



**Council Connections** brings the latest news on disability rights, resources that promote inclusion, and opportunities for advocacy to individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members living in the heart of Vermont Communities.



## PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTIONS MORE ACCESSIBLE THANKS TO VTDIGGER

Vermonters may confidently step into the voting booths this fall thanks to a new election guide which aims to educate and empower novice and seasoned voters alike.

Online news source and non-profit, VTDigger, has closely followed the words and actions of elected and hired officials in Vermont State Government since it was founded in 2009.

### What are **10 things you need to be ready?**

VTDigger's check-list gives you tips on how to vote and outlines the rules for when you do vote.

The online news source has recently shared its [Election Guide](#), an on-going project and resource that VTDigger will update until the General Election in November. The guide includes full coverage on candidates, debates, outcomes, and an interactive map. Candidates for [house](#), [senate](#), and governor were sent a questionnaire and results are available on the web. *Of the 270 people who are registered to participate in the 2018 elections, 160 of them responded to the questionnaire.*

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS and VOTE for the people who represent you.**  
**August 14, 2018, Primary Elections**  
**November 6, 2018, General Elections**

### Who are the Gubernatorial Candidates?

- [James Ehlers](#), Democrat
- [Christine Hallquist](#), Democrat
- [Phil Scott](#), Republican
- [Brenda Siegel](#), Democrat
- [Ethan Sonneborn](#), Democrat
- [Keith Stern](#), Republican

### Do you know your 2017-2018 Representatives and how they voted on Major Bills?

- [What's the roll-call?](#)
- [How do I find my Legislator\(s\)?](#)
- [How do I find specific bills or acts?](#)

VERMONT Secretary of State  
My Voter Page

YOU MAY USE THIS SYSTEM TO CHECK YOUR:

- Voter registration status
- Absentee ballot status
- Mailin application and ballot status
- Ball location
- Elected offices
- Registration information on file with the town office
- Sample ballot for the upcoming election
- Challenge letter response
- Ballot mail

Check if you are already registered to vote  **Check My Status** Not yet registered to vote?  **Register Online**

SIGN IN INFO

First Name:   
Last Name:   
Date of Birth:   
Registered Town:   
Do you have a VT Driver's License/Permit?  Yes  No  
VT DL/PLD:

Sign In

Note: My Voter Page provides a web-based search of data extracted from Vermont's statewide voter registration database. It is NOT the official record of your registration, which is retained by the voter registration office in the town of your residence.

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The "[My Vote Page](#)" lets you check if you're registered to vote, your ballot options, booth location, etc.

## What debates have taken place thus far?

- [A gubernatorial debate between Republican candidates](#); it begins at the 5:30 minute mark and is hosted by VTDigger's founder Anne Galloway.
- [A gubernatorial debate between Democratic candidates and Republican candidates](#); click the "candidates forum" link beside the video to watch the full 58 minutes hosted by WCAX.

For more information [read the article by VTDigger](#).

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Reduce your personal waste in every way you can and keep plastic around for those who need it.

## AIM TO REDUCE WASTE MAY COMPROMISE DIGNITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF OTHERS

In alignment with the "[Be Straw Free](#)" campaign, businesses and towns in Vermont hope to reduce their carbon footprint by saying "no" to straws and inadvertently say "no" to people with disabilities.

Straws mean independence for those who have disabilities that prevent them from bringing a glass to their mouth to drink, without straws they have trouble staying hydrated - and they must rely on the assistance of another person.

The ban usually comes with substitutes like metal, glass, or paper... but some advocates say they're just not as good as plastic. So, let's meet-in-the-middle and consider plastic straws as an accommodation that must be accounted for (just like the "safe to cross" chirping at a cross walk).

Images of garbage floating in our water ways and animals harmed by plastic debris is enough to motivate anyone to want to be better for our Earth. And we can be better, for our earth and for each other.

For more information [read the article by WCAX](#) and [MyChamplainValley](#).

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Order your own set of cards by calling UVM's Interpreter Coordinator during normal business hours at [\(802\) 847-0695](tel:802-847-0695).

## VERMONT'S UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER HAS MORE OPTIONS TO COMMUNICATE

Personalized cards may be used to outline basic preferences for those who exchange information differently.

Remembering to describe your symptoms and ask every question at the doctor's office is hard, but communicating shouldn't be. The [University of Vermont](#) is empowering people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing by handing out cards that can be personalized; they'll even mail them to you free of charge.

These cards alert staff to your disability, your preference for a professional interpreter, and how you'd like to interact while you wait for interpretation services.

For more information watch the video below.



## WE WANT TO SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

**VTDDC is looking to expand its stock photographs of Vermonters with disabilities, and their families, that show inclusion, productivity, and capability.** It only takes a few moments to look through your photo albums and find your favorites... Who knows, your picture may be showcased on our [Facebook](#), in our [Newsletter](#), or in one of our publications! We appreciate anything you're willing to send, and BIG KUDOS to the Vermonters who've already emailed us to share their accomplishments and passions.



Email us at [vtddc@vermont.gov](mailto:vtddc@vermont.gov) with the photos attached and subject line "I am Vermont".



## WHAT'S UP, UNDER THE BIG DOME?

**VTDDC is at the State House closely monitoring policy that could impact Vermonters with developmental disabilities...**



At its August meeting, the Advisory Board for the Green Mountain Care Board hosted a panel discussion on Vermont's "mental health crisis."

The panelists were Melissa Bailey, the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health, Dr. Susan Deppe, psychiatrist, Dr. Rick Barnett, psychologist, Dr. Mark McGee, Chief Medical Officer at Brattleboro Retreat, Julie Tessler, Executive Director of the Vermont Council of Developmental and Mental Health Services, and Devon Green, Vice President of Government Relations, Vermont Association of Hospital and Health Systems. The Green Mountain Care Board did not include anyone representing consumers and family members on its panel.

The panelists were uniformly concerned about the lack of mental health providers in Vermont. All of the panelists cited a lack of providers for children. There was a lot of discussion regarding the fact that the only inpatient services available for children are at the Brattleboro Retreat.

The Green Mountain Care Board will be hosting future panels and hopefully one will focus on services for people with developmental disabilities.

## SAVE THE DATE for the next Quarterly Meeting



Council members work together to increase awareness about the needs of Vermonters with disabilities and encourage systems change. They are expected to attend four day-long meetings each year and to be active participants on a committee or work group.

**When: Thursday, September 27, 2018**

**Where: [Vocational Rehab](#), St. Johnsbury, Vermont**

The mission of VTDDC is to help build connections and supports that bring people with developmental disabilities, and their families, into the heart of Vermont Communities.