

In 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, spoke of four freedoms in his State of the Union speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Fear, Freedom from Want and Freedom of Speech. His words helped to inspire and unify the country to persevere and eventually win WWII.

Norman Rockwell interpreted these Four Freedoms through his brilliant illustrations. On a recent trip to the Norman Rockwell Museum, while standing in the gallery that displays these impressive works of art, I was struck at the deepest level as to why I continue to be opposed to VT H361. As I gazed at “Freedom of Expression” with my young nieces by my side, we saw in the painting, a man from Arlington Vermont with his annual town meeting report stuffed in his pocket rising to address the meeting. He looked as though he might have just come from work with his plaid shirt, worn jacket and the hands of a laborer. His neighbors were looking up expectantly at him. We could see the man formulating his thoughts and preparing to express his opinions on the topic at hand. I shared with my nieces how lucky they were to live in a state where town meetings are still cherished and they can look forward to participating in themselves one day.

I realized then that this freedom of expression in regard to public education is precisely what Governor Shumlin and many legislators are tinkering with. An honest and in-depth conversation with all Vermonters must be had before any fundamental changes are made to our basic democratic principles. This will take more than a 2 hour committee hearing in Montpelier at the end of a workday.

We in Vermont have a time honored tradition of local control which I believe deserves to be preserved and handed down to future generations.

Save my democratic rights. Vote NO on H361 or better yet abandon the concept and focus on the true problems we face in education today, many of which are imbued in the concept of “Freedom from Want”.

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