



**STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
115 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VT
05633-5201**

January 26, 2024

Dear Senator Hardy and Distinguished Members of the Vermont Senate,

P.R.1 is a thoughtful, considered update to our Vermont Constitution to allow the General Assembly to adopt qualifications to run, hold and maintain the elected county positions. This is especially important for the law enforcement positions of State's Attorney and Sheriff.

We have found this year that an elected Sheriff can be under multiple criminal investigations, facing an assault charge for kicking a detainee, be decertified after a unanimous finding by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council of professional misconduct and still retain their position in our state.

Impeachment is not a practical, responsive tool to resolve crises like those we have faced in Windham, Addison, and Franklin Counties in recent history. It requires a long, thorough investigation and a political process that can only result in a removal from office after an extraordinary vote of the House of Representatives and a trial in the Senate. We can't afford to have corrupt, criminal individuals hold high office for the months it takes to go through an impeachment. P.R.1 would at least allow the General Assembly to set a reasonable process for suspension and removal for officials who are ineligible or unfit to serve. Moreover, impeachment is not an available solution when the official's inappropriate or criminal behavior occurred prior to assuming elected office and the voters were unaware of the scope of that behavior.

Vermonters have been shocked at the events of the last year and are demanding that we do something to create a fair, responsive process to hold these elected officials accountable. Short of resignation, death or impeachment there is no way to suspend or remove a Sheriff who loses their certification for misconduct or a State's Attorney who is disbarred.


It may be helpful to think about other offices for which the legislature sets reasonable qualifications. If we vote, and set qualifications for the office of Adjutant General, I think we can trust the General Assembly to adopt qualifications for County officials.

Accountability and transparency. Checks and balances. These are values that are deeply important to the functioning of our democracy. The unchecked ability of a defiant, unfit elected Sheriff to remain in office is embarrassing. We should fix this for future Vermonters now. That starts with P.R.1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike McCarthy', written in a cursive style.

Representative Mike McCarthy
Chair, House Government Operations & Military Affairs Committee
Vice Chair, Special Committee On Impeachment Inquiry

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Lalonde', written in a cursive style.

Representative Martin Lalonde
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Chair, Special Committee On Impeachment Inquiry