



# Town of Readsboro

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## **Board of Selectmen**

Raymond Eilers, Chair  
Nathan Kurz  
Joseph Berard

January 16 2025

## Testimony to Vermont House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee

I'm Nathan Kurz, a selectboard member from the town of Readsboro. Readsboro is in Southern Vermont, in the Bennington-1 District, and thus directly affected by the irregularities in this election. The Readsboro Board of Civil Authority met and submitted a letter expressing our opinion on remedies on December 4th 2024. I'll mostly be summarizing that letter.

Our first point is that the error in the voting should be corrected. Standards for elections should be high, it's not fair to voters anywhere if their votes don't count. The precedent should be set that errors will be corrected rather than allowed to stand. That said, the since the error occurred only in the Town of Pownal, we don't feel it makes sense to do a revote of the entire district.

Turnout in all towns was high because it was a contentious presidential election. Realistically, the turnout for a special election like this will be much lower. If you have a district wide revote, you will be throwing out the votes of anyone who voted in the first election but doesn't participate in the second. This isn't an improvement.

While no solution is perfect, we feel that the remedy should concentrate on the voters who deprived of their right to vote in this election. Pownal sent the ballots to the wrong voters, and the solution is for Pownal to send those ballots to the right voters. Those voters might end up with more sway than they would otherwise, but it's the closest we can come to the original intent.

When making your decision, please keep in mind that like many towns in Vermont, the Town of Readsboro is struggling to meet our budget without undue increases in our property tax rate. We estimate that a special election would cost the town about \$2000. While this isn't a giant amount, and while we value free and fair elections, we're at the point where we're cutting out everything that we can from our budget.

Since I have your attention, it's probably worth mentioning that one of the main difficulties with our budget is an unexpected bill from the state. VTrans is replacing the main bridge in our town on Route 100. While the state is paying for the bridge itself, the town is responsible for the cost of moving our water line to the new bridge. The estimate we were given several years ago was \$105,000, which was high but something we could afford. With the re-bid and the massively higher project cost, the actual cost for the town is now \$653,000.

This is about half our annual town budget. For a water line that doesn't actually need to be replaced. VTrans is allowing us to pay on an installment plan, but even spread over 6 years this involves paying more than the original estimate each year. You may have seen the news that the federal government is reimbursing the state for \$18 million toward the cost of the bridge. If there was any way that some of this money could be used to reduce the burden on our town, we'd be very appreciative.

But back to the main topic. The Town of Readsboro encourages you to do your best correct the obvious errors with this election. We'll support whatever the outcome is, and we want all the votes to count. But we encourage you to protect the rights of those who have already cast legally binding ballots and discourage you from adopting remedies that cost any more than they need to.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Kurz", written in a cursive style.

Nathan Kurz  
Readsboro Vermont