49.71%	49.46%	0%	Hancock	61.70%	60.99%	1%
Saint George	62.26%	61.64%	1%	Bethel	57.62%	57.95%	0%	Braintree	62.59%	61.84%	1%
Barnet	58.92%	58.18%	1%	Monkton	58.32%	57.96%	0%	Corinth	58.93%	59.90%	1%
Braintree	61.09%	61.84%	1%	Morristown	58.07%	57.70%	0%	Panton	62.05%	61.06%	1%
Wheelock	56.46%	57.36%	1%	Sandgate	51.55%	51.03%	1%	Burke	59.46%	60.59%	1%
Bridgewater	61.25%	60.32%	1%	Reading	58.82%	57.98%	1%	Poultney	58.98%	57.85%	1%
Glover	60.15%	61.09%	1%	Dover	52.84%	54.18%	1%	Cavendish	56.19%	54.81%	1%
Poultney	56.88%	57.85%	1%	Georgia	34.13%	35.83%	2%	North Hero	61.63%	63.19%	2%
Walden	58.89%	57.78%	1%	Stockbridge	59.08%	60.81%	2%	Fairfield	65.24%	66.93%	2%
Albany	60.40%	61.65%	1%	Tunbridge	54.06%	55.94%	2%	Killington	62.78%	64.52%	2%
Shrewsbury	58.79%	57.51%	1%	Wolcott	56.73%	54.68%	2%	Brandon	61.00%	59.09%	2%
Shoreham	61.92%	60.55%	1%	Springfield	53.06%	55.33%	2%	Saint Johnsbury	61.60%	59.63%	2%
Shaftsbury	51.37%	49.85%	2%	Woodbury	54.14%	56.48%	2%	Kirby	61.54%	59.51%	2%
Corinth	58.28%	59.90%	2%	Chester	53.94%	56.32%	2%	Bridgewater	62.41%	60.32%	2%
Ferrisburgh	63.54%	61.80%	2%	West Windsor	60.62%	57.96%	3%	Wheelock	55.26%	57.36%	2%
Sailsbury	63.09%	65.15%	2%	Dorset	60.24%	57.33%	3%	Grand Isle	64.05%	66.17%	2%
Ludlow	59.43%	57.36%	2%	Middletown Springs	52.61%	55.65%	3%	Shrewsbury	59.89%	57.51%	2%
Pawlet	58.86%	56.57%	2%	Duxbury	55.88%	58.93%	3%	Brookfield	63.91%	61.50%	2%
Readsboro	48.87%	46.28%	3%	Bristol	57.82%	54.76%	3%	Searsburg	45.00%	47.50%	3%
Colchester	64.61%	62.02%	3%	Johnson	56.41%	53.21%	3%	West Haven	62.61%	65.22%	3%
New Haven	63.87%	61.11%	3%	Readsboro	49.51%	46.28%	3%	Springfield	58.39%	55.33%	3%
Springfield	58.23%	55.33%	3%	Newbury	53.42%	56.66%	3%	Walden	60.89%	57.78%	3%

Cavendish	57.90%	54.81%	3%	Pownal	50.90%	47.60%	3%	Middletown Springs	58.91%	55.65%	3%
Whitingham	54.62%	51.47%	3%	Rupert	52.97%	56.37%	3%	Pawlet	60.00%	56.57%	3%
Kirby	56.28%	59.51%	3%	Jericho	59.38%	55.85%	4%	Pittsfield	60.31%	63.74%	3%
North Hero	59.90%	63.19%	3%	Cambridge	57.45%	53.82%	4%	Proctor	61.27%	64.74%	3%
Waltham	62.36%	59.04%	3%	Londonderry	59.00%	55.23%	4%	Athens	54.55%	51.05%	4%
Killington	60.87%	64.52%	4%	Barnard	57.58%	53.79%	4%	Danville	61.45%	65%	4%
Tinmouth	58.02%	54.32%	4%	Grafton	60.26%	56.41%	4%	Shoreham	64.15%	60.55%	4%
Newark	54.86%	58.75%	4%	Pawlet	52.71%	56.57%	4%	Glover	64.85%	61.09%	4%
Newbury	60.60%	56.66%	4%	Manchester	56.61%	52.63%	4%	Ferrisburgh	65.76%	61.80%	4%
Hardwick	62.56%	58.52%	4%	Bradford	54.56%	58.75%	4%	Albany	57.64%	61.65%	4%
Northfield	60.24%	64.43%	4%	Hancock	56.74%	60.99%	4%	Fair Haven	54.23%	58.56%	4%
Fletcher	62.48%	58.24%	4%	Shaftsbury	54.24%	49.85%	4%	New Haven	65.51%	61.11%	4%
Grand Isle	61.65%	66.17%	5%	Walden	53.33%	57.78%	4%	Saint George	66.04%	61.64%	4%
Pittsfield	59.16%	63.74%	5%	Williston	56.52%	61.02%	4%	Wallingford	55.70%	60.26%	5%
Strafford	41.12%	36.48%	5%	Cavendish	50.17%	54.81%	5%	Newbury	61.30%	56.66%	5%
Bakersfield	66.03%	61.29%	5%	Barnet	53.51%	58.18%	5%	Newark	54.09%	58.75%	5%
Fair Haven	53.61%	58.56%	5%	Shrewsbury	52.56%	57.51%	5%	Randolph	64.37%	59.62%	5%
West Haven	60%	65.22%	5%	Searsburg	42.50%	47.50%	5%	Readsboro	51.13%	46.28%	5%
Randolph	64.95%	59.62%	5%	Randolph	54.48%	59.62%	5%	Stratton	58.54%	63.41%	5%
Williston	66.71%	61.02%	6%	Royalton	57.29%	52.12%	5%	Barnet	63.10%	58.18%	5%
Bradford	64.45%	58.75%	6%	Plymouth	59.02%	53.76%	5%	Bakersfield	66.22%	61.29%	5%
Westfield	56.54%	62.31%	6%	Sudbury	55.09%	60.70%	6%	Westfield	57.31%	62.31%	5%
Woodbury	62.63%	56.48%	6%	Pomfret	59.39%	53.70%	6%	Chester	61.42%	56.32%	5%
Weathersfield	55.56%	61.84%	6%	Orwell	38.25%	32.54%	6%	Stamford	49.87%	55.15%	5%
Saint Albans City	66.21%	59.86%	6%	West Fairlee	60.56%	54.80%	6%	Whitingham	56.78%	51.47%	5%
Stratton	56.91%	63.41%	6%	Underhill	60.21%	54.43%	6%	Hardwick	63.86%	58.52%	5%
Sandgate	57.73%	51.03%	7%	Bridgewater	54.52%	60.32%	6%	Plymouth	59.11%	53.76%	5%
Reading	64.71%	57.98%	7%	Hyde Park	54.05%	60.15%	6%	Hubbardton	56.73%	62.18%	5%
Dover	61.04%	54.18%	7%	Windham	63.51%	57.35%	6%	Westmore	55.87%	61.45%	6%
Westford	66.49%	59.60%	7%	Vergennes	60.54%	54.36%	6%	Sandgate	56.70%	51.03%	6%
Stockbridge	67.72%	60.81%	7%	Weston	61.43%	55.10%	6%	Dover	59.85%	54.18%	6%
Wallingford	53.31%	60.26%	7%	Brandon	52.68%	59.09%	6%	Tinmouth	60.08%	54.32%	6%
Vernon	53.27%	60.24%	7%	Stowe	61.36%	54.95%	6%	Colchester	67.95%	62.02%	6%
Athens	58.04%	51.05%	7%	Wardsboro	56.48%	50.00%	6%	Weathersfield	55.72%	61.84%	6%
Londonderry	62.29%	55.23%	7%	Ludlow	50.71%	57.36%	7%	Fletcher	64.60%	58.24%	6%
Rupert	63.46%	56.37%	7%	Panton	54.13%	61.06%	7%	Barton	60.22%	66.85%	7%
Stamford	48.02%	55.15%	7%	Corinth	52.76%	59.90%	7%	Whiting	65.36%	72.07%	7%
Westmore	54.19%	61.45%	7%	Arlington	57.61%	50.46%	7%	Grafton	63.14%	56.41%	7%
Whiting	64.80%	72.07%	7%	Poultney	50.65%	57.85%	7%	Reading	64.71%	57.98%	7%

Isle La Motte	58.39%	65.73%	7%	Marshfield	58.12%	50.89%	7%	Andover	55.23%	62.09%	7%
Pownal	54.95%	47.60%	7%	Hardwick	51.03%	58.52%	7%	Stockbridge	67.72%	60.81%	7%
Proctor	57.37%	64.74%	7%	South Hero	52.31%	59.96%	8%	Waterville	57.71%	64.63%	7%
South Hero	67.34%	59.96%	7%	Sunderland	58.72%	51.06%	8%	Vernon	53.27%	60.24%	7%
Rutland City	56.84%	49.46%	7%	Landgrove	64.42%	56.73%	8%	Woodbury	63.48%	56.48%	7%
Andover	54.58%	62.09%	8%	Burke	52.82%	60.59%	8%	Bradford	65.78%	58.75%	7%
Fairfield	59.37%	66.93%	8%	Westford	51.54%	59.60%	8%	Waltham	66.42%	59.04%	7%
Hubbardton	54.49%	62.18%	8%	Moretown	62.07%	53.99%	8%	Tunbridge	63.48%	55.94%	8%
Hancock	68.79%	60.99%	8%	Wheelock	49.25%	57.36%	8%	Enosburgh	61.06%	68.65%	8%
Hyde Park	68.25%	60.15%	8%	Waltham	50.55%	59.04%	8%	Richford	57.48%	65.11%	8%
Tunbridge	64.06%	55.94%	8%	Windhall	60.44%	51.87%	9%	Saint Albans City	67.58%	59.86%	8%
Jay	55.98%	64.11%	8%	Montgomery	56.81%	48.17%	9%	Chelsea	57.73%	65.46%	8%
Plymouth	62.03%	53.76%	8%	Fletcher	49.59%	58.24%	9%	Hyde Park	68.03%	60.15%	8%
Bethel	66.59%	57.95%	9%	Shelburne	63.35%	54.67%	9%	Castleton	55.24%	63.13%	8%
Danville	56.35%	65%	9%	Fairfax	41.33%	32.56%	9%	Chittenden	55.43%	63.35%	8%
Waterville	55.85%	64.63%	9%	Ferrisburgh	52.82%	61.80%	9%	Rupert	64.31%	56.37%	8%
Arlington	59.54%	50.46%	9%	Saint Albans City	50.76%	59.86%	9%	Westford	68.30%	59.60%	9%
Dorset	66.54%	57.33%	9%	Saint George	52.52%	61.64%	9%	Williston	70.10%	61.02%	9%
Enosburgh	59.41%	68.65%	9%	Waterbury	63.77%	54.58%	9%	Isle La Motte	56.64%	65.73%	9%
Manchester	61.87%	52.63%	9%	Saint Johnsbury	50.16%	59.63%	9%	Cabot	64.17%	54.96%	9%
Barton	57.35%	66.85%	10%	Colchester	52.48%	62.02%	10%	Canaan	55.40%	64.69%	9%
Grafton	66.03%	56.41%	10%	Braintree	52.26%	61.84%	10%	Duxbury	68.51%	58.93%	10%
Chelsea	55.67%	65.46%	10%	Shoreham	50.94%	60.55%	10%	Saint Albans Town	60.46%	70.23%	10%
Brownington	53.07%	62.88%	10%	Hartland	62.55%	52.92%	10%	Pownal	57.42%	47.60%	10%
Cabot	64.89%	54.96%	10%	Bolton	62.36%	52.44%	10%	Bethel	67.89%	57.95%	10%
Searsburg	37.50%	47.50%	10%	Kirby	49.39%	59.51%	10%	Leicester	58.08%	68.18%	10%
Canaan	54.60%	64.69%	10%	New Haven	50.56%	61.11%	11%	Londonderry	65.45%	55.23%	10%
Castleton	52.83%	63.13%	10%	Starksboro	61.31%	50.73%	11%	Wardsboro	60.49%	50.00%	10%
West Windsor	68.29%	57.96%	10%	Windsor	61.57%	50.66%	11%	Jay	53.59%	64.11%	11%
Chittenden	52.95%	63.35%	10%	Vershire	62.80%	51.79%	11%	Franklin	55.99%	66.73%	11%
Richford	54.67%	65.11%	10%	East Montpelier	62.97%	51.88%	11%	Sheffield	56.57%	67.33%	11%
Duxbury	69.38%	58.93%	10%	Westfield	51.15%	62.31%	11%	South Hero	70.76%	59.96%	11%
Monkton	68.44%	57.96%	10%	Athens	62.24%	51.05%	11%	Mendon	55.50%	66.31%	11%
Danby	48.86%	59.89%	11%	Sharon	63.01%	51.75%	11%	Eden	57.07%	68.05%	11%
Belvidere	53.73%	64.93%	11%	Wallingford	48.97%	60.26%	11%	Washington	55.51%	66.52%	11%
Eden	56.83%	68.05%	11%	Wilmington	58.21%	46.86%	11%	Danby	48.86%	59.89%	11%
Sunderland	62.34%	51.06%	11%	Elmore	63.16%	51.46%	12%	Monkton	69.53%	57.96%	12%
Sheffield	55.38%	67.33%	12%	Killington	52.70%	64.52%	12%	Rutland Town	57.46%	69.13%	12%
Roxbury	66.67%	54.68%	12%	Weathersfield	50.00%	61.84%	12%	Rutland City	61.24%	49.46%	12%

Washington	54.43%	66.52%	12%	Brookfield	49.47%	61.50%	12%	West Windsor	69.76%	57.96%	12%
Jericho	68.14%	55.85%	12%	Andover	50%	62.09%	12%	Shaftsbury	61.68%	49.85%	12%
Charleston	53.75%	66.15%	12%	Hubbardton	50%	62.18%	12%	Brownington	50.92%	62.88%	12%
Morristown	70.32%	57.70%	13%	Glover	48.68%	61.09%	12%	Roxbury	66.67%	54.68%	12%
Wardsboro	62.65%	50.00%	13%	Fairlee	64.03%	51.61%	12%	Ryegate	58.90%	71%	12%
Johnson	65.87%	53.21%	13%	Fayston	65.61%	53.17%	12%	Marshfield	63.03%	50.89%	12%
Bristol	67.63%	54.76%	13%	Bakersfield	48.77%	61.29%	13%	Johnson	65.54%	53.21%	12%
Marshfield	63.85%	50.89%	13%	Albany	49.12%	61.65%	13%	Pittsford	54.00%	66.43%	12%
Leicester	55.05%	68.18%	13%	Hinesburg	64.66%	52.09%	13%	Windham	70.14%	57.35%	13%
Troy	53.38%	66.54%	13%	Berlin	46.99%	34.29%	13%	Alburgh	57.38%	70.48%	13%
Woodford	59.72%	46.53%	13%	Rochester	64.86%	51.89%	13%	Morristown	70.80%	57.70%	13%
Weston	68.32%	55.10%	13%	Pittsfield	50.76%	63.74%	13%	Jericho	68.96%	55.85%	13%
Mendon	52.48%	66.31%	14%	Stratton	50.41%	63.41%	13%	Vershire	65.18%	51.79%	13%
Ryegate	56.85%	71%	14%	Halifax	57.50%	44.44%	13%	Bristol	68.21%	54.76%	13%
Windhall	66.15%	51.87%	14%	Stamford	41.95%	55.15%	13%	Dorset	70.86%	57.33%	14%
Barnard	68.18%	53.79%	14%	Charlotte	65.16%	51.93%	13%	Troy	53.01%	66.54%	14%
Saint Albans Town	55.71%	70.23%	15%	Woodstock	64.08%	50.62%	13%	Windhall	65.71%	51.87%	14%
Baltimore	49.51%	64.08%	15%	Newark	45.14%	58.75%	14%	Brighton	52.28%	66.16%	14%
West Fairlee	69.72%	54.80%	15%	Fair Haven	44.74%	58.56%	14%	Wolcott	68.86%	54.68%	14%
Windham	72.51%	57.35%	15%	Westmore	46.93%	61.45%	15%	Lyndon	54.30%	68.50%	14%
Brighton	50.98%	66.16%	15%	Peacham	62.82%	48.27%	15%	Charleston	51.94%	66.15%	14%
Hartland	68.20%	52.92%	15%	Sailsbury	50.52%	65.15%	15%	Benson	50.83%	65.25%	14%
Coventry	50.74%	66.26%	16%	Richmond	64.67%	50.04%	15%	Underhill	69.29%	54.43%	15%
Alburgh	54.90%	70.48%	16%	Essex	56.21%	41.37%	15%	Arlington	65.50%	50.46%	15%
Stowe	70.59%	54.95%	16%	Bennington	58.83%	43.75%	15%	Royalton	67.20%	52.12%	15%
Royalton	67.97%	52.12%	16%	South Burlington	65.65%	50.45%	15%	Montgomery	63.46%	48.17%	15%
Orwell	48.41%	32.54%	16%	Newport City	47.53%	32.21%	15%	Coventry	50.74%	66.26%	16%
Vergennes	70.30%	54.36%	16%	Hartford	64.24%	48.52%	16%	Sunderland	66.60%	51.06%	16%
Derby	52.35%	68.36%	16%	Waitsfield	66.80%	51.06%	16%	Manchester	68.29%	52.63%	16%
Cambridge	69.83%	53.82%	16%	Danby	44.11%	59.89%	16%	Derby	52.62%	68.36%	16%
Windsor	34.46%	50.66%	16%	Northfield	48.17%	64.43%	16%	Barnard	69.70%	53.79%	16%
West Rutland	49.88%	66.11%	16%	North Hero	46.70%	63.19%	16%	Cambridge	69.77%	53.82%	16%
Georgia	52.13%	35.83%	16%	Peru	66.83%	50.24%	17%	Weston	71.07%	55.10%	16%
Shelburne	70.97%	54.67%	16%	Vernon	43.63%	60.24%	17%	Starksboro	66.79%	50.73%	16%
Wolcott	71.05%	54.68%	16%	Greensboro	65.28%	48.61%	17%	Vergennes	70.64%	54.36%	16%
Underhill	70.83%	54.43%	16%	Goshen	62.50%	45.54%	17%	West Rutland	49.76%	66.11%	16%
Rutland Town	52.67%	69.13%	16%	Middlesex	65.73%	48.75%	17%	Sheldon	59.91%	76.30%	16%
Pittsford	49.81%	66.43%	17%	Castleton	46.09%	63.13%	17%	Milton	55.36%	71.85%	16%
Benson	48.46%	65.25%	17%	Proctor	47.69%	64.74%	17%	West Fairlee	71.31%	54.80%	17%



Rochester	69.13%	51.89%	17%	Danville	47.80%	65%	17%	Bridport	56.29%	72.96%	17%
Bennington	61.01%	43.75%	17%	Jay	46.89%	64.11%	17%	Addison	54.48%	71.76%	17%
Lyndon	51.20%	68.50%	17%	Barton	48.73%	66.85%	18%	Swanton	56.24%	73.57%	17%
Starksboro	33.39%	50.73%	17%	Chittenden	45.19%	63.35%	18%	Newport Town	51.37%	69.10%	18%
Bolton	69.92%	52.44%	17%	Jamaica	60.82%	42.53%	18%	Wilmington	64.86%	46.86%	18%
Wilmington	64.49%	46.86%	18%	Brownington	44.48%	62.88%	18%	Hartland	71.09%	52.92%	18%
Vershire	69.64%	51.79%	18%	Woodford	65.28%	46.53%	19%	Bolton	70.87%	52.44%	18%
Halifax	62.78%	44.44%	18%	Mendon	46.99%	66.31%	19%	Baltimore	45.63%	64.08%	18%
Sharon	70.17%	51.75%	18%	Barre City	51.17%	31.26%	20%	Sutton	53.85%	72.36%	19%
Peacham	66.74%	48.27%	18%	Leicester	48.23%	68.18%	20%	Topsham	50.11%	68.62%	19%
Wells	50.10%	68.66%	19%	Troy	46.24%	66.54%	20%	Mount Tabor	48.57%	67.14%	19%
Hinesburg	70.81%	52.09%	19%	Chelsea	44.85%	65.46%	21%	Sharon	70.32%	51.75%	19%
Milton	52.96%	71.85%	19%	Whiting	51.40%	72.07%	21%	Halifax	63.06%	44.44%	19%
Montgomery	67.11%	48.17%	19%	Mount Holly	49.40%	28.46%	21%	Belvidere	46.27%	64.93%	19%
Landgrove	75.96%	56.73%	19%	Grand Isle	45.19%	66.17%	21%	Brunswick	58.33%	77.08%	19%
Franklin	47.41%	66.73%	19%	Craftsbury	65.05%	43.43%	22%	East Haven	49.55%	68.47%	19%
Newport Town	49.73%	69.10%	19%	Eden	46.10%	68.05%	22%	Stowe	74.01%	54.95%	19%
Fairlee	71.95%	51.61%	20%	Charleston	44.19%	66.15%	22%	Groton	50.61%	69.98%	19%
Moretown	74.68%	53.99%	21%	Waterville	42.55%	64.63%	22%	Wells	49.10%	68.66%	20%
Bridport	52.21%	72.96%	21%	Worcester	68.27%	45.96%	22%	Windsor	70.23%	50.66%	20%
Sutton	51.57%	72.36%	21%	Baltimore	41.75%	64.08%	22%	Orwell	52.38%	32.54%	20%
Waterbury	75.37%	54.58%	21%	Lincoln	67.23%	44.39%	23%	Rochester	71.76%	51.89%	20%
Groton	49.15%	69.98%	21%	Bloomfield	41.89%	64.86%	23%	Waterford	51.09%	71.02%	20%
Addison	50.93%	71.76%	21%	Pittsford	43.20%	66.43%	23%	Fairlee	71.73%	51.61%	20%
Swanton	52.67%	73.57%	21%	West Haven	41.74%	65.22%	23%	Georgia	56.01%	35.83%	20%
Charlotte	73.26%	51.93%	21%	Washington	42.98%	66.52%	24%	Berkshire	54.10%	74.80%	21%
Goshen	66.96%	45.54%	21%	Warren	70.10%	46.54%	24%	Moretown	75.00%	53.99%	21%
Bloomfield	43.24%	64.86%	22%	Weybridge	69.04%	45.40%	24%	Hinesburg	73.24%	52.09%	21%
East Montpelier	74.20%	51.88%	22%	Canaan	40.95%	64.69%	24%	Ira	51.31%	72.77%	21%
Sheldon	53.95%	76.30%	22%	Huntington	69.62%	45.84%	24%	Bloomfield	43.24%	64.86%	22%
Pomfret	76.09%	53.70%	22%	Sheffield	43.43%	67.33%	24%	Waterbury	76.29%	54.58%	22%
Peru	72.68%	50.24%	22%	Isle La Motte	41.61%	65.73%	24%	Peru	72.20%	50.24%	22%
Fayston	75.79%	53.17%	23%	Rockingham	65.71%	41.49%	24%	Bennington	65.83%	43.75%	22%
South Burlington	73.11%	50.45%	23%	Richford	40.81%	65.11%	24%	Landgrove	78.85%	56.73%	22%
Hartford	71.45%	48.52%	23%	Coventry	41.87%	66.26%	24%	Barre Town	54.02%	76.14%	22%
Elmore	74.46%	51.46%	23%	West Rutland	41.71%	66.11%	24%	Williamstown	53.37%	75.65%	22%
Waterford	47.91%	71.02%	23%	Fairfield	42.21%	66.93%	25%	Shelburne	77.18%	54.67%	23%
Berkshire	51.56%	74.80%	23%	Ryegate	45.89%	71%	25%	Peacham	70.90%	48.27%	23%
Ira	49.21%	72.77%	24%	Brookline	68.14%	42.92%	25%	Concord	47.02%	69.93%	23%

Guildhall	45.37%	69.44%	24%	Derby	43.11%	68.36%	25%	Brookline	65.93%	42.92%	23%
Fairfax	56.71%	32.56%	24%	Topsham	43.12%	68.62%	26%	Guildhall	46.30%	69.44%	23%
Mount Tabor	42.86%	67.14%	24%	Brighton	40.35%	66.16%	26%	East Montpelier	75.22%	51.88%	23%
Lemington	53.66%	78.05%	24%	Rutland Town	43.10%	69.13%	26%	Pomfret	77.99%	53.70%	24%
Richmond	74.53%	50.04%	24%	Lyndon	42.43%	68.50%	26%	Grandby	51.35%	75.68%	24%
Berlin	59.10%	34.29%	25%	Wells	42.12%	68.66%	27%	Fayston	77.51%	53.17%	24%
Woodstock	75.46%	50.62%	25%	Mount Tabor	40.00%	67.14%	27%	Newport City	56.58%	32.21%	24%
Waitsfield	75.97%	51.06%	25%	Townshend	66.89%	39.70%	27%	Goshen	70.54%	45.54%	25%
Newport City	57.34%	32.21%	25%	Calais	69.34%	42.04%	27%	Woodford	71.53%	46.53%	25%
Brookline	68.14%	42.92%	25%	Belvidere	37.31%	64.93%	28%	Elmore	76.61%	51.46%	25%
Barre Town	50.77%	76.14%	25%	Enosburgh	40.95%	68.65%	28%	Hartford	73.70%	48.52%	25%
Chester	30.95%	56.32%	25%	Benson	36.88%	65.25%	28%	Charlotte	77.12%	51.93%	25%
Middletown Springs	30.22%	55.65%	25%	Guildhall	39.81%	69.44%	30%	Fairfax	57.76%	32.56%	25%
Mount Holly	54.52%	28.46%	26%	East Haven	38.74%	68.47%	30%	Maidstone	50.00%	75.49%	25%
Lowell	44.14%	70.22%	26%	Waterford	41.04%	71.02%	30%	Clarendon	46.10%	72.03%	26%
Essex	67.47%	41.37%	26%	Alburgh	40.41%	70.48%	30%	Lunenburg	44.44%	70.62%	26%
Williamstown	49.41%	75.65%	26%	Granville	73.68%	43.61%	30%	Woodstock	76.82%	50.62%	26%
Middlesex	75.02%	48.75%	26%	Middlebury	71.22%	40.88%	30%	Richmond	76.28%	50.04%	26%
Greensboro	75%	48.61%	26%	Saint Albans Town	39.82%	70.23%	30%	Waitsfield	77.31%	51.06%	26%
Maidstone	49.02%	75.49%	26%	Sutton	41.88%	72.36%	30%	South Burlington	76.90%	50.45%	26%
Irasburg	44.75%	71.73%	27%	Newport Town	38.57%	69.10%	31%	Irasburg	45.18%	71.73%	27%
East Haven	41.44%	68.47%	27%	Thetford	72.81%	42.01%	31%	Berlin	60.88%	34.29%	27%
Grandby	48.65%	75.68%	27%	Plainfield	70.23%	39.38%	31%	Highgate	48.82%	75.42%	27%
Jamaica	69.59%	42.53%	27%	Bridport	42.01%	72.96%	31%	Mount Holly	55.27%	28.46%	27%
Brunswick	50%	77.08%	27%	Groton	38.74%	69.98%	31%	Greensboro	75.56%	48.61%	27%
Lunenburg	43.46%	70.62%	27%	Concord	38.19%	69.93%	32%	Middlesex	76.22%	48.75%	27%
Concord	42.48%	69.93%	27%	Ira	40.31%	72.77%	32%	Worcester	73.65%	45.96%	28%
Lincoln	72.85%	44.39%	28%	Franklin	33.09%	66.73%	34%	Jamaica	71.13%	42.53%	29%
Brandon	30.07%	59.09%	29%	Addison	37.81%	71.76%	34%	Craftsbury	72.32%	43.43%	29%
Highgate	46.28%	75.42%	29%	Lemington	43.90%	78.05%	34%	Rockingham	70.48%	41.49%	29%
Clarendon	42.88%	72.03%	29%	Winooski	71.38%	37.07%	34%	Essex	70.37%	41.37%	29%
Barre City	61.21%	31.26%	30%	Grandby	40.54%	75.68%	35%	Orange	49.28%	78.37%	29%
Craftsbury	73.70%	43.43%	30%	Clarendon	36.65%	72.03%	35%	Lowell	40.44%	70.22%	30%
Rockingham	71.85%	41.49%	30%	Lunenburg	34.81%	70.62%	36%	Lincoln	74.54%	44.39%	30%
Worcester	76.73%	45.96%	31%	Williamstown	38.70%	75.65%	37%	Warren	77.31%	46.54%	31%
Warren	77.88%	46.54%	31%	Irasburg	34.69%	71.73%	37%	Townshend	70.68%	39.70%	31%
Huntington	77.48%	45.84%	32%	Swanton	35.76%	73.57%	38%	Huntington	76.85%	45.84%	31%
Weybridge	77.76%	45.40%	32%	Newfane	73.21%	35.10%	38%	Barre City	63.78%	31.26%	33%
Holland	39.39%	71.97%	33%	Maidstone	37.25%	75.49%	38%	Norton	45.07%	78.87%	34%

Townshend	73.15%	39.70%	33%	Barre Town	36.79%	76.14%	39%	Holland	37.50%	71.97%	34%
Morgan	41.78%	75.68%	34%	Holland	32.58%	71.97%	39%	Morgan	39.73%	75.68%	36%
Orange	43.27%	78.37%	35%	Guilford	73.01%	33.59%	39%	Calais	78.22%	42.04%	36%
Calais	78.22%	42.04%	36%	Lowell	30.72%	70.22%	40%	Weybridge	81.61%	45.40%	36%
Norton	42.25%	78.87%	37%	Berkshire	34.96%	74.80%	40%	Lemington	41.46%	78.05%	37%
Plainfield	76.12%	39.38%	37%	Strafford	76.57%	36.48%	40%	Plainfield	75.97%	39.38%	37%
Thetford	79.33%	42.01%	37%	Sheldon	34.72%	76.30%	42%	Granville	80.45%	43.61%	37%
Middlebury	78.70%	40.88%	38%	Montpelier	76.79%	35.08%	42%	Thetford	79.13%	42.01%	37%
Granville	81.95%	43.61%	38%	Dummerston	74.42%	32.40%	42%	Middlebury	81.01%	40.88%	40%
Newfane	76.21%	35.10%	41%	Westminster	73.19%	30.80%	42%	Newfane	76.10%	35.10%	41%
Winooski	78.60%	37.07%	42%	Morgan	32.88%	75.68%	43%	Winooski	78.57%	37.07%	42%
Topsham	25.28%	68.62%	43%	Milton	29.03%	71.85%	43%	Stannard	76.09%	32.61%	43%
Guilford	79.14%	33.59%	46%	Stannard	76.09%	32.61%	43%	Guilford	77.51%	33.59%	44%
Westminster	78.14%	30.80%	47%	Brunswick	33.33%	77.08%	44%	Westminster	75.18%	30.80%	44%
Dummerston	80%	32.40%	48%	Ripton	78.62%	34.54%	44%	Ripton	80.59%	34.54%	46%
Ripton	82.89%	34.54%	48%	Highgate	31.23%	75.42%	44%	Dummerston	79.52%	32.40%	47%
Stannard	81.52%	32.61%	49%	Cornwall	69.22%	24.54%	45%	Strafford	84.75%	36.48%	48%
Montpelier	84.24%	35.08%	49%	Orange	33.65%	78.37%	45%	Montpelier	85.14%	35.08%	50%
Cornwall	77.02%	24.54%	52%	Burlington	77.90%	30.81%	47%	Victory	34.69%	85.71%	51%
Burlington	83.58%	30.81%	53%	Norwich	81.70%	34.52%	47%	Burlington	83.17%	30.81%	52%
Norwich	87.67%	34.52%	53%	Norton	30.99%	78.87%	48%	Cornwall	77.87%	24.54%	53%
Victory	30.61%	85.71%	55%	Brattleboro	77.85%	27.21%	51%	Brattleboro	81.50%	27.21%	54%
Brattleboro	82.80%	27.21%	56%	Putney	79.95%	23.01%	57%	Norwich	89.62%	34.52%	55%
Marlboro	83.39%	21.22%	62%	Victory	26.53%	85.71%	59%	Putney	83.81%	23.01%	61%
Putney	85.70%	23.01%	63%	Marlboro	80.81%	21.22%	60%	Marlboro	83.76%	21.22%	63%

Next, the average absolute difference between Scott and each of the other candidates was calculated per precinct. **Appendix B - Table 2** shows the absolute difference between Scott and each of the candidates by precinct in addition to the average absolute difference.

**Appendix B - Table 2**

	<b>Absolute Difference Sanders/ Scott</b>		<b>Absolute Difference Zuckerman/ Scott</b>		<b>Absolute Difference Welch/ Scott</b>		<b>Average Absolute Difference</b>
Addison	20.83%	Addison	33.95%	Addison	17.28%	Addison	24.02%
Albany	1.25%	Albany	12.53%	Albany	4.01%	Albany	5.93%
Alburgh	15.58%	Alburgh	30.07%	Alburgh	13.10%	Alburgh	19.58%
Andover	7.51%	Andover	12.09%	Andover	6.86%	Andover	8.82%
Arlington	9.08%	Arlington	7.15%	Arlington	15.04%	Arlington	10.42%
Athens	6.99%	Athens	11.19%	Athens	3.50%	Athens	7.23%
Bakersfield	4.74%	Bakersfield	12.52%	Bakersfield	4.93%	Bakersfield	7.40%
Baltimore	14.57%	Baltimore	22.33%	Baltimore	18.45%	Baltimore	18.45%
Barnard	14.39%	Barnard	3.79%	Barnard	15.91%	Barnard	11.36%
Barnet	0.74%	Barnet	4.67%	Barnet	4.92%	Barnet	3.44%
Barre City	29.95%	Barre City	19.91%	Barre City	32.52%	Barre City	27.46%
Barre Town	25.37%	Barre Town	39.35%	Barre Town	22.12%	Barre Town	28.95%
Barton	9.50%	Barton	18.12%	Barton	6.63%	Barton	11.42%
Belvidere	11.20%	Belvidere	27.62%	Belvidere	18.66%	Belvidere	19.16%
Bennington	17.26%	Bennington	15.08%	Bennington	22.08%	Bennington	18.14%
Benson	16.79%	Benson	28.37%	Benson	14.42%	Benson	19.86%
Berkshire	23.24%	Berkshire	39.84%	Berkshire	20.70%	Berkshire	27.93%
Berlin	24.81%	Berlin	12.70%	Berlin	26.59%	Berlin	21.37%
Bethel	8.64%	Bethel	0.33%	Bethel	9.94%	Bethel	6.30%
Bloomfield	21.62%	Bloomfield	22.97%	Bloomfield	21.62%	Bloomfield	22.07%
Bolton	17.48%	Bolton	9.92%	Bolton	18.43%	Bolton	15.28%
Bradford	5.70%	Bradford	4.19%	Bradford	7.03%	Bradford	5.64%
Braintree	0.75%	Braintree	9.58%	Braintree	0.75%	Braintree	3.69%
Brandon	29.02%	Brandon	6.41%	Brandon	1.91%	Brandon	12.45%
Brattleboro	55.59%	Brattleboro	50.64%	Brattleboro	54.29%	Brattleboro	53.51%
Bridgewater	0.93%	Bridgewater	5.80%	Bridgewater	2.09%	Bridgewater	2.94%
Bridport	20.75%	Bridport	30.95%	Bridport	16.67%	Bridport	22.79%
Brighton	15.18%	Brighton	25.81%	Brighton	13.88%	Brighton	18.29%
Bristol	12.87%	Bristol	3.06%	Bristol	13.45%	Bristol	9.79%
Brookfield	0.30%	Brookfield	12.03%	Brookfield	2.41%	Brookfield	4.91%
Brookline	25.22%	Brookline	25.22%	Brookline	23.01%	Brookline	24.48%
Brownington	9.81%	Brownington	18.40%	Brownington	11.96%	Brownington	13.39%
Brunswick	27.08%	Brunswick	43.75%	Brunswick	18.75%	Brunswick	29.86%
Burke	0.29%	Burke	7.77%	Burke	1.13%	Burke	3.06%
Burlington	52.77%	Burlington	47.09%	Burlington	52.36%	Burlington	50.74%

Cabot	9.93%	Cabot	0.00%	Cabot	9.21%	Cabot	6.38%
Calais	36.18%	Calais	27.30%	Calais	36.18%	Calais	33.22%
Cambridge	16.01%	Cambridge	3.63%	Cambridge	15.95%	Cambridge	11.86%
Canaan	10.09%	Canaan	23.74%	Canaan	9.29%	Canaan	14.37%
Castleton	10.30%	Castleton	17.04%	Castleton	7.89%	Castleton	11.74%
Cavendish	3.09%	Cavendish	4.64%	Cavendish	1.38%	Cavendish	3.04%
Charleston	12.40%	Charleston	21.96%	Charleston	14.21%	Charleston	16.19%
Charlotte	21.33%	Charlotte	13.23%	Charlotte	25.19%	Charlotte	19.92%
Chelsea	9.79%	Chelsea	20.61%	Chelsea	7.73%	Chelsea	12.71%
Chester	25.37%	Chester	2.38%	Chester	5.10%	Chester	10.95%
Chittenden	10.40%	Chittenden	18.16%	Chittenden	7.92%	Chittenden	12.16%
Clarendon	29.15%	Clarendon	35.38%	Clarendon	25.93%	Clarendon	30.15%
Colchester	2.59%	Colchester	9.54%	Colchester	5.93%	Colchester	6.02%
Concord	27.45%	Concord	31.74%	Concord	22.91%	Concord	27.37%
Corinth	1.62%	Corinth	7.14%	Corinth	0.97%	Corinth	3.24%
Cornwall	52.48%	Cornwall	44.68%	Cornwall	53.33%	Cornwall	50.16%
Coventry	15.52%	Coventry	24.39%	Coventry	15.52%	Coventry	18.48%
Craftsbury	30.27%	Craftsbury	21.62%	Craftsbury	28.89%	Craftsbury	26.93%
Danby	11.03%	Danby	15.78%	Danby	11.03%	Danby	12.61%
Danville	8.65%	Danville	17.20%	Danville	3.55%	Danville	9.80%
Derby	16.01%	Derby	25.25%	Derby	15.74%	Derby	19.00%
Dorset	9.21%	Dorset	2.91%	Dorset	13.53%	Dorset	8.55%
Dover	6.86%	Dover	1.34%	Dover	5.67%	Dover	4.62%
Dummerston	47.60%	Dummerston	42.02%	Dummerston	47.12%	Dummerston	45.58%
Duxbury	10.45%	Duxbury	3.05%	Duxbury	9.58%	Duxbury	7.69%
East Haven	27.03%	East Haven	29.73%	East Haven	18.92%	East Haven	25.23%
East Montpelier	22.32%	East Montpelier	11.09%	East Montpelier	23.34%	East Montpelier	18.92%
Eden	11.22%	Eden	21.95%	Eden	10.98%	Eden	14.72%
Elmore	23.00%	Elmore	11.70%	Elmore	25.15%	Elmore	19.95%
Enosburgh	9.24%	Enosburgh	27.70%	Enosburgh	7.59%	Enosburgh	14.84%
Essex	26.10%	Essex	14.84%	Essex	29.00%	Essex	23.31%
Fair Haven	4.95%	Fair Haven	13.82%	Fair Haven	4.33%	Fair Haven	7.70%
Fairfax	24.15%	Fairfax	8.77%	Fairfax	25.20%	Fairfax	19.37%
Fairfield	7.56%	Fairfield	24.72%	Fairfield	1.69%	Fairfield	11.32%
Fairlee	20.34%	Fairlee	12.42%	Fairlee	20.12%	Fairlee	17.63%
Fayston	22.62%	Fayston	12.44%	Fayston	24.34%	Fayston	19.80%
Ferrisburgh	1.74%	Ferrisburgh	8.98%	Ferrisburgh	3.96%	Ferrisburgh	4.89%
Fletcher	4.24%	Fletcher	8.65%	Fletcher	6.36%	Fletcher	6.42%

Franklin	19.32%	Franklin	33.64%	Franklin	10.74%	Franklin	21.23%
Georgia	16.30%	Georgia	1.70%	Georgia	20.18%	Georgia	12.73%
Glover	0.94%	Glover	12.41%	Glover	3.76%	Glover	5.70%
Goshen	21.42%	Goshen	16.96%	Goshen	25.00%	Goshen	21.13%
Grafton	9.62%	Grafton	3.85%	Grafton	6.73%	Grafton	6.73%
Grand Isle	4.52%	Grand Isle	20.98%	Grand Isle	2.12%	Grand Isle	9.21%
Grandby	27.03%	Grandby	35.14%	Grandby	24.33%	Grandby	28.83%
Granville	38.34%	Granville	30.07%	Granville	36.84%	Granville	35.08%
Greensboro	26.39%	Greensboro	16.67%	Greensboro	26.95%	Greensboro	23.34%
Groton	20.83%	Groton	31.24%	Groton	19.37%	Groton	23.81%
Guildhall	24.07%	Guildhall	29.63%	Guildhall	23.14%	Guildhall	25.61%
Guilford	45.55%	Guilford	39.42%	Guilford	43.92%	Guilford	42.96%
Halifax	18.34%	Halifax	13.06%	Halifax	18.62%	Halifax	16.67%
Hancock	7.80%	Hancock	4.25%	Hancock	0.71%	Hancock	4.25%
Hardwick	4.04%	Hardwick	7.49%	Hardwick	5.34%	Hardwick	5.62%
Hartford	22.93%	Hartford	15.72%	Hartford	25.18%	Hartford	21.28%
Hartland	15.28%	Hartland	9.63%	Hartland	18.17%	Hartland	14.36%
Highgate	29.14%	Highgate	44.19%	Highgate	26.60%	Highgate	33.31%
Hinesburg	18.72%	Hinesburg	12.57%	Hinesburg	21.15%	Hinesburg	17.48%
Holland	32.58%	Holland	39.39%	Holland	34.47%	Holland	35.48%
Hubbardton	7.69%	Hubbardton	12.18%	Hubbardton	5.45%	Hubbardton	8.44%
Huntington	31.64%	Huntington	23.78%	Huntington	31.01%	Huntington	28.81%
Hyde Park	8.10%	Hyde Park	6.10%	Hyde Park	7.88%	Hyde Park	7.36%
Ira	23.56%	Ira	32.46%	Ira	21.46%	Ira	25.83%
Irasburg	26.98%	Irasburg	37.04%	Irasburg	26.55%	Irasburg	30.19%
Isle La Motte	7.34%	Isle La Motte	24.12%	Isle La Motte	9.09%	Isle La Motte	13.52%
Jamaica	27.06%	Jamaica	18.29%	Jamaica	28.60%	Jamaica	24.65%
Jay	8.13%	Jay	17.22%	Jay	10.52%	Jay	11.96%
Jericho	12.29%	Jericho	3.53%	Jericho	13.11%	Jericho	9.64%
Johnson	12.66%	Johnson	3.20%	Johnson	12.33%	Johnson	9.40%
Killington	3.65%	Killington	11.82%	Killington	1.74%	Killington	5.74%
Kirby	3.23%	Kirby	10.12%	Kirby	2.03%	Kirby	5.13%
Landgrove	19.23%	Landgrove	7.69%	Landgrove	22.12%	Landgrove	16.35%
Leicester	13.13%	Leicester	19.95%	Leicester	10.10%	Leicester	14.39%
Lemington	24.39%	Lemington	34.15%	Lemington	36.59%	Lemington	31.71%
Lincoln	28.46%	Lincoln	22.84%	Lincoln	30.15%	Lincoln	27.15%
Londonderry	7.06%	Londonderry	3.77%	Londonderry	10.22%	Londonderry	7.02%
Lowell	26.08%	Lowell	39.50%	Lowell	29.78%	Lowell	31.79%
Ludlow	2.07%	Ludlow	6.65%	Ludlow	0.44%	Ludlow	3.05%

Lunenburg	27.16%	Lunenburg	35.81%	Lunenburg	26.18%	Lunenburg	29.72%
Lyndon	17.30%	Lyndon	26.07%	Lyndon	14.20%	Lyndon	19.19%
Maidstone	26.47%	Maidstone	38.24%	Maidstone	25.49%	Maidstone	30.07%
Manchester	9.24%	Manchester	3.98%	Manchester	15.66%	Manchester	9.63%
Marlboro	62.17%	Marlboro	59.59%	Marlboro	62.54%	Marlboro	61.43%
Marshfield	12.96%	Marshfield	7.23%	Marshfield	12.14%	Marshfield	10.78%
Mendon	13.83%	Mendon	19.32%	Mendon	10.81%	Mendon	14.65%
Middlebury	37.82%	Middlebury	30.34%	Middlebury	40.13%	Middlebury	36.10%
Middlesex	26.27%	Middlesex	16.98%	Middlesex	27.47%	Middlesex	23.57%
Middletown Springs	25.43%	Middletown Springs	3.04%	Middletown Springs	3.26%	Middletown Springs	10.58%
Milton	18.89%	Milton	42.82%	Milton	16.49%	Milton	26.07%
Monkton	10.48%	Monkton	0.36%	Monkton	11.57%	Monkton	7.47%
Montgomery	18.94%	Montgomery	8.64%	Montgomery	15.29%	Montgomery	14.29%
Montpelier	49.16%	Montpelier	41.71%	Montpelier	50.06%	Montpelier	46.98%
Moretown	20.69%	Moretown	8.08%	Moretown	21.01%	Moretown	16.59%
Morgan	33.90%	Morgan	42.80%	Morgan	35.95%	Morgan	37.55%
Morristown	12.62%	Morristown	0.37%	Morristown	13.10%	Morristown	8.70%
Mount Holly	26.06%	Mount Holly	20.94%	Mount Holly	26.81%	Mount Holly	24.60%
Mount Tabor	24.28%	Mount Tabor	27.14%	Mount Tabor	18.57%	Mount Tabor	23.33%
New Haven	2.76%	New Haven	10.55%	New Haven	4.40%	New Haven	5.90%
Newark	3.89%	Newark	13.61%	Newark	4.66%	Newark	7.39%
Newbury	3.94%	Newbury	3.24%	Newbury	4.64%	Newbury	3.94%
Newfane	41.11%	Newfane	38.11%	Newfane	41.00%	Newfane	40.07%
Newport City	25.13%	Newport City	15.32%	Newport City	24.37%	Newport City	21.61%
Newport Town	19.37%	Newport Town	30.53%	Newport Town	17.73%	Newport Town	22.54%
North Hero	3.29%	North Hero	16.49%	North Hero	1.56%	North Hero	7.11%
Northfield	4.19%	Northfield	16.26%	Northfield	0.06%	Northfield	6.84%
Norton	36.62%	Norton	47.88%	Norton	33.80%	Norton	39.43%
Norwich	53.15%	Norwich	47.18%	Norwich	55.10%	Norwich	51.81%
Orange	35.10%	Orange	44.72%	Orange	29.09%	Orange	36.30%
Orwell	15.87%	Orwell	5.71%	Orwell	19.84%	Orwell	13.81%
Panton	0.33%	Panton	6.93%	Panton	0.99%	Panton	2.75%
Pawlet	2.29%	Pawlet	3.86%	Pawlet	3.43%	Pawlet	3.19%
Peacham	18.47%	Peacham	14.55%	Peacham	22.63%	Peacham	18.55%
Peru	22.44%	Peru	16.59%	Peru	21.96%	Peru	20.33%
Pittsfield	4.58%	Pittsfield	12.98%	Pittsfield	3.43%	Pittsfield	7.00%
Pittsford	16.62%	Pittsford	23.23%	Pittsford	12.43%	Pittsford	17.43%
Plainfield	36.74%	Plainfield	30.85%	Plainfield	36.59%	Plainfield	34.73%

Plymouth	8.27%	Plymouth	5.26%	Plymouth	5.35%	Plymouth	6.29%
Pomfret	22.39%	Pomfret	5.69%	Pomfret	24.29%	Pomfret	17.46%
Poultney	0.97%	Poultney	7.20%	Poultney	1.13%	Poultney	3.10%
Pownal	7.35%	Pownal	3.30%	Pownal	9.82%	Pownal	6.82%
Proctor	7.37%	Proctor	17.05%	Proctor	3.47%	Proctor	9.30%
Putney	62.69%	Putney	56.94%	Putney	60.80%	Putney	60.14%
Randolph	5.33%	Randolph	5.14%	Randolph	4.75%	Randolph	5.07%
Reading	6.73%	Reading	0.84%	Reading	6.73%	Reading	4.77%
Readsboro	2.59%	Readsboro	3.23%	Readsboro	4.85%	Readsboro	3.56%
Richford	10.44%	Richford	24.30%	Richford	7.63%	Richford	14.12%
Richmond	24.49%	Richmond	14.63%	Richmond	26.24%	Richmond	21.79%
Ripton	48.35%	Ripton	44.08%	Ripton	46.05%	Ripton	46.16%
Rochester	17.24%	Rochester	12.97%	Rochester	19.87%	Rochester	16.69%
Rockingham	30.36%	Rockingham	24.22%	Rockingham	28.99%	Rockingham	27.86%
Roxbury	11.99%	Roxbury	0.00%	Roxbury	11.99%	Roxbury	7.99%
Royalton	15.85%	Royalton	5.17%	Royalton	15.08%	Royalton	12.03%
Rupert	7.09%	Rupert	3.40%	Rupert	7.94%	Rupert	6.14%
Rutland City	7.38%	Rutland City	0.25%	Rutland City	11.78%	Rutland City	6.47%
Rutland Town	16.46%	Rutland Town	26.03%	Rutland Town	11.67%	Rutland Town	18.05%
Ryegate	14.15%	Ryegate	25.11%	Ryegate	12.10%	Ryegate	17.12%
Sailsbury	2.06%	Sailsbury	14.63%	Sailsbury	0.42%	Sailsbury	5.70%
Saint Albans City	6.35%	Saint Albans City	9.10%	Saint Albans City	7.72%	Saint Albans City	7.72%
Saint Albans Town	14.52%	Saint Albans Town	30.41%	Saint Albans Town	9.77%	Saint Albans Town	18.23%
Saint George	0.62%	Saint George	9.12%	Saint George	4.40%	Saint George	4.71%
Saint Johnsbury	0.12%	Saint Johnsbury	9.47%	Saint Johnsbury	1.97%	Saint Johnsbury	3.85%
Sandgate	6.70%	Sandgate	0.52%	Sandgate	5.67%	Sandgate	4.30%
Searsburg	10.00%	Searsburg	5.00%	Searsburg	2.50%	Searsburg	5.83%
Shaftsbury	1.52%	Shaftsbury	4.39%	Shaftsbury	11.83%	Shaftsbury	5.91%
Sharon	18.42%	Sharon	11.26%	Sharon	18.57%	Sharon	16.08%
Sheffield	11.95%	Sheffield	23.90%	Sheffield	10.76%	Sheffield	15.54%
Shelburne	16.30%	Shelburne	8.68%	Shelburne	22.51%	Shelburne	15.83%
Sheldon	22.35%	Sheldon	41.58%	Sheldon	16.39%	Sheldon	26.77%
Shoreham	1.37%	Shoreham	9.61%	Shoreham	3.60%	Shoreham	4.86%
Shrewsbury	1.28%	Shrewsbury	4.95%	Shrewsbury	2.38%	Shrewsbury	2.87%
South Burlington	22.66%	South Burlington	15.20%	South Burlington	26.45%	South Burlington	21.44%
South Hero	7.38%	South Hero	7.65%	South Hero	10.80%	South Hero	8.61%
Springfield	2.90%	Springfield	2.27%	Springfield	3.06%	Springfield	2.74%



Stamford	7.13%	Stamford	13.20%	Stamford	5.28%	Stamford	8.54%
Stannard	48.91%	Stannard	43.48%	Stannard	43.48%	Stannard	45.29%
Starksboro	17.34%	Starksboro	10.58%	Starksboro	16.06%	Starksboro	14.66%
Stockbridge	6.91%	Stockbridge	1.73%	Stockbridge	6.91%	Stockbridge	5.18%
Stowe	15.64%	Stowe	6.41%	Stowe	19.06%	Stowe	13.70%
Strafford	4.64%	Strafford	40.09%	Strafford	48.27%	Strafford	31.00%
Stratton	6.50%	Stratton	13.00%	Stratton	4.87%	Stratton	8.12%
Sudbury	0.00%	Sudbury	5.61%	Sudbury	0.00%	Sudbury	1.87%
Sunderland	11.28%	Sunderland	7.66%	Sunderland	15.54%	Sunderland	11.49%
Sutton	20.79%	Sutton	30.48%	Sutton	18.51%	Sutton	23.26%
Swanton	20.90%	Swanton	37.81%	Swanton	17.33%	Swanton	25.35%
Thetford	37.32%	Thetford	30.80%	Thetford	37.12%	Thetford	35.08%
Tinmouth	3.70%	Tinmouth	0.00%	Tinmouth	5.76%	Tinmouth	3.15%
Topsham	43.34%	Topsham	25.50%	Topsham	18.51%	Topsham	29.12%
Townshend	33.45%	Townshend	27.19%	Townshend	30.98%	Townshend	30.54%
Troy	13.16%	Troy	20.30%	Troy	13.53%	Troy	15.66%
Tunbridge	8.12%	Tunbridge	1.88%	Tunbridge	7.54%	Tunbridge	5.85%
Underhill	16.40%	Underhill	5.78%	Underhill	14.86%	Underhill	12.35%
Vergennes	15.94%	Vergennes	6.18%	Vergennes	16.28%	Vergennes	12.80%
Vernon	6.97%	Vernon	16.61%	Vernon	6.97%	Vernon	10.18%
Vershire	17.85%	Vershire	11.01%	Vershire	13.39%	Vershire	14.08%
Victory	55.10%	Victory	59.18%	Victory	51.02%	Victory	55.10%
Waitsfield	24.91%	Waitsfield	15.74%	Waitsfield	26.25%	Waitsfield	22.30%
Walden	1.11%	Walden	4.45%	Walden	3.11%	Walden	2.89%
Wallingford	6.95%	Wallingford	11.29%	Wallingford	4.56%	Wallingford	7.60%
Waltham	3.32%	Waltham	8.49%	Waltham	7.38%	Waltham	6.40%
Wardsboro	12.65%	Wardsboro	6.48%	Wardsboro	10.49%	Wardsboro	9.87%
Warren	31.34%	Warren	23.56%	Warren	30.77%	Warren	28.56%
Washington	12.09%	Washington	23.54%	Washington	11.01%	Washington	15.55%
Waterbury	20.79%	Waterbury	9.19%	Waterbury	21.71%	Waterbury	17.23%
Waterford	23.11%	Waterford	29.98%	Waterford	19.93%	Waterford	24.34%
Waterville	8.78%	Waterville	22.08%	Waterville	6.92%	Waterville	12.59%
Weathersfield	6.28%	Weathersfield	11.84%	Weathersfield	6.12%	Weathersfield	8.08%
Wells	18.56%	Wells	26.54%	Wells	19.56%	Wells	21.55%
West Fairlee	14.92%	West Fairlee	5.76%	West Fairlee	16.51%	West Fairlee	12.40%
West Haven	5.22%	West Haven	23.48%	West Haven	2.61%	West Haven	10.44%
West Rutland	16.23%	West Rutland	24.40%	West Rutland	16.35%	West Rutland	18.99%
West Windsor	10.33%	West Windsor	2.66%	West Windsor	11.80%	West Windsor	8.26%

Westfield	5.77%	Westfield	11.16%	Westfield	5.00%	Westfield	7.31%
Westford	6.89%	Westford	8.06%	Westford	8.70%	Westford	7.88%
Westminster	47.34%	Westminster	42.39%	Westminster	44.38%	Westminster	44.70%
Westmore	7.26%	Westmore	14.52%	Westmore	5.58%	Westmore	9.12%
Weston	13.22%	Weston	6.33%	Weston	15.97%	Weston	11.84%
Weybridge	32.36%	Weybridge	23.64%	Weybridge	36.21%	Weybridge	30.74%
Wheelock	0.90%	Wheelock	8.11%	Wheelock	2.10%	Wheelock	3.70%
Whiting	7.27%	Whiting	20.67%	Whiting	6.71%	Whiting	11.55%
Whitingham	3.15%	Whitingham	0.20%	Whitingham	5.31%	Whitingham	2.89%
Williamstown	26.24%	Williamstown	36.95%	Williamstown	22.28%	Williamstown	28.49%
Williston	5.69%	Williston	4.50%	Williston	9.08%	Williston	6.42%
Wilmington	17.63%	Wilmington	11.35%	Wilmington	18.00%	Wilmington	15.66%
Windhall	14.28%	Windhall	8.57%	Windhall	13.84%	Windhall	12.23%
Windham	15.16%	Windham	6.16%	Windham	12.79%	Windham	11.37%
Windsor	16.20%	Windsor	10.91%	Windsor	19.57%	Windsor	15.56%
Winooski	41.53%	Winooski	34.31%	Winooski	41.50%	Winooski	39.11%
Wolcott	16.37%	Wolcott	2.05%	Wolcott	14.18%	Wolcott	10.87%
Woodbury	6.15%	Woodbury	2.34%	Woodbury	7.00%	Woodbury	5.16%
Woodford	13.19%	Woodford	18.75%	Woodford	25.00%	Woodford	18.98%
Woodstock	24.84%	Woodstock	13.46%	Woodstock	26.20%	Woodstock	21.50%
Worcester	30.77%	Worcester	22.31%	Worcester	27.69%	Worcester	26.92%

Finally, the Vermont precincts were ranked by the average absolute difference between Scott and the other candidates to identify the precincts with the highest likelihood of split-ticket voters.

**Appendix B – Table 3** shows the ranked precincts by average absolute difference.

**Appendix B – Table 3**

	<b>Ranked Average Absolute Difference</b>
Sudbury	1.87%
Springfield	2.74%
Panton	2.75%
Shrewsbury	2.87%
Whitingham	2.89%
Walden	2.89%
Bridgewater	2.94%
Cavendish	3.04%
Ludlow	3.05%
Burke	3.06%
Poultney	3.10%
Tinmouth	3.15%
Pawlet	3.19%
Corinth	3.24%
Barnet	3.44%
Readsboro	3.56%
Braintree	3.69%
Wheelock	3.70%
Saint Johnsbury	3.85%
Newbury	3.94%
Hancock	4.25%
Sandgate	4.30%
Dover	4.62%
Saint George	4.71%
Reading	4.77%
Shoreham	4.86%
Ferrisburgh	4.89%
Brookfield	4.91%
Randolph	5.07%
Kirby	5.13%
Woodbury	5.16%
Stockbridge	5.18%

Hardwick	5.62%
Bradford	5.64%
Glover	5.70%
Salisbury	5.70%
Killington	5.74%
Searsburg	5.83%
Tunbridge	5.85%
New Haven	5.90%
Shaftsbury	5.91%
Albany	5.93%
Colchester	6.02%
Rupert	6.14%
Plymouth	6.29%
Bethel	6.30%
Cabot	6.38%
Waltham	6.40%
Fletcher	6.42%
Williston	6.42%
Rutland City	6.47%
Grafton	6.73%
Pownal	6.82%
Northfield	6.84%
Pittsfield	7.00%
Londonderry	7.02%
North Hero	7.11%
Athens	7.23%
Westfield	7.31%
Hyde Park	7.36%
Newark	7.39%
Bakersfield	7.40%
Monkton	7.47%
Wallingford	7.60%
Duxbury	7.69%
Fair Haven	7.70%
Saint Albans City	7.72%

Westford	7.88%
Roxbury	7.99%
Weathersfield	8.08%
Stratton	8.12%
West Windsor	8.26%
Hubbardton	8.44%
Stamford	8.54%
Dorset	8.55%
South Hero	8.61%
Morristown	8.70%
Andover	8.82%
Westmore	9.12%
Grand Isle	9.21%
Proctor	9.30%
Johnson	9.40%
Manchester	9.63%
Jericho	9.64%
Bristol	9.79%
Danville	9.80%
Wardsboro	9.87%
Vernon	10.18%
Arlington	10.42%
West Haven	10.44%
Middletown Springs	10.58%
Marshfield	10.78%
Wolcott	10.87%
Chester	10.95%
Fairfield	11.32%
Barnard	11.36%
Windham	11.37%
Barton	11.42%
Sunderland	11.49%
Whiting	11.55%
Castleton	11.74%
Weston	11.84%

Cambridge	11.86%
Jay	11.96%
Royalton	12.03%
Chittenden	12.16%
Windhall	12.23%
Underhill	12.35%
West Fairlee	12.40%
Brandon	12.45%
Waterville	12.59%
Danby	12.61%
Chelsea	12.71%
Georgia	12.73%
Vergennes	12.80%
Brownington	13.39%
Isle La Motte	13.52%
Stowe	13.70%
Orwell	13.81%
Vershire	14.08%
Richford	14.12%
Montgomery	14.29%
Hartland	14.36%
Canaan	14.37%
Leicester	14.39%
Mendon	14.65%
Starksboro	14.66%
Eden	14.72%
Enosburgh	14.84%
Bolton	15.28%
Sheffield	15.54%
Washington	15.55%
Windsor	15.56%
Wilmington	15.66%
Troy	15.66%
Shelburne	15.83%
Sharon	16.08%
Charleston	16.19%
Landgrove	16.35%
Moretown	16.59%
Halifax	16.67%

Rochester	16.69%
Ryegate	17.12%
Waterbury	17.23%
Pittsford	17.43%
Pomfret	17.46%
Hinesburg	17.48%
Fairlee	17.63%
Rutland Town	18.05%
Bennington	18.14%
Saint Albans Town	18.23%
Brighton	18.29%
Baltimore	18.45%
Coventry	18.48%
Peacham	18.55%
East Montpelier	18.92%
Woodford	18.98%
West Rutland	18.99%
Derby	19.00%
Belvidere	19.16%
Lyndon	19.19%
Fairfax	19.37%
Alburgh	19.58%
Fayston	19.80%
Benson	19.86%
Charlotte	19.92%
Elmore	19.95%
Peru	20.33%
Goshen	21.13%
Franklin	21.23%
Hartford	21.28%
Berlin	21.37%
South Burlington	21.44%
Woodstock	21.50%
Wells	21.55%
Newport City	21.61%
Richmond	21.79%
Bloomfield	22.07%
Waitsfield	22.30%

Newport Town	22.54%
Bridport	22.79%
Sutton	23.26%
Essex	23.31%
Mount Tabor	23.33%
Greensboro	23.34%
Middlesex	23.57%
Groton	23.81%
Addison	24.02%
Waterford	24.34%
Brookline	24.48%
Mount Holly	24.60%
Jamaica	24.65%
East Haven	25.23%
Swanton	25.35%
Guildhall	25.61%
Ira	25.83%
Milton	26.07%
Sheldon	26.77%
Worcester	26.92%
Craftsbury	26.93%
Lincoln	27.15%
Concord	27.37%
Barre City	27.46%
Rockingham	27.86%
Berkshire	27.93%
Williamstown	28.49%
Warren	28.56%
Huntington	28.81%
Grandby	28.83%
Barre Town	28.95%
Topsham	29.12%
Lunenburg	29.72%
Brunswick	29.86%
Maidstone	30.07%
Clarendon	30.15%
Irasburg	30.19%
Townshend	30.54%
Weybridge	30.74%

Strafford	31.00%
Lemington	31.71%
Lowell	31.79%
Calais	33.22%
Highgate	33.31%
Plainfield	34.73%
Thetford	35.08%
Granville	35.08%
Holland	35.48%
Middlebury	36.10%
Orange	36.30%
Morgan	37.55%
Winooski	39.11%
Norton	39.43%
Newfane	40.07%
Guilford	42.96%
Westminster	44.70%
Stannard	45.29%
Dummerston	45.58%
Ripton	46.16%
Montpelier	46.98%
Cornwall	50.16%
Burlington	50.74%
Norwich	51.81%
Brattleboro	53.51%
Victory	55.10%
Putney	60.14%
Marlboro	61.43%

## APPENDIX C: Progressive Activists and In-Depth Interview

### Questions

Below is the list of Progressive Activists interviewed by this researcher in addition to their association(s) with the Vermont Progressive Party.

1. Martha Abbott, *Progressive State Assistant Treasurer and Progressive State Committee Member, Former Progressive gubernatorial candidate and campaign employee*
2. Terry Bouricius, *Former Progressive Vermont State Representative, Former Citizen's Party City Councilor and Co-Founder of the Progressive Party*
3. Representative Selene Colburn, *Progressive/Democrat Vermont State Representative*
4. Representative Emma Mulvaney Stanak, *Progressive/Democrat Vermont State Representative, Former Progressive Burlington City Councilor, and Former Chair of the Vermont Progressive Party.*
5. City Councilor Jack Hanson, *Progressive Burlington City Councilor*
6. Jeremy Hansen, *Former Progressive Party Candidate and Academic at Norwich University who has conducted research on the Progressive Party*
7. Steve Hitgen, *Former Progressive State Representative and Former Progressive Candidate for Lieutenant Governor*
8. Shannon Jackson, *Former Progressive Mayoral Campaign Manager, Former Vermont State Director for Senator Bernie Sanders, and former Senate Campaign Manager for Senator Bernie Sanders*
9. Emilie Krasnow, *Former Progressive Chair for Chittenden County, Former employee for the Progressive caucus, Progressive Elected Officials, and Progressive Candidates*

10. Erhard Mahnke, *Progressive State Committee Member and Former Progressive State Senate Candidate*
11. Carter Neubieser, *Co-Campaign Manager for Progressive Party Mayoral Campaign, Former Progressive Burlington City Council Candidate*
12. Senator Chris Pearson, *Progressive/Democrat State Senator, Former Progressive Party Employee, and Former Progressive Campaign Manager*
13. Senator Anthony Pollina, *Progressive/Democrat Vermont State Senator and Former Progressive Candidate for Governor*
14. Megan Polyte, *Former Progressive Party Gubernatorial Campaign Manager, Former State Vice Chair for the Progressive Party*
15. Barbara Prine, *Progressive State Committee Member and Progressive Party Activist*
16. Joshua Wronski, *Executive Director of The Progressive Party*
17. Representative Tanya Vyhovski, *Progressive/Democrat Vermont State Representative, and Progressive State Committee Member*
18. Former Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman, *Progressive/Democrat Vermont Lieutenant Governor, Former Progressive/Democrat State Senator and Former Progressive Member of the Vermont House of Representatives*

Each of the interviewees was asked the following series of questions:

1. *Why are you a Progressive party activist? What makes you so supportive of the Progressive Party? What makes the Progressive Party special? What are some things you feel best about how the Progressive Party has contributed to life in Vermont?*
2. *Tell me some of the reasons you first got involved with the Vermont Progressive Party?*

3. *What makes it different from the Vermont Democratic Party?*
4. *One of the reasons I am doing this research is that the Vermont Progressive Party is the most successful third party in the country. Why do you think that is true? Why do you think this party is more successful than other third parties around the country?*
5. *What do you think the future of the Progressive Party looks like? What are some key decisions that the Party will make in the next number of years?*
6. *In your opinion, are Fusion candidates good for the Progressive Party or do they dilute the Progressive Party? Do you think the Progressive Party can truly be seen as distinct outside of Burlington in light of fusion candidates?*
7. *Is there anything you would like to share about yourself and the Progressive Party? What did I miss with my questions? What would you like to make sure I understand and know before we end the interview?*

Follow up questions were asked if interviewees were unclear or if the researcher wanted more information than was provided by the interviewee.



## **APPENDIX D: Public Opinion Survey Findings on Progressives**

To complement the in-depth interviews, survey data from two Vermont sources was collected and analyzed for similarities with the qualitative data described in the chapter above.

Through connections with the Vermont Democratic Party and with the 2020 Zuckerman for VT campaign, this researcher was able to acquire two public opinion polls that give some insight into the Vermont Progressive Party's members, voters, and the Vermont public's opinion of the party relative to the Democratic and Republican Parties.

The first poll was funded by the **Vermont Democratic Party** and fielded in May of 2019. The survey was conducted online with 795 Vermont Voters. The second poll was conducted online by the **Zuckerman for VT campaign** of 1009 likely Vermont voters in October of 2020. Below is an analysis of the two surveys' findings of Vermont voters' feelings toward the Progressive Party and their party identification. Relevant demographic trends are identified.

### **Issue Priorities Matches Party Identification**

Public opinion polling done on voters in Vermont reinforces the activists' stated attraction to the Progressive Party. In the public opinion poll conducted by the Zuckerman campaign, the poll asked voters to select issues that were the most important issues for them. The results demonstrated Progressive voters feel attracted to the same issues that had been mentioned by the Progressive Party activists.

Specifically, similar to the Progressive activists' support for climate activism, Progressives across Vermont are much more likely than those who identify with other parties to say that climate change is one of their top issues. Three quarters of Progressives say climate

change is their top issue, compared to 53% of Democrats, 24% of Independents, and 3% of Republicans.

Progressives across Vermont are also much more likely to think that issues around social justice and healthcare are important: Progressives are more likely to say healthcare is one of their top issues (60%) than Democrats (53%). Progressives are also slightly more likely to say that reproductive rights are one of their top issues (28%) than Democrats (23%).

Unfortunately, the Zuckerman for Vermont campaign did not ask any specific questions that were able to directly test the economic arguments that the Progressive activists mentioned – like corporate contributions or the wealth gap. The economic issues asked by the survey included: taxes, unemployment/jobs, and the stock market. However, we can look at the importance of taxation as tangentially related to comfort with the wealth gap and see that the results support the Progressive argument against an economic system that favors the wealthy: Progressives were much less likely to say that taxes (6%) were an important issue than Democrats (15%), Independents (29%), and Republicans (49%).

This researcher hypothesizes that if there had been options on the survey that specifically mentioned corporate contributions or corporate influence on elections, the wealth gap, labor rights, or the political status quo that benefits the wealthy over the working class, we would have seen a spike in Progressives indicating they believed that issue to be of high importance.

<b>Table 29: Issue importance by Party Identification</b>					
<i>Q. Which of the following are the most important issues for you? Choose up to three.</i>					
Issue	All	Progressives	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Healthcare	43	60	53	18	48
Climate Change/ Environment	37	75	53	3	24
Taxes	26	6	15	49	29
Coronavirus/COVID-19	26	21	42	6	24
Gun Rights	19	3	0	49	27
Reproductive Rights	16	28	23	2	13
Unemployment/Jobs	13	10	10	18	13
Corrupt Republicans	13	18	17	2	17
Corrupt Democrats	13	1	0	34	16
Public Education	11	14	15	6	8
Mental Health and Addiction	10	8	12	7	12
Gun Control	8	7	13	5	3
Police Brutality	8	13	11	1	9
Election Fraud	7	3	3	17	2
Public Safety	7	5	5	10	8
Broadband Expansion	6	10	7	4	7
Election Security	5	5	5	7	2
Fuel/Oil Prices	5	1	1	9	9
Protecting the Unborn	4	0	0	13	3
Corrupt Progressives	3	0	0	10	3
Terrorism	3	0	2	6	4
Vermont State Colleges	3	2	4	2	3
Reopening Schools	3	0	1	6	4
Stock Market	3	1	1	7	0
Ending Foreign Wars	2	3	2	2	2
Improving Remote Learning/Virtual School	1	2	2	0	2
Artificial Intelligence	0	2	0	1	0

Interestingly, Progressives are half as likely (21%) to say that COVID-19 is one of their top issues than Democrats (42%).

### ***Who Likes Progressives and who Identifies as a Progressive?***

While the Progressive Party is the most successful third party in the country, the Vermont Democratic Party is still by far the most popular party in Vermont. In the poll conducted by the Vermont Democratic Party, when asked “how favorable are your feelings about each of the following public figures and organizations?” Vermont voters were twice as likely or more to say they were very favorable to the Democratic Party (16%) than to the Progressive Party (8%) or the Republican Party (5%). In aggregate, over half (51%) of Vermont voters said they were favorable to the Democratic Party, in contrast to 26% who were favorable to the Progressive Party and 20% who were favorable to the Republican Party.

<b>Table 30: Favorability Towards The Three Parties</b> <i>Q: How favorable are your feelings about each of the following public figures and organizations?</i>			
	The Progressive Party	The Democratic Party	The Republican Party
Very favorable	8%	16%	5%
Somewhat favorable	18%	35%	16%
Neutral	34%	15%	29%
Somewhat unfavorable	8%	6%	25%
Very unfavorable	25%	28%	23%
Never heard of them	8%	1%	2%
Total favorable	26%	51%	20%
Total unfavorable	32%	34%	49%
Net favorable	-6	17	-28

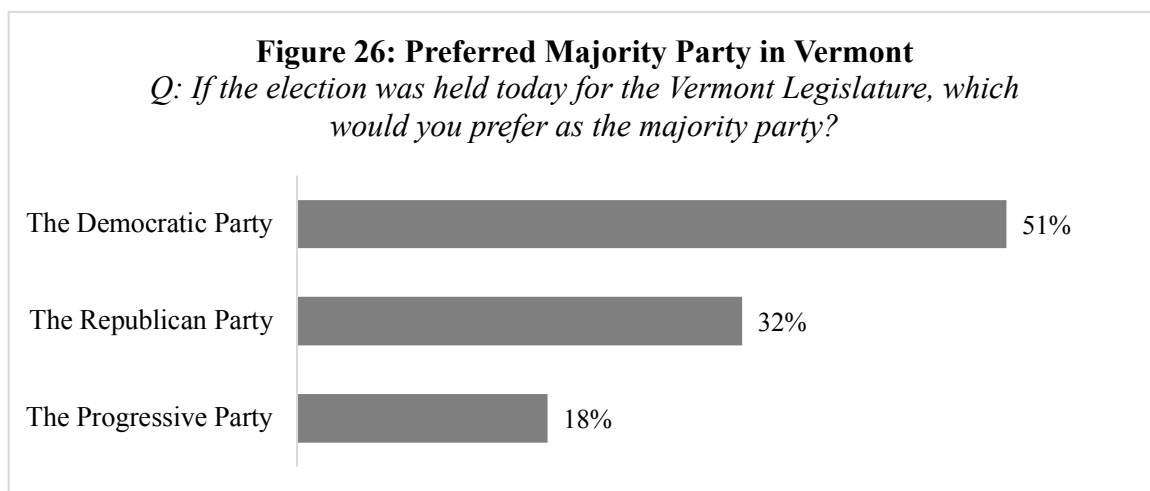
When looking deeper into the demographics, trends begin to emerge in terms of Progressive Party support. Women (31%) are more favorable to the Progressive Party than men (21%). In regards to age, those between 18-34 are most likely to be favorable to the Progressive Party (30%) closely followed by those 65 and older (29%), compared with voters of other ages: 35-29 (25%), 50-64 (22%). When looking at education, Vermont voters with a bachelor’s degree

(34%) are more likely than those with some college or less (19%) to be favorable to the Progressive Party.

There is also overlap between the Democratic and Progressive Parties. Vermonters who identify as Democrats are more likely to be favorable to the Progressive Party (38%) than Republicans (3%), and Independents (24%).

Favorability towards the Progressive Party is relatively uniform across the state. Chittenden county residents (29%) and Southeastern Vermonters (29%) are most likely to be favorable, closely followed by Northeast Vermont (26%), Southwest Vermont (25%) and then the Burlington Metropolitan area specifically (24%). (Note: the Burlington Metropolitan areas is within Chittenden County.)

Vermont voters would also prefer Democratic control of the legislature. When asked, “If the election was held today for the Vermont Legislature, which would you prefer as the majority party?” over half (51%) of Vermont voters said the Democratic Party, while less than a third (32%) said the Republican Party, and fewer than one in five (18%) said the Progressive Party. This information is shown in **Figure 26**.



Independents (27%), those aged 18-34 (25%), and voters in Southeast Vermont (24%) are the groups most likely to say they would prefer the Progressive Party as the majority party.

### ***Party Identification***

In Vermont, parties do not require party registration to vote in the primary. In addition, many Progressives strategically use the Democratic primary to run as “fusion candidates” and coordinate write-ins for the Progressive primary (because election law requires that candidates can have their name only one ballot<sup>198</sup>) thereby distorting Vermont Secretary of State data on party identification. For instance, in the 2020 election, Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman’s campaign recruited around 300 Progressive voters for a write-in campaign for the Progressive nomination while he also competed in the Democratic primary election.<sup>199</sup>

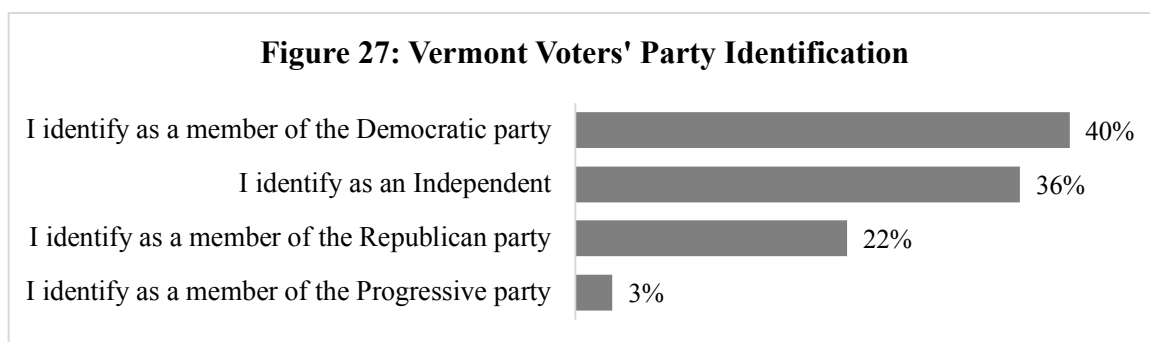
As a result of this political system and situation, public opinion polls give us one of the best insights into party identification in Vermont.

According to the Vermont Democratic Party poll, four-in-ten Vermont voters identify as a member of the Democratic Party, while 36% identify as an independent, 22% identify as a member of the Republican Party, and only 3% identify as a member of the Progressive Party.

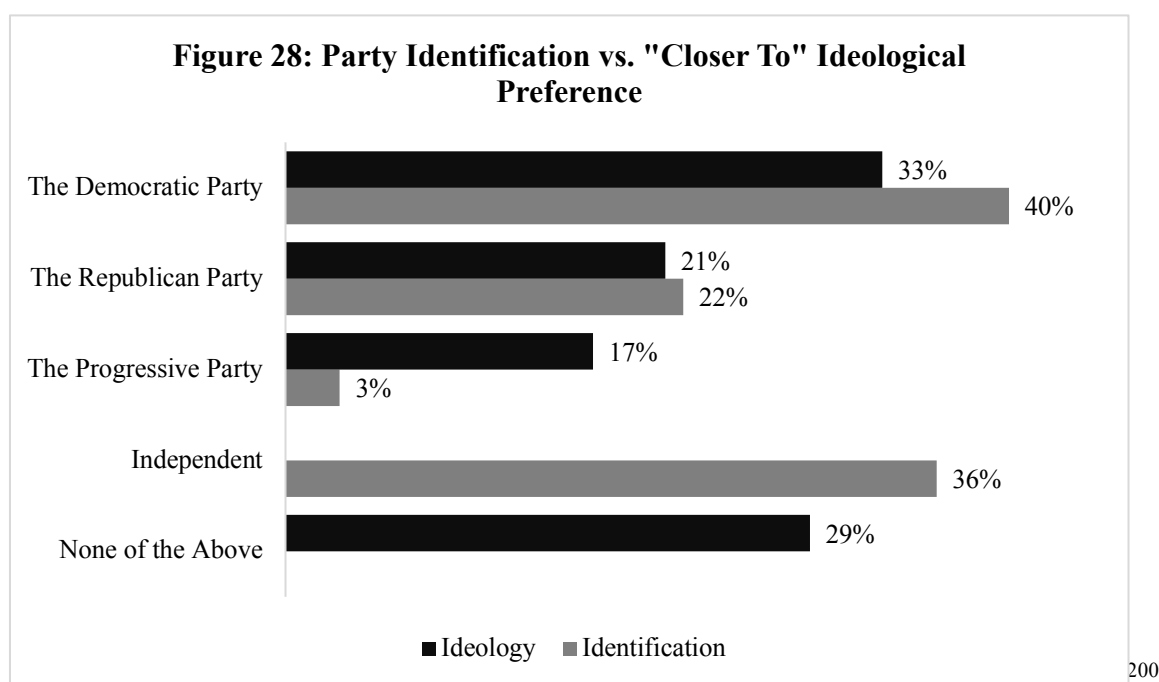
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<sup>198</sup> Vermont General Assembly, “Vermont Statutes Online, Title 17: Elections, Chapter 049: Nominations, Subchapter 001: Primary Elections, (17 V.S.A. § 2353),” accessed December 17, 2020, <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/17/049/02353>.

<sup>199</sup> Colin Meyn, “Zuckerman wins Progressive nomination; Ericson eyes a recount,” *VT Digger*, August 17, 2020, <https://vtdigger.org/2020/08/17/zuckerman-wins-progressive-nomination-ericson-eyes-a-recount/>.



In contrast, however, when asked “do you consider yourself closer to the Democrats, the Republicans, the Progressive Party, or none of the above” almost one in five (17%) Vermont voters said the Progressive Party, a third (33%) said the Democrats, and 21% said the Republicans. Almost three in ten Vermont voters (29%) said none of the above. **Figure 28** compares those two results.



Once again, women (23%) are more likely than men (12%) to consider themselves closer to the Progressive Party. Interestingly, being “closer to” the Progressive party does not track in

<sup>200</sup> “None of the above” was only offered as an option for the ideology question, not party identification. While “Independent” was only offered for the party identification question, not the ideology question.

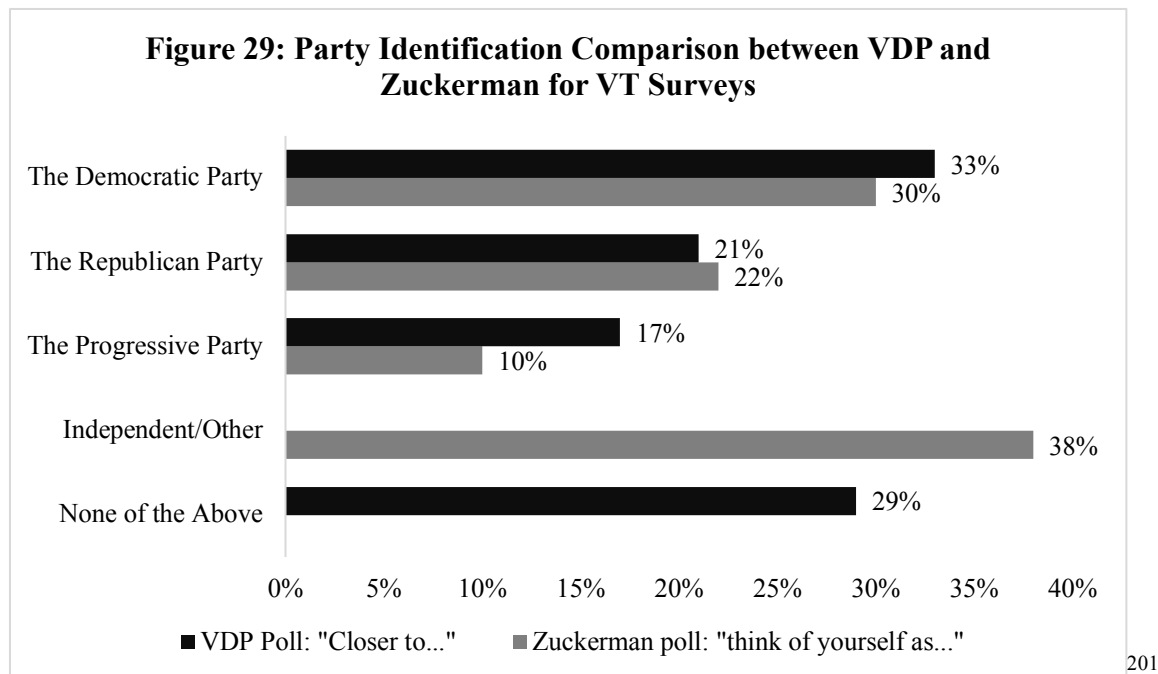
the same way that it did in previous questions. Instead, being “closer to” the Progressive Party is most likely at the poles of the age spectrum: voters 35-49 are most likely to consider themselves closer to the Progressive Party (21%), closely followed by voters 65 and older (19%), then 18-34 (18%), in contrast to voters between 50-64 (11%).

The Vermont Democratic Party poll demonstrates that there is significant and substantial support for the Progressive Party in Vermont in terms of favorability and ideological alignment. However, when it comes to identifying with only one party label, few Vermonters identify with the Progressive Party. That said, future research could ask the party identification as a select all that apply questions or potentially a ranked choice question to get a better sense of the complicated party identification in Vermont. After all, how would prominent politicians like Progressive/Democrat Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman be able to answer that question while also ensuring that the complexity of his party identification was captured in the data?

When asked “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a...?”, party identification in Vermont tracks relatively well between the 2020 Zuckerman campaign poll and the 2019 Democratic Party poll for the two major parties. This is especially true when initial party identification is analyzed prior to combining straight party identification with leaners.

However, there is a substantial dip in Vermont voters identifying with the Progressive Party (17% to 10%) and an increase in voters identifying as “None of the Above” and “Independent/Other” (29% to 38%).





In the Zuckerman campaign poll, when combining initial party identification with leaners, over four-in-ten (43%) of likely voters think of themselves as either Democrat or lean Democrat, 31% think of themselves as Republican, 13% think of themselves as Progressive or lean Progressive, and 13% are pure independents.

Looking specifically at demographics, women (15%), once again, are more likely to be/lean Progressive than men (12%). Younger voters between 18-34 (19%) are most likely to be/lean Progressive, followed by voters over 65 (14%), voters 35-49 (13%), and then voters 50-64 (10%). Voters with a bachelor's degree or higher (18%) are twice as likely to be/lean Progressive than those with some college or less (9%). Finally, combining these demographics gives an even starker picture: women with a bachelor's degree or higher (20%) are the most likely to be/lean Progressive, followed by men with a Bachelor's degree or higher (15%), then women with some college or less (10%), and men with some college or less (9%).

<sup>201</sup> "None of the above" was only offered as an option for the ideology question in the VDP poll, "independent/other" was only offered as an option for the ideology question in the Zuckerman poll.

## APPENDIX E: Town Clerks Survey Topline

### Topline

Q1. What town are you a clerk for?

All
N=127
Alburgh, Andover, Barnard, Barre City, Barre Town, Barton, Belvidere, Bennington, Berkshire, Bethel, Bolton, Braintree, Brandon, Bridgewater, Bristol, Brookline, Cabot, Calais, Cambridge, Canaan, Castleton, Chelsea, Corinth, Cornwall, Coventry, Danby, Dover, Dummerston, East Dorset, East Montpelier, Enosburg, Essex, Fair Haven, Fairfax, Fairfield, Fayston, Ferrisburgh, Georgia, Goshen, Grafton, Granby, Grand Isle, Granville, Guildhall, Guilford, Hardwick, Hartford, Hartland, Highgate, Hinesburg, Holland, Hubbardton, Huntington, Ira, Isle La Motte, Jay, Jericho, Lowell, Lyndon, Maidstone, Manchester, Marlboro, Marshfield, Milton, Monkton, Montgomery, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, New Haven, Newfane, Northfield, Norton, Pawlet, Peacham, Peru, Pomfret, Proctor, Putney, Reading, Richford, Richmond, Ripton, Rutland City, Rutland Town, S Burlington, Salisbury, Searsburg, Sharon, Shoreham, Shrewsbury, South Hero, St Johnsbury, St. Albans Town, Stamford, Starksboro, Stowe, Strafford, Sudbury, Topsham, Underhill, Vergennes, Vernon, Waitsfield, Walden, Wardsboro, Warren, Washington, Waterbury, Waterford, Waterville, Weathersfield, Wells, West Fairlee, Westfield, Westford, Westminster, Weybridge, Williamstown, Williston, Wilmington, Windham, Windsor, Winooski, Woodbury, Woodford, Woodstock

Open Town Meeting Only
N=25
Andover, Bethel, Braintree, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Cornwall, Fairfield, Fayston, Grafton, Granville, Hubbardton, Norton, Peacham, Peru, Pomfret, Proctor, Starksboro, Strafford, Sudbury, Topsham, Wardsboro, Waterville, Westminster, Windham

Australian Ballot Only
N=25
Barre City, Barre Town, Bennington, Berkshire, Castleton, Fair Haven, Grand Isle, Guilford, Hartford, Milton, New Haven, Northfield, Pawlet, Rutland City, Rutland Town, S. Burlington, Salisbury, Shrewsbury, South Hero, St. Johnsbury, St. Albans Town, Wells, Weybridge, Windsor, Winooski

Hybrid System
N=77
Alburgh, Barnard, Barton, Belvidere, Bolton, Brandon, Bridgewater, Bristol, Cabot, Calais, Canaan, Corinth, Coventry, Danby, Dover, Dummerston, East Dorset, East Montpelier, Enosburg, Essex, Fairfax, Ferrisburgh, Georgia, Goshen, Granby, Guildhall, Hardwick, Hartland, Highgate, Hinesburg, Holland, Huntington, Ira, Isle La Motte, Jay, Jericho, Lowell, Lyndon, Maidstone, Manchester, Marlboro, Marshfield, Monkton, Montgomery, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, Newfane, Putney, Reading, Richford, Richmond, Ripton, Searsburg, Sharon, Shoreham, Stamford, Stowe, Underhill, Vergennes, Vernon, Waitsfield, Walden, Warren, Washington, Waterbury, Waterford, Weathersfield, West Fairlee, Westfield, Westford, Williamstown, Williston, Wilmington, Woodbury, Woodford, Woodstock

Clerks with Less Time in Office (less than six years)
N=40
Andover, Belvidere, Bennington, Bethel, Cabot, Calais, Cambridge, Castleton, Coventry, Dummerston, East Montpelier, Essex, Ferrisburgh, Georgia, Guildhall, Hartford, Isle La Motte, Jay, Lowell, Maidstone, Manchester, Milton, Montgomery, Newfane, Northfield, Peacham, Peru, Putney, Ripton, Rutland Town, Salisbury, South Hero, Stowe, Vernon, Waterford, West Fairlee, Windham, Windsor, Woodford, Woodstock

Clerks with More Time in Office (six or more years)
N=87
Alburgh, Barnard, Barre City, Barre Town, Barton, Berkshire, Bolton, Braintree, Brandon, Bridgewater, Bristol, Brookline, Canaan, Chelsea, Corinth, Cornwall, Danby, Dover, East Dorset, Enosburg, Fair Haven, Fairfax, Fairfield, Fayston, Goshen, Grafton, Granby, Grand Isle, Granville, Guilford, Hardwick, Hartland, Highgate, Hinesburg, Holland, Hubbardton, Huntington, Ira, Jericho, Lyndon, Marlboro, Marshfield, Monkton, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, New Haven, Norton, Pawlet, Pomfret, Proctor, Reading, Richford, Richmond, Rutland City, South Burlington, Searsburg, Sharon, Shoreham, Shrewsbury, St. Johnsbury, St. Albans Town, Stamford, Starksboro, Strafford, Sudbury, Tinmouth, Topsham, Underhill, Vergennes, Waitsfield, Walden, Wardsboro, Warren, Washington, Waterbury, Waterville, Weathersfield, Wells, Westfield, Westford, Westminster, Weybridge, Williamstown, Williston, Wilmington, Winooski, Woodbury

Q2. How many years have you personally been involved as a voter in town meeting day in Vermont?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Less than 5 years	2%	0%	0%	4%	2%	0%
5 to 10 years	13%	12%	20%	12%	25%	8%
11 to 15 years	6%	4%	4%	8%	10%	5%
16 to 20 years	9%	24%	4%	5%	5%	10%
More than 20 years	69%	60%	72%	71%	53%	77%

Q3. And for how many years total have you served as a town clerk?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Average	11.4	11.3	9.1	12.2	3.2	15.4
Median	8.5	9.0	8.0	8.0	3.0	12.0
Mode	3	6	12	3	3	12

Q4. What type of voting does your town engage in on town meeting day?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Open town meeting only	20%	100%	0%	0%	23%	18%
Hybrid system with an open town meeting and Australian ballot	51%	0%	0%	84%	63%	60%
Only Australian ballot	20%	0%	100%	0%	15%	22%
Representational	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	9%	0%	0%	16%	0%	0%

*\*Note: the 9% of all respondents who selected other described hybrid systems with an open town meeting and an Australian ballot. Their selection of “other” was driven by their descriptions of how the Australian ballot and open town meeting were split. For instance: “Floor vote for appropriations and Australian Ballot for Elections”*

Q5. In the last 3-5 years, which of the following best describes attending an *open town meeting* in your town?

*\*Only asked of towns with open town meeting only or hybrid system*

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=90	N=25		N=65	N=44	N=64
Very orderly	84%	76%	-	88%	96%	80%
Somewhat orderly	16%	24%	-	13%	4%	20%
Somewhat disorderly	0%	0%	-	0%	0%	0%
Very disorderly	0%	0%	-	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	-	0%	0%	0%

Q6. When issues are brought up in *open town meetings* how frequently or infrequently are they adjusted or amended by the town meeting participants?

*\*Only asked of towns with open town meeting only or hybrid system*

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=90	N=25		N=65	N=44	N=64
<b>Total Frequently</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>28%</b>		<b>36%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>30%</b>
Very frequently	5%	8%	-	3%	8%	3%
Somewhat frequently	30%	20%	-	33%	35%	27%
Somewhat infrequently	22%	40%	-	14%	19%	22%
Very infrequently	44%	32%	-	48%	35%	48%
<b>Total Infrequently</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>72%</b>		<b>62%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>70%</b>
Don't know	0%	0%	-	0%	4%	0%

Q7. What issues, if any, were being raised in open town meetings 5-10 years ago that have now become a bigger part of the issue debates in Vermont or national politics?

*\*Only asked of towns with open town meeting only or hybrid system*

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=90	N=25		N=65	N=44	N=64
Education issues (funding, taxes)	25%	24%	-	25%	12%	30%
Climate change and renewable energy	22%	28%	-	19%	31%	17%
None	22%	24%	-	20%	19%	23%
Taxation	17%	8%	-	20%	15%	17%
Infrastructure	10%	8%	-	11%	12%	9%
Budgets and funding issues	8%	8%	-	8%	8%	8%
Citizens United	6%	4%	-	6%	4%	6%
Cost of living (housing and wages)	6%	0%	-	8%	4%	6%
Healthcare and healthcare costs	5%	4%	-	5%	4%	5%
Nuclear power	3%	0%	-	5%	4%	3%
Other	10%	8%	-	11%	19%	6%

Q8. What issues, if any, that have been brought up in *recent* open town meetings that you believe are likely to be raised up in Vermont- or national-level politics?

*\*Only asked of towns with open town meeting only or hybrid system*

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=90	N=25		N=65	N=44	N=64
Climate change	28%	36%	-	25%	35%	27%
None	22%	24%	-	22%	23%	22%
Education	21%	28%	-	19%	15%	23%
Taxes	9%	4%	-	11%	4%	11%
Infrastructure	9%	4%	-	11%	19%	5%
Healthcare and healthcare costs	7%	4%	-	8%	8%	6%
Aging Population	4%	0%	-	6%	12%	2%
Cannabis marketplace	3%	4%	-	3%	0%	5%
Cost of living	3%	4%	-	3%	8%	2%
Budget	3%	0%	-	5%	4%	3%
Other	12%	4%	-	16%	8%	14%

Q9. What would you say is the maximum number of registered voters your town could have before you think it would be necessary to move to solely an Australian ballot?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Average	3814	1376	-	4813	5042	3274
Median	2000	1000	-	2000	2000	1750
Mode	1000	1000	-	10000	1000	1000

*\*Note: Respondents who put in a number higher than the population of Vermont were excluded.*



Q10. Thinking about the town you serve, compared to 3-5 years ago, would you say that the number of people participating in town meeting day (either physically attending town meetings and/or voting in the Australian ballot) is increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Increasing	7%	0%	12%	8%	5%	8%
Staying about the same	67%	84%	60%	26%	78%	63%
Decreasing	25%	16%	28%	64%	18%	28%
Not able to judge	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%

Q11. Thinking about the last 3-5 years, what would you say is the *average*, the *highest* and the *lowest* numbers of people who have participated in town meeting day in your town?

*Continued on next page*

Average

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Average	353	112	982	222	341	356
Median	140	95	622	125	150	125
Mode	100	75	3500	100	150	100

Highest

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Average	571	135	1522	396	541	581
Median	180	120	807	175	250	175
Mode	300	140	2000	300	300	200

Lowest

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Average	240	89	649	152	270	226
Median	100	73	420	87	120	100
Mode	150	50	2000	150	250	50

Q12. What specific issue or topic do you think has prompted the highest turnout on town meeting day?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Education issues and funding	27%	28%	20%	29%	23%	29%
Presidential primary elections	20%	0%	48%	17%	20%	20%
Local elections	17%	24%	24%	12%	30%	10%
Budget and bond issues	17%	8%	12%	22%	18%	17%
"Big ticket" purchases	13%	12%	8%	14%	5%	16%
Infrastructure	6%	8%	0%	8%	3%	8%
Taxes	6%	4%	4%	8%	8%	6%
None	3%	8%	0%	3%	3%	3%
ATVs & snowmobiles on town roads	2%	8%	0%	1%	0%	3%
Other	11%	20%	8%	9%	13%	11%

Q13. In your opinion, is there a point at which there can be too *few* people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Yes	43%	52%	40%	41%	30%	49%
No	30%	24%	20%	36%	33%	29%
Don't know	27%	24%	40%	24%	38%	22%

Q14. What would you say is the *minimum percentage of registered voters* who can attend an open town meeting and have it still be an effective form of government?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=55	N=10	N=13	N=32	N=12	N=43
Average	7%	8%	6%	7%	6%	7%
Median	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Mode	5%	5%	10%	5%	3%	5%

Q15. And in your opinion, is there a point at which there can be too *many* people for an open town meeting to be an effective form of government?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Yes	13%	16%	8%	14%	15%	13%
No	63%	64%	64%	63%	60%	66%
Don't know	23%	20%	28%	22%	25%	22%

Q16. Thinking broadly, what would you say is the largest number of people who could attend an *open town meeting* and still have it be an effective form of government?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=17	N=2	N=4	N=11	N=6	N=11
Average	437	283	203	530	570	371
Median	300	300	203	500	500	300
Mode	500	300	N/A	500	1000	300

Q17. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the *open town meetings* as a form of government?

*Continued on next page*

#### Strengths

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
A "voice" and a chance to state opinion	39%	44%	20%	43%	43%	37%
Discussion and debate	32%	36%	32%	30%	38%	29%
Reasoning and arguments presented	18%	20%	16%	18%	15%	20%
Brings the community together civilly	17%	16%	12%	20%	23%	15%
Creates informed voters	17%	12%	12%	20%	18%	16%
Ability to amend	17%	4%	12%	22%	18%	16%
Consensus building	3%	0%	8%	3%	3%	5%
Other	8%	8%	16%	5%	3%	10%

## Weaknesses

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Low participation and low interest	25%	36%	24%	21%	18%	29%
A few people have an outsized say	13%	20%	4%	14%	13%	14%
Work schedules and inability to attend the meeting	13%	16%	8%	13%	15%	11%
Peer pressure	8%	20%	0%	7%	13%	6%
Less nuance and sometimes inaccurate information	6%	0%	4%	8%	3%	7%
Disruption and disagreement	4%	4%	0%	5%	0%	6%
Lack of efficiency	4%	4%	4%	4%	8%	2%
None	2%	0%	4%	3%	3%	2%
Other	2%	4%	4%	0%	0%	2%

Q18. What would you say are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of an *Australian Ballot* as a form of government?

#### Strengths

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Greater ability to participate	39%	44%	44%	36%	35%	40%
Anonymity	26%	24%	28%	26%	30%	24%
Higher participation & more people represented	21%	12%	24%	24%	23%	22%
Logistically easier to manage	6%	8%	4%	7%	10%	5%
Other	7%	12%	12%	4%	8%	7%

#### Weaknesses

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Lack of debate and discussion,	29%	32%	40%	24%	35%	25%
Less informed voters	17%	24%	0%	21%	10%	22%
No ability to amend/ voter input	10%	8%	4%	12%	15%	7%
Less understanding of the results	5%	8%	12%	1%	5%	5%
Less community feel	4%	8%	0%	4%	3%	5%
None	4%	0%	12%	3%	0%	6%
Logistical challenges	3%	0%	0%	5%	5%	2%
Other	6%	12%	4%	5%	5%	7%

Q19. Which best describes how you feel about the decision-making process in *open town meetings* on town meeting day?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
They <i>facilitate</i> democratic decision making	69%	80%	40%	75%	68%	70%
They <i>hinder</i> democratic decision making	5%	4%	4%	5%	3%	6%
Don't know	18%	8%	44%	13%	25%	15%
Both	4%	0%	4%	5%	3%	5%
Other	4%	8%	8%	1%	3%	5%

Q20. In general, how much do you think *open town meetings* improve or damage community relationships, if at all?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Total Improves</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Greatly improves community relationships	21%	20%	8%	26%	23%	21%
Somewhat improves community relationships	29%	32%	28%	29%	33%	29%
Neither improves nor damages community relationships	35%	44%	24%	36%	35%	34%
Somewhat damages community relationships	4%	0%	4%	5%	3%	5%
Greatly damages community relationships	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
<b>Total Damages</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Don't know	10%	4%	36%	3%	8%	10%

Q21. In your opinion, on a scale of 0-10 where 10 is extremely important and 0 is not important at all how would you rate the importance of the following:

*Continued on next page*

- a. Achieving the highest participation rates as possible on town meeting day

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Average	8.5	8.8	8.9	8.3	8.6	8.5
Median	9	10	10	8	8	9
Mode	10	10	10	10	10	10



b. Facilitating negotiation and community engagement on town meeting day

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
Average	8.4	9.0	7.8	8.4	8.8	8.3
Median	9	10	9	9	9.5	9
Mode	10	10	10	10	10	10

Q22. How good or bad of a job would you say the town meeting in the town you represent does when addressing the following issues.

Needing to raise taxes

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>95%</b>
Very good job	50%	44%	44%	54%	48%	52%
Somewhat of a good job	43%	52%	52%	37%	40%	44%
Somewhat of a bad job	1%	0%	0%	1%	3%	0%
Very bad job	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Don't know	2%	4%	0%	3%	0%	3%
Not applicable	4%	0%	4%	5%	10%	1%

## Education funding

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>60%</b>
Very good job	21%	20%	20%	22%	18%	24%
Somewhat of a good job	34%	24%	44%	34%	30%	36%
Somewhat of a bad job	10%	0%	16%	12%	18%	7%
Very bad job	8%	20%	4%	5%	3%	10%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>17%</b>
Don't know	2%	0%	0%	3%	3%	1%
Not applicable	25%	36%	16%	24%	30%	22%

## Electing municipal officers

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>92%</b>
Very good job	60%	52%	52%	66%	50%	64%
Somewhat of a good job	30%	44%	32%	25%	38%	28%
Somewhat of a bad job	2%	0%	4%	1%	0%	2%
Very bad job	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Don't know	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Not applicable	7%	4%	12%	7%	13%	5%

### Voting on the town budget

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>98%</b>
Very good job	67%	64%	60%	70%	68%	67%
Somewhat of a good job	30%	36%	36%	26%	28%	31%
Somewhat of a bad job	1%	0%	0%	1%	3%	0%
Very bad job	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Don't know	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Not applicable	2%	0%	4%	1%	3%	1%

### Voting on the school budget

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>63%</b>
Very good job	30%	24%	44%	28%	28%	32%
Somewhat of a good job	31%	12%	32%	37%	10%	31%
Somewhat of a bad job	10%	8%	4%	12%	10%	9%
Very bad job	4%	12%	4%	1%	5%	3%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Don't know	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Not applicable	25%	44%	16%	21%	28%	23%

Petitions brought by town members

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>86%</b>
Very good job	45%	40%	44%	47%	40%	48%
Somewhat of a good job	40%	40%	40%	41%	45%	38%
Somewhat of a bad job	2%	4%	0%	3%	0%	3%
Very bad job	1%	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Don't know	4%	8%	0%	4%	3%	5%
Not applicable	7%	8%	12%	5%	13%	5%

Bond Issues

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>95%</b>
Very good job	31%	8%	40%	36%	33%	30%
Somewhat of a good job	24%	16%	32%	24%	28%	22%
Somewhat of a bad job	2%	0%	4%	1%	0%	2%
Very bad job	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Don't know	8%	16%	0%	8%	8%	8%
Not applicable	36%	60%	24%	32%	33%	38%

### Spending Levels

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>95%</b>
Very good job	41%	36%	44%	42%	45%	39%
Somewhat of a good job	45%	48%	48%	43%	43%	47%
Somewhat of a bad job	2%	4%	0%	3%	8%	0%
Very bad job	2%	0%	4%	3%	3%	2%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Don't know	2%	4%	0%	1%	0%	2%
Not applicable	7%	8%	4%	8%	3%	9%

### Government Staffing Levels

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Good Job</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>95%</b>
Very good job	37%	40%	32%	38%	40%	36%
Somewhat of a good job	32%	24%	36%	33%	38%	30%
Somewhat of a bad job	4%	0%	8%	4%	5%	3%
Very bad job	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
<b>Bad Job</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Don't know	6%	16%	4%	3%	3%	7%
Not applicable	21%	20%	20%	21%	15%	23%

## All Respondents

N=127	Very good job	Somewhat of a good job	Somewhat of a bad job	Very bad job	Don't know	Not applicable
Voting on the town budget	67%	30%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Electing municipal officers	60%	30%	2%	0%	1%	7%
Needing to raise taxes	50%	43%	1%	0%	2%	4%
Petitions brought by town members	45%	40%	2%	1%	4%	7%
Spending levels	41%	45%	2%	2%	2%	7%
Government staffing levels	37%	32%	4%	1%	6%	21%
Bond issues	31%	24%	2%	0%	8%	36%
Voting on the school budget	30%	31%	10%	4%	1%	25%
Education funding	21%	34%	10%	8%	2%	25%

## Open Town Meeting

N=25	Very good job	Somewhat of a good job	Somewhat of a bad job	Very bad job	Don't know	Not applicable
Voting on the town budget	64%	36%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Electing municipal officers	52%	44%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Needing to raise taxes	44%	52%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Petitions brought by town members	40%	40%	4%	0%	8%	8%
Government staffing levels	40%	24%	0%	0%	16%	20%
Spending levels	36%	48%	4%	0%	4%	8%
Voting on the school budget	24%	12%	8%	12%	0%	44%
Education funding	20%	24%	0%	20%	0%	36%
Bond issues	8%	16%	0%	0%	16%	60%

## Australian Ballot

N=25	Very good job	Somewhat of a good job	Somewhat of a bad job	Very bad job	Don't know	Not applicable
Voting on the town budget	60%	36%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Electing municipal officers	52%	32%	4%	0%	0%	12%
Needing to raise taxes	44%	52%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Spending levels	44%	48%	0%	4%	0%	4%
Petitions brought by town members	44%	40%	0%	4%	0%	12%
Voting on the school budget	44%	32%	4%	4%	0%	16%
Bond issues	40%	32%	4%	0%	0%	24%
Government staffing levels	32%	36%	8%	0%	4%	20%
Education funding	20%	44%	16%	4%	0%	16%

## Hybrid System

N=77	Very good job	Somewhat of a good job	Somewhat of a bad job	Very bad job	Don't know	Not applicable
Voting on the town budget	70%	26%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Electing municipal officers	66%	25%	1%	0%	1%	7%
Needing to raise taxes	54%	37%	1%	0%	3%	5%
Petitions brought by town members	47%	41%	3%	0%	4%	5%
Spending levels	42%	43%	3%	3%	1%	8%
Government staffing levels	38%	33%	4%	1%	3%	21%
Bond issues	36%	24%	1%	0%	8%	32%
Voting on the school budget	28%	37%	12%	1%	1%	21%
Education funding	22%	34%	12%	5%	3%	24%

### Clerks With Less Experience

N=40	Very good job	Somewhat of a good job	Somewhat of a bad job	Very bad job	Don't know	Not applicable
Voting on the town budget	68%	28%	3%	0%	0%	3%
Electing municipal officers	50%	38%	0%	0%	0%	13%
Needing to raise taxes	48%	40%	3%	0%	0%	10%
Spending levels	45%	43%	8%	3%	0%	3%
Petitions brought by town members	40%	45%	0	0%	3%	13%
Government staffing levels	40%	38%	5%	0%	3%	15%
Bond issues	33%	28%	0%	0%	8%	33%
Voting on the school budget	28%	30%	10%	5%	0%	28%
Education funding	18%	30%	18%	3%	3%	30%

### Clerks With More Experience

N=87	Very good job	Somewhat of a good job	Somewhat of a bad job	Very bad job	Don't know	Not applicable
Voting on the town budget	67%	31%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Electing municipal officers	64%	28%	2%	0%	1%	5%
Needing to raise taxes	52%	44%	0%	0%	3%	1%
Petitions brought by town members	48%	38%	3%	1%	5%	5%
Spending levels	39%	47%	0%	2%	2%	9%
Government staffing levels	36%	30%	3%	1%	7%	23%
Bond issues	30%	22%	2%	0%	8%	38%
Voting on the school budget	32%	31%	9%	3%	1%	23%
Education funding	24%	36%	7%	10%	1%	22%



Q23. In what ways do you think town policy formation would be better or worse if *open town meetings* were eliminated?

	All	Open Town Meeting	Australian Ballot	Hybrid System	Less Experience	More Experience
	N=127	N=25	N=25	N=77	N=40	N=87
<b>Total Worse</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Total Better</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>No real change</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>18%</b>
Less discussion and voter input into decisions	30%	36%	28%	29%	38%	26%
Less accountability for elected officeholders	13%	16%	4%	16%	20%	10%
Less informed electorate	10%	12%	24%	4%	13%	8%
Loss of community engagement and participation	8%	16%	8%	5%	13%	7%
Less democracy	5%	0%	0%	8%	8%	3%
Don't know	15%	12%	12%	17%	8%	18%
Other	10%	8%	16%	9%	8%	11%

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## **CURRICULUM VITA**

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