

Phi Gamma Delta

Beta Upsilon Chapter

158 South Willard St, Burlington VT 05401

Rep. Janet Ancel
Chair, Committee on Ways & Means
Vermont House of Representatives
115 State St., Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Representative Ancel,

22 April 2014

We are very thankful that you were able to afford the men and women of the Greek community at the University of Vermont the opportunity to speak before your committee last week. The dedication that they displayed was symbolic of the work ethic, tenacity and strong faith in service that the men and women of the Greek system have for chapters.

We are writing to you and the members of this committee (at the eleventh hour) to ask that S. 221's language for repeal of fraternity and sorority house tax exemption be removed from the bill. We believe, as does the community, that the amount of money that this would draw for the state's property tax rolls does not warrant repeal and would only do harm to the incredible work that is being done by our chapters. No other state, according to the North American Inter-Fraternal Conference (NIC) has repealed a Greek organization's property tax exemption and this would have a detrimental and effectively devastating impact on chapter houses in the Greek community at the University of Vermont.

While many chapters have sent you testimony – We would like to share with you our perspective. Like our peers within our chapter, we gained a great deal of knowledge in running the chapter house at the corner of South Willard Street and Main Street in Burlington. Our house is a historical landmark and we are responsible for not only its upkeep but also ensuring the historical character of the house remains intact. Phi Gamma Delta's chapter house is a residential learning community, operated and managed by local volunteers and a limited liability corporation (LLC) known as a housing corporation. The graduates are volunteers who do not draw a salary or stipend but volunteer their time, energy, ideas and resources. The organization does not draw a profit from rent but rather distribute that rent back into the chapter house for repairs, keeping rent affordable and ensuring proper study space and safety standards for our brothers. Our goal is to provide safe and affordable housing for University of Vermont students. Our chapter house is held to the highest standards of safety and is regularly inspected by Burlington Code Enforcement and the Burlington Fire Department with conditions far superior to many domiciles within the Burlington rental market. We meet/exceed all safety standards, provide monetary support to the City for services rendered and contribute to the overall health and character of our neighborhood by being active, engaged citizens with a strong belief in community service and philanthropic work. To lose these chapter houses would have a detrimental impact on the University of Vermont (whose educational mission we sustain and promote) and the rental market in the City of Burlington.

We believe that S. 221 will do more harm than good and respectfully request that you will lead the committee and remove the language from bill. Our members work hard, go to school, play by the rules and are active and engaged citizens in the community. They do not deserve to be singled out by this bill.

We appreciate your time, consideration and the hospitality afforded by your committee. As a Vermont taxpayer and resident and voter of Brattleboro and South Burlington – on behalf of my chapter, our thousands of alumni in the local Vermont business and nonprofit community – We appreciate your time, your attention to this issue and affording our community the right to speak and be heard.

Sincerely,

Scott C. McCarty (Vermont 2008)
Purple Legionnaire (Graduate Advisor)
Phi Gamma Delta – University of Vermont

Ty. Williams (Vermont 2015)
Chapter President
Phi Gamma Delta – University of Vermont