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March 9, 2015

Hon. Peter Shumlin, Governor
State of Vermont
Executive Office of the Governor
109 State Street Pavillion
Montpelier, VT 05609

Re: Funding of the Vermont Interactive Television Network

Dear Governor Shumlin:

I recently learned that your Budget for the State which has been sent to the General Assembly calls for the elimination of funding for the Vermont Interactive Television Network (VIT). I write as a concerned Vermonter to ask you to reconsider this position.

As Vermont's Chapter 13 Bankruptcy Trustee for the past twenty four years, I am aware of how much value the state gets from the services provided by the VIT Network. The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Vermont has been one of VIT's many clients for almost the entire time I have been serving as Chapter 13 Trustee. This has allowed this court to hold hearings generally once per month by interactive TV, so that participants can attend court hearings from as many as five different sites across the state. Most times I have done this I have saved as much as 100 to 200 miles of automobile travel. A very rough calculation suggests that over the past several decades I have saved close to 20,000 miles of driving by being able to attend hearings via VIT. When this savings is multiplied by the many thousands of users of the VIT system, from attorneys, business people, clients and students, the savings on Vermont's highways and the savings of fuel and greenhouse gases is significant.

Perhaps more important than even the environmental savings is the fact that VIT allows Vermonters of all walks of life to engage in educational opportunities right in their own communities that would be impossible without the services VIT offers. By utilizing VIT studios (some of which are located right in Vermont Community College and State College campuses) Community College and State College students have the opportunity to attend classes around and beyond the borders of the state, and take advantage of far greater educational opportunities. Certainly the value that VIT provides to the State College and Community College systems alone more that equals the cost to the state.

I know your administration has been a strong advocate of creating the technological infrastructure of the 21st Century in Vermont to keep our state competitive in the worlds of education and business. The VIT Network is exactly that kind of infrastructure. The presence of VIT shows to the business world as well as the world of education that Vermont is a leader in finding new, more efficient ways to use technology. The State has been making that kind of investment in VIT for several decades now and it would be a tragic act of short-sightedness to let that investment be lost due to a temporary budget shortfall, as we recover from a major recession. To sacrifice this kind of resource for the amount of funding involved will do more damage to the state in the long run than the short term savings at stake (which I understand is less than \$1,000,000.00). It is exactly during such a recovery that we dare not sacrifice the infrastructure and resources that will help build a stronger economy and educational system in the future.

As every Vermont dairy farmer well knows, you never feed your seed corn to your cows, no matter how hungry they are, because your seed corn is your future. I know the budget is tight this year governor, but the investment in VIT is part of Vermont' seed corn. Like seed corn, it pays dividends for future economic growth, a more connected and vibrant educational system, and a cleaner environment- all things your administration stands for.

I hope you will take this into account and will reconsider a budget cut that would likely be a permanent end to a Network that keeps Vermonters connected- in business, in education and in access to justice.

Thank you for the wonderful work you do for this little state we love and for taking a moment to consider this perspective.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan M. Sensenich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jan M. Sensenich
Chapter 13 Standing Trustee
District of Vermont

cc: Senator Alice W. Nitka
Senator Dick McCormack
Senator John F. Campbell
Representative Timothy Briglin
Representative James Masland
Representative Mitzi Johnson, Chair, House Appropriations
Theresa Utton-Jerman, Legislative Assistant
Senator Jane Kitchel, Chair, Senate Appropriations
Becky Buck, Legislative Assistant
Tara Lidstone, Executive Director, Vermont Interactive Technologies