

# VIEW

Vermont Information Exchange for Women  
Newsletter



February 25th, 2021

## News & Resources



WARMLY WELCOMES  
OUR NEW COMMISSIONER:  
**WENDY KNIGHT**  
OF PANTON, VERMONT



[Governor Scott has appointed Wendy Knight of Panton to serve a four-year term on the Vermont Commission on Women \(VCW\)](#), the state's non-partisan commission working to advance rights and opportunities for women and girls.

Commissioner Knight is a communications and marketing executive with over 20 years of government, corporate and entrepreneurial experience in advertising and marketing, food and beverage, healthcare, media, non-profit, and the publishing industries.

She's held several leadership positions in Governor Scott's Administration, as Vermont Tourism and Marketing Commissioner, as a strategic lead for the state's economic development initiative *Think Vermont*, and as Vice-Chair of the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative, a private-public initiative to grow the economy and preserve our natural resources. With this background in economic development, a focus that draws her to the work of the VCW is ensuring that women have economic opportunities and fiscal independence.

A former freelance journalist for the New York Times, she has written four non-fiction books and appeared on NPR, CNN, and ABC News. Her current work includes writing about domestic violence, a topic featured in her powerful and personal op-ed in USA Today about children living in abusive homes during the COVID-19 quarantine.

Commissioner Knight is the Chief Marketing Officer of Knight Automotive and a consultant to On the Fly, a women-led collective supporting Vermont's hospitality and tourism businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19. She currently serves on the boards of the Vermont Futures Project, which provides data and research to achieve long-term economic growth in our state, and the Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance. She is a former Select Board Member for the town of Panton and a graduate of Cornell University.

## **VCW Commissioner Kiah Morris Announces Premier of Color Lines in the Green Mountains Docuseries**

The first episode of [Color Lines in the Green Mountains](#) premieres on Sunday, February 28th at 1:00 p.m., and features an interview with Tabitha Moore. Tabitha is a 6th generation Vermonter, mother, daughter, spouse, and social justice warrior. She is a PhD Candidate, a Training Coordinator at the University of Vermont, former President of the Rutland Area Branch of the NAACP and former Vermont Director of the NAACP. She is a member of the Vermont State Police's Fair and Impartial Policing Committee and a member of the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council's Fair and Impartial Training Committee. She received her individualized Bachelor of Arts degree from Wells College in The Psychology of Latin America in the Context of Its Language and Culture, and her Master of Arts Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Syracuse University. She also holds an advanced certificate in Diversity, Social Justice and Inclusion from the University of

Colorado, Colorado Springs and is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and School Counselor in the state of Vermont.

## **VCW Supports Universal School Meals & Federal Paid Family Medical Leave Program**

This month, VCW Commissioners voted to sign on to two important initiatives, joining with Hunger Free Vermont and others to [support legislation guaranteeing universal school meals at all of Vermont's public schools](#), and joining with other members of the VT FaMLI Coalition in [supporting a federal paid family medical leave program](#).

## **Access to Menstrual Supplies | Vermont Commission on Women**

In 2021, a bill regarding menstrual products, S.32, was introduced in the Vermont Senate to ensure all students who menstruate have free, immediate access to menstrual supplies within their school restrooms, and another bill, H.260 was introduced to they are available in public school restrooms and correctional facilities. Two additional bills, H.53 & S.53 were introduced to remove the non-essential items tax. We've put together an [info sheet that takes a deeper dive into the impact these policies could have and how other states are approaching the issues](#).

Special thanks to VCW volunteer Emily Pocock for her contributions to this publication!

## **Senate to vote on exempting feminine hygiene products from sales tax | VTDigger**

"A bill that would exempt feminine hygiene products from Vermont's sales tax has been sent to the Senate floor for a vote. The bill, S.53, would lift the sales tax from products including tampons, panty liners, menstrual cups, and similar products "designed for feminine hygiene in connection with the human menstrual cycle," it reads. The Senate Finance Committee voted 7-0 Wednesday to recommend passage." – [James Finn for VTDigger](#)

## **Menstrual Equity Legislative Toolkit | ACLU & Period Equity**

Focused on a few specific areas: ending the "tampon tax" and ensuring access to menstrual products in public schools, government-funded homeless shelters, and correctional institutions, [this toolkit includes](#) sample legislative and policy language; talking points; responses to common arguments; a primer on the "tampon tax"; a template for a legislative letter; model op-eds and links to other articles; tips for managing social media

and “viral moments”; a briefing paper on menstrual equity; and an interview with an on-the-ground advocate.

## **Sexual assault bill would redefine consent in state law**

“A bill introduced in the Legislature last week would modernize Vermont’s sexual assault laws to redefine consent and recognize that substance use is often a factor in sexual violence cases. Rep. Sarah Copeland Hanzas, lead sponsor of the bill, H.183, said it’s become clear that alcohol and drug use is the ‘common thread’ in a significant number of Vermont’s sexual assault cases. She said the state’s definition of consent needs to fully account for the fact that people who are intoxicated by drugs or alcohol can’t consent to sex.” – [Ellie French for VT Digger](#)

## **Register for VT’s COVID-19 vaccine sign-up platform | Department of Health**

Even if your age group is not yet eligible, you can still get a step ahead by creating your account in VT’s system. That way, when your age group is up, it will be smooth sailing to sign up for your first dose. Learn more at [healthvermont.gov/MyVaccine](https://healthvermont.gov/MyVaccine).

## **Queer Black History | Pride Center of Vermont**

For this year’s Black History & Legacy Month, the Pride Center of Vermont’s THRIVE program is highlighting some of the legendary Black queer and trans people in our community, both present and historical, in their [Queer Black History project](#).

## **Special enrollment period for VT Health Exchange open Feb 16 - May 14**

In alignment with the Federal initiative, the State of Vermont is re-opening a [special health insurance enrollment period from February 16 – May 14](#) to offer Vermonters who do not currently have health insurance an opportunity to enroll in a qualified health plan and receive premium and cost-sharing assistance, if eligible. Intended to facilitate access to health insurance, the special enrollment period is being implemented in partnership with qualified health plan issuers, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont, MVP Health Care, and Northeast Delta Dental. To enroll, Vermonters should call the Customer Support Center at 1-855-899-9600 Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.– 4:30 pm.

## **New program to support Vermonters of color running for public office | VTDigger**

“A group of state and local leaders, including people of color and those who identify as LGBTQIA, announced plans to launch the Bright Leadership Institute in a virtual press conference Monday. February 8 marks the 100th anniversary of Vermont’s ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. The Northfield Savings Bank Foundation will fund the initiative through Vermont’s two chapters of the NAACP in Windham and Rutland counties, according to a press release. The goal is to ‘support Vermonters who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) to learn how to run for office in a cohort model.’” – [Emma Cotton for VTDigger](#)

## **Office of Child Advocate Survey | Voices for Vermont’s Children**

Lawmakers have introduced a bill to create an [Office of Child Advocate in Vermont](#). Voices for Vermont’s Children has created an [online form for Vermonters to sign on to a letter thanking the bill sponsors and to share their personal experiences with Vermont's child protective system](#). Participants can elect to keep their stories anonymous if preferred.

## **LunaFest is Back! | Vermont Works for Women**

Vermont Works for Women will again host LUNAFEST, a traveling film festival of award-winning short films by and about women, and this year, offer our audience multiple ways to view the films and make a night of supporting women and girls in Vermont! [Check out the 2021 lineup](#) of groundbreaking films and learn more about the women filmmakers who are capturing these untold, thought-provoking stories. [Community members will have the option of purchasing a ticket](#) for a virtual screening the weekend of March 26-28 to celebrate Women's History Month, or in person at the Sunset Drive-In Theater in Colchester, VT the evening of June 3.

## **Women Can Do Conference goes virtual | Vermont Works for Women**

Instead of an in-person one-day conference, [Vermont Works for Women is expanding Women Can Do to a full week](#) of activities, events, and opportunities for female and gender non-conforming high school students to explore STEM and other non-traditional fields, April 5th - 9th. There will be a mix of hands-on and online engagement opportunities, and all of them are flexible to one's schedule.

## **Scott seeks applications for State Board of Education | VT Business Magazine**

Governor Phil Scott announced today that he is seeking applications for two openings on the State Board of Education. The Board is responsible for the establishment, advancement, and evaluation of public education policy. Board duties include making regulations governing attendance and records of attendance of all pupils, standards for

student performance, adult basic education programs, approval of independent schools, disbursement of funds, and equal access for all Vermont students to a quality education. New members will be appointed by the Governor to a six-year term, beginning March 2021. Those interested in appointment to the Board should [complete the Application for Gubernatorial Appointment to State Boards and Commissions](#).

## **'There's Some Gaps': Racial Justice Advocate Calls For Vt. To Revisit COVID Vax Plan | VPR**

As Vermont works to expand who can get vaccinated for COVID-19, state officials say they are committed to ensuring those disproportionately affected by the virus, including those who are Black, Indigenous and people of color, have equitable access to the vaccine. But what does equitable mean, and is the state's plan achieving it? [VPR's Henry Epp spoke with Mark Hughes](#).

## **VT survey to inform early childhood development and education policy | Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council**

Over the last two months, the Governor and Agency Leadership proposed a plan for how to move forward on a cradle-to-career vision. The [February 22 State Advisory Council meeting included a presentation from Education Secretary French and DCF Commissioner Brown](#) about the plan. The BBF State Advisory Council invites Vermonters to participate in an [anonymous survey to elevate the voice of families and early childhood stakeholders](#).

## **Free Masks for Non-Profit Use | Vermont Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VT-VOAD).**

Free masks are available in cartons of 500. The face coverings provided are 100% cotton and contain silver and copper. Washable. Adult One-size fits all. Not to be sold. These masks are available courtesy of Vermont Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VT-VOAD).

To order masks, contact VT-VOAD directly by calling Amanda Jones at 801-682-3741. These masks are to be used for a non-profit's operations and not to be given away to clients/survivors. Please let VT-VOAD know how they'll be used in service to the public.

## **Reach Up Explainer | Voices for Vermont's Children**

Vermont's Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) program Reach Up is a lifeline for many Vermont families, but it's also an issue with a lot of complexity. [Voices Executive Director Michelle Fay sat down to explain what Reach Up is and why it's so critical that we](#)



[raise the benefit to meet families' basic needs.](#) For more information, [check out this fact sheet](#) from Voices with information and helpful talking points.

## **Lt. Governor Molly Gray hosts 'Seat at the Table' on equity in public health access**

Lt. Governor Gray hosted her second "Seat at the Table" on the topic of equity in public health with a particular focus on Vermont's former refugee community or individuals with a refugee background in Vermont. A total of 58 community leaders and policymakers joined the "Seat at the Table" to learn more about the ways in which the State must build a more culturally and linguistically competent public health system. recording of the event is [available to view on YouTube.](#)

[Vermonters wishing to attend future sessions, can register, and find additional information.](#)

## **Elizabeth Deutsch: Constitutional amendment to protect abortion rights | VTDigger Commentary**

"This year, the Vermont Senate has the opportunity to safeguard Vermonters' reproductive freedom from the reach of the U.S. Supreme Court by passing Prop 5, a proposed amendment to the Vermont Constitution that would protect people's personal reproductive rights. A constitutional amendment, Prop 5 must pass through the General Assembly in two consecutive bienniums before going to a public, statewide vote." - [Elizabeth Deutsch via VTDigger](#)

## **The Deeper Dig: Xusana Davis on race, belonging and 'Vermontiness' | VTDigger's The Deeper Dig**

A recent report from Vermont's Office of Racial Equity describes widespread disparities in how people of color are treated in the state. Authored by Xusana Davis, the state's first director of racial equity, the report describes how candidates or people in public office were threatened or harassed. It details racial disparities in traffic stop data. And it finds minorities are underrepresented and underpaid in certain state government roles. [Davis discusses how people of color in Vermont, as in the rest of the country, face disproportionate health impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic.](#) But the global crisis has also deepened what she describes as "out-of-state 'xenophobia,'" a problematic notion of who is a "real Vermonter" that remains a key barrier to achieving equity.

## **Vermont Conversation: Drug overdoses break records in 'the other epidemic' | VT Digger**

[David Goodman discusses the overdose crisis and possible solutions](#), including drug legalization and harm reduction efforts, with Vermont Attorney General TJ Donovan, anti-poverty and opioid policy advocate Brenda Siegel, Rep. Selene Colburn and Chittenden County State's Attorney Sarah George. And listeners will hear about the personal experience of addiction, homelessness and recovery with Jedediah Popp, co-director for the Windham County Consortium on Substance Use, who is in recovery from substance use disorder.

## **Momentum Launches Neighbor to Neighbor Program | Pride Center of VT**

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has left many vulnerable populations seeking assistance and services to help navigate through what was once considered everyday activities, such as grocery shopping, picking up medications, yard work, friendly phone conversations, etc. This community outreach program connects LGBTQ+ Vermonters over 55 years of age through need-based support services that aid with various tasks so as to avoid travel to communal spaces.

**To Request Services:** [For those who would like to receive services from the Neighbor to Neighbor Project, please sign up here.](#)

**To Volunteer:** [For those who would like to volunteer for the Neighbor to Neighbor Project, please sign up here.](#)

## **Lawmakers start the planning for a replacement women's prison in Vermont | VTDigger**

"Solutions that don't include building a massive, multimillion-dollar prison have been totally missing at the legislative level, said Ashley Messier, executive director of the Women's Justice and Freedom Initiative, and once a resident at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility. During the pandemic, with the state trying to discharge as many Vermont prisoners as possible, the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility has had about half as many residents as the year before, with no detrimental effect to public safety." – [Ellie French for VTDigger](#)

## **Lawmakers, prosecutor say it's time for Vermont to decriminalize drugs | VTDigger**

"It's time for Vermont to decriminalize all drugs, said several left-leaning lawmakers and Chittenden County State's Attorney Sarah George on Wednesday. The push for



decriminalization came during a press conference during which lawmakers unveiled a number of new bills to address the state's overdose crisis." – [Ellie French for VTDigger](#)

## **90 years after Vermont eugenics survey, lawmakers propose apology to those affected | VTDigger**

"A eugenics survey in Vermont sought to 'breed a better Vermonter' by sterilizing and institutionalizing Indigenous people, French-Canadians, and people who were mixed-race, poor or disabled. Ninety years after the 1931 survey got underway, lawmakers are proposing an official apology for the state-supported program that tore families apart. Abenaki people in Vermont say the ripple effects of the eugenics movement are still felt today and an apology from the state is an important step in repairing the relationship." – [Amanda Gokee for VTDigger](#)

## **Local student honored - Alicia Caputo named candidate in U.S. presidential scholars program | Rutland Herald**

"[Alicia Kailani Caputo, a graduating senior at Rutland High School and Stafford Technical Center, has been named a Career and Technical Education candidate as part of the 2021 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program.](#) The candidates are nominated based on their accomplishments in career and technical education fields."

## **Vermont Jump\$tart Coalition Youth 2nd annual video contest | VT Business Magazine**

The Vermont Jump\$tart Coalition is pleased to partner with the Vermont Access Network, the State Treasurer's office, and Front Porch Forum to announce an [original video contest for youth](#), with the goal to help them better understand the importance of managing money responsibly. The contest encourages youth to develop videos that will highlight the benefits of saving and spending money wisely, investing for a rainy day, and/or making sound financial decisions. The deadline for student submissions is April 15, and the winning videos will be showcased on the newly updated Jump\$tart website and throughout the state on Access Network stations.

## **The student debt forgiveness debate highlights the racial gap in what borrowers owe | CNBC**

"According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Black and African American college graduates owe an average of \$25,000 more in student loan debt than white college graduates. Four years after graduation, 48% of Black students owe an

average of 12.5% more than they borrowed and 29% face monthly student loan payments of \$350 or more.” – [Abigail Johnson Hess for CNBC](#)

## **Free online personal finance training offered to all Vermont educators | VT Business Magazine**

Starting March 3, the Center for Financial Literacy at Champlain College, in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education, will be offering [free online \(and on-demand\) financial literacy training for all Vermont K-12 teachers](#). More than 80,000 Vermont students could benefit from this program, which gives teachers access to the tools, resources, and training they need to successfully integrate personal finance education into their classrooms and organizations.

## **Virtual venture capital deals are shaping Vermont’s startup scene | VTDigger**

“Nationally, about 20% of the deals in the last decade, with about 14% of the dollar value, went to female company founders. That’s four-fold growth over the last decade. In Vermont, seven out of the 31 companies with capital investment in the last decade had at least one female founder. Those companies raised about \$17 million. ‘A long way to go here, but these numbers are significant.’” – [Anne Wallace Anne for VTDigger](#)

## **Meet TIME's First-Ever Kid of the Year: Gitanjali Rao, 15 | Time Magazine**

“Observe, brainstorm, research, build and communicate.” That is what the brilliant young scientist and inventor Gitanjali Rao told actor and activist Angelina Jolie about her process, over Zoom, from her home in Colorado, during a break in her virtual schooling. Just 15 years old, [Rao has been selected from a field of more than 5,000 nominees as TIME’s first-ever Kid of the Year](#). She spoke about her astonishing work using technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated drinking water to opioid addiction and cyberbullying, and about her mission to create a global community of young innovators to solve problems the world over.

## **LIFT Giving Circle reaches donation milestone | VT Business Magazine**

[LIFT \(Locally Impacting the Future Together\)](#) has [reached a significant donation milestone this year](#) with more than \$50,000 donated to local organizations. Over the last three years, LIFT has grown from a desire to bring women together to do something positive and impactful to over twenty members making a difference in the Greater Burlington, Vermont community. Alexandra Clauss and Shireen Hart founded LIFT Giving Circle in 2017 because

they wanted to harness the generosity and energy of the women in their community to help local groups with their missions.

### **Clift: A ‘mea culpa’ to women artists | VTDigger Commentary**

“The work of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) in recognizing women’s overlooked place in art and its public mea culpa was significant. Its extensive third-floor exhibition of women’s art, ‘Women Take the Floor,’ offered a stellar showcase of women’s art that sought to ‘acknowledge and remedy the systemic gender discrimination found in museums, galleries, the academy and the marketplace, including the MFA’s inconsistent history in supporting women’s art.’” - [Elayne Clift via VTDigger](#)

### **Safety chief apologizes for describing exchange with female lawmaker as ‘uppity’ | VTDigger**

“Public Safety Commissioner Michael Schirling apologized for using the word “uppity” to describe a heated exchange with a female lawmaker Thursday after he was roundly criticized by legislators. Schirling used the word, which has both sexist and racist connotations, to characterize his back-and-forth with Rep. Tanya Vyhovsky, P/D-Essex Town, during a committee discussion about police use of force.” [Kit Norton for VTDigger](#)

## **Funding Opportunities**

### **Paycheck Protection Program Update | Women Business Owners Network**

SBA will offer [Paycheck Protection Program](#) loans to businesses with 20 or less employees and sole proprietors only from Wednesday, February 24 through Wednesday, March 10, 2021. President Biden has also announced [additional program changes](#) to make access to PPP loans more equitable.

## **Events**

**TJ Donovan – Restorative Justice Virtual Speaker Series | Hartford Dismas House**

*Tomorrow, Friday, February 26, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.*

**Storytelling for Business: In-Person/High-Touch | CWE VT**

*Tomorrow, Friday, February 26, 12:00 -1:00 p.m.*

**Women and Leadership: Celebrating Voices in Tech | Black River Innovation Campus**

*Tomorrow, Friday, February 26, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.*

**Finding Balance with Respectful Infant Care with Jean Newberry | Good Beginnings**

*Saturday, February 27, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.*

**LGBTQ+ Town Meeting | Facilitated by LGTBQIA Alliance of Vermont**

*Tuesday, March 2, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.*

**VT Women’s Mentoring Program- Mentor Training | Mercy Connections**

*Wednesdays, March 3 – 24 & Monday, March 29, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.*

**Inspiring Change in 2021 | Women’s Freedom Center**

*Thursday, March 4, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.*

**Mid-Winter Parents Circle | SafeArt**

*Thursday, March 4, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.*

**Reflexology for Workplace and Personal Wellness with Mpath Well-being | WBON**

*Friday, March 5, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.*

**Seat at the Table, International Women’s Day | Lt. Gov. Molly Gray**

*Monday, March 8, details TBD*

**Medicare & You Workshop | Central VT Council on Aging**

*Monday, March 8, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.*

**To Say Yes, You First Need To Say No with Carrie Allen | WBON**

*Tuesday, March 9, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.*

**BYP Coffee Tasting with Kestrel Coffee | Burlington Young Professionals**

*Wednesday, March 10, 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.*

**Mindful and Positive Parenting | SafeArt**

*Thursday, March 11, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.*

**Using the Virtual Push to Experiment & Grow Engagement w/ Monique Priestley | WBON**

*Wednesday, March 17, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.*

**Responding to Racist Flare-ups on Social Media | VT-HEC**

*Wednesday, March 17, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.*

**Girls Get the Message | Girls Inc. & Dartmouth Hitchcock**

*Saturday, March 20, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.*

Submit your event to our statewide events calendar



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