

Michael Talbott

**BUDGET HEARINGS: The Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations are seeking public input on the FY2017 proposed State budget**

**Rutland Public Schools Longfellow Administration Building 6 Church Street, Rutland Board Room**

**Monday, February 15, 2016, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

My name is Dr. Michael Talbott. I'm a professor of cinema and media studies at Castleton University. I'm here to talk to the committees members about the need to support higher education in the state of Vermont.

I'm from ~~Southern California~~. One of the most significant factors that drew me to New England was my perception that this region places a high value on education, particularly higher education.

I was shocked to discover that the Vermont's support for public higher education has been in decline since 1980, and can now be characterized as in a state of neglect. Vermont currently ranks 49 out 50 states for support of higher education, and our students are burdened with some of the highest tuitions in the country, leaving them with higher-than-average ~~student~~ ~~burden~~ debt ~~burden~~ upon graduation.

One of my first-year students works 30/hours a week at the local Dunkin Donuts to pay for college. His family lacks the means to assist with his college tuition—in fact, he sends a portion of his wages home each week to help his single mother. His shifts begin at 6am. Upon completing work, he comes straight to my afternoon class, and though he is a bright and diligent student enthusiastic about his education, he struggles to stay engaged because he is exhausted. I worry that this promising young man will not be able to continue his education because of a lack of financial support from the state of Vermont.

Unfortunately, this student's struggle is not an aberration—his plight is a common one faced by young people at Vermont's public colleges. To balance a full-time job and a full-time education is unrealistic. It is unconscionable and impractical to foist the burden of funding public higher education on the backs of students.

The state must contribute more than the current 13%. This meager amount does not demonstrate that a high value is placed on public higher education.