

## Talking about our campaign

A vast majority of Vermonters support climate action, reducing fossil fuel usage and energy independence. However, to those unfamiliar with the concept, a policy designed to achieve these goals – putting a price on carbon pollution – can be met with skepticism or knee-jerk opposition.

That skepticism evaporates, however, when people understand that our campaign shares many of their same goals and concerns and that three fundamental principles undergird our efforts. We are committed to pursuing a policy that:

- 1) grows jobs and the economy
- 2) protects low- and middle-income Vermonters and
- 3) substantially reduces polluting carbon emissions.

*How* we introduce this concept, and talk about it as a tool to realizing these goals, is critical to success. We cannot simply rationalize or explain our proposal—**we have to connect with people, understand what’s important to them and shape this policy in line with their values and goals.**

Based on conversations, research and feedback — we know the top messages that resonate with Vermonters as it relates to this effort are **SAVINGS, INDEPENDENCE** and **LEGACY**.

Together—these three themes form a messaging triangle (below). In conversations with other Vermonters, strive to frame our plan in these terms and work to incorporate at least two of these themes into your discussion.

### SAVINGS

- People want to save money on their energy costs by weatherizing their home, going solar, etc. These cleaner, more efficient energy technologies are available right now, and people are already taking advantage of them.
- But there are many people who want to make these upgrades today but feel shut out by the up-front costs. This plan gives all Vermonters access to these money-saving energy options.
- And we’ll prioritize low Vermonters—putting them first in line. **A low-income family that gets free weatherization services could save almost \$800 per year in home heating costs.**
- We can also save by making these same investments on public buildings like schools, police stations and town halls.

### INDEPENDENCE

- Vermonters value their independence and believe in self-reliance. This is a chance to put our energy choices in the hands of Vermonters instead of large fossil fuel corporations.
- **We send almost \$1 billion per year out of state to big oil and gas companies.** We can change that—and give Vermonters more options and more control over our energy future.
- Picture a Vermont where we’re producing almost all of our energy cleanly and locally — keeping more money in state, creating jobs here, growing a sustainable local economy, and bringing low-income earners along in the transition.

### LEGACY

- Vermonters want a healthy economy and environment for generations to come. This plan embodies those values—**our campaign is one of stewardship.**
- While this plan alone will not solve global warming, it’s a big step in the right direction and an opportunity for us to do our part
- Carbon pollution pricing is an investment in Vermont’s future. It’s something that can produce savings and benefits right now—but also leaves a substantially better Vermont for years to come.

## Tips for communicating:

- ⇒ **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE** - Think about who you are talking to. Do they own a business? Do they have children? Grandchildren? Where are they from? Are they a lifelong Vermonter? These can be important clues to the values they hold and shape what messages you want to highlight in your conversation. It's likely someone with children values legacy. You might want to explain how this plan will reduce emissions and keep harmful pollution out of the air we breathe. A small business owner on the other hand would likely be interested to hear about how our plan emphasizes keeping more dollars in the local economy.
- ⇒ **ASK QUESTIONS & LISTEN** - If you don't already know your audience, find out what concerns/motivates the person you're talking to. This doesn't mean you need to probe the person - simply asking where they're from or what they do can help you understand a little bit about their values. And listen for the cues that they offer up. They might explain that they've looked into going solar but can't afford it. Or that they're worried about the impact of the plan on low-income Vermonters. *Hear* what they're saying.
- ⇒ **ACKNOWLEDGE CONCERNS/RESIST ARGUING** - If someone does express reservations or concerns, avoid arguing. Acknowledge the concern and try reframing that concern in the context of the themes we know resonate. If someone talks about affordability (as it relates to energy, or just generally) speak to them about savings—and demonstrate that shared value. That person might be more interested in efficiency than clean energy or reduced fossil fuel usage — so talk to them about that. Similarly, you may encounter someone who thinks this doesn't go far enough in addressing climate change. Acknowledge that a lot more needs to be done—but reframe it as an opportunity for Vermont to be part of the solution, take a big step forward in addressing carbon emissions here and leave our state better and cleaner in the future (legacy).
- ⇒ **CONNECT THE THEMES** - The themes best resonate when used together. So if you talk about legacy and a cleaner Vermont, connect it to the cleaner energy options that are available today—and the savings associated with that. Or if you're talking about energy independence, talk about what that means to you and how an energy independent Vermont is a legacy we can be proud of.
- ⇒ **SHARE PERSONAL STORIES** - This is probably the most important thing you can do. Sharing stories of your own (or even others) that highlight these values is more powerful than just trading facts. Share examples of Vermonters who are already saving money and using cleaner energy - and connect that to our campaign's plan to make that a reality for everyone. Or if you have kids, talk about how that impacts your support for the campaign, and encourage the person you're talking to to do the same. Make the discussion relatable and personal.

## Telling our story

### The importance of personal narratives

*"The power of your story may not lie in its drama, but in its absolutely perfect relationship to your cause."*

- **John Capecci** and **Timothy Cage**, Living Proof: Telling Your Story to Make a Difference

One of the most effective ways of bringing new supporters into this campaign is by connecting our plan to real-life situations and personal stories that demonstrate what energy independence means.

When people hear from other Vermonters who have gone solar, or weatherized their homes — they want to learn more. When people hear from other Vermonters who wish they could do more to reduce fossil fuel usage, but feel they don't have the ability to do so — they understand that. When people hear from Vermonters who think it's possible to build a more sustainable future for their kids or grandkids — they connect with that.

**So how do we do get these stories? We go out and talk to people!**

You can do this at farmers markets, community gatherings, or get-togethers you organize in your own home! Get in touch with our organizers and **we'll provide whatever support you need.**

#### Tips for story Collecting:

- ◇ **Keep it brief.** Short stories are easier to share and get in front of more people.
- ◇ **Look for variety.** We want to hear from people who are both achieving energy independence and those who aspire to it. This campaign is about making energy independence an opportunity for everyone.
- ◇ **Think about how and where to share them.** Images are powerful—especially on social media. See our tips on collecting photo and video!

#### SAMPLE STORY:



**I am a single senior living in my own home in Barre.**

**I have investigated the options for placing panels on my own south facing roof, but the budgetary limits of many of us seniors throughout the state often make that difficult, if not impossible.**

**For very low income folks, it's out of the question. Many of us in this position want to be part of this important energy transition, but need more financial help to do so. *We all should be in this together.***

**And as soon as I am able to make this happen, in my own way, I will.**

**— Islene Runningdeer, Barre, VT—**

**NOW IT'S YOUR TURN. TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO TELL YOUR PERSONAL STORY!**

## Entering the conversation

As we work to strengthen our messaging on this campaign by gathering supportive materials and stories, we also need your help to disseminate that message far and wide through the mass media *and* push back against the inevitable wave of misinformation the fossil fuel industry will pour in these same channels. **We have a number of tools in place to do just that.**

### Social media:

- ⇒ One of the simplest things you can do to help us get our message out there is follow us on social media and like and share our posts. **Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.**



Facebook.com/  
energyindependentvt



@EnergyIndVT



@EnergyIndVT

- ⇒ **Social media is exponential!** Think of it this way - we have nearly 1,000 followers on Facebook. If each of those followers has 250 friends of their own, that's a combined social reach of 250,000 people. But to reach that potential we need you — our followers — to **like, share, retweet those posts.**
- ⇒ **Pro tip:** To ensure you're seeing our posts in your Facebook newsfeed, visit our Facebook page, select the drop down menu next to the "liked" button the page, and check the option "see first." This will put Energy Independent Vermont posts at the top of your newsfeed!

### Online Comments

- ⇒ We want media coverage of our campaign — and we'll continue to organize events and opportunities that will put our efforts in the spotlight. That **media attention also creates the space for public debate on the merits of our campaign** — and this debate often happens in internet comment sections. We know that **lawmakers read these comment sections** and for better or worse can sometimes use them as a barometer of public sentiment.
- ⇒ If you're interested in joining the debate email our communications director Zach Tomanelli at [zach@vpig.org](mailto:zach@vpig.org) and let him know!

## Getting Our Voices into the Media

### *Writing a Strong Letter to the Editor (LTE)*

\* ALL letters must include your **NAME, ADDRESS and PHONE.** \*

**\* Please limit all letters to 300 words or less. \***

LTEs are a quick, simple appeal for readers to support a specific policy goal or piece of legislation. Following these three simple guidelines will make your LTE shine:

#### **Speak from the heart and from vivid personal experience:**

- ⇒ Do you have an experience with the effects of extreme weather and climate change?
- ⇒ Have you benefited from renewable energy in your own home, and would like to see others have the same opportunity?
- ⇒ Have you been involved or witnessed another successful social movement that others were skeptical of, or thought was impossible?

**Tie the LTE to a specific article or recent political debate** that has garnered media attention.

Need help finding something? Contact us and we'll help!

**Make it happen and follow up!** Utilize our attached media list to distribute your letter far and wide. Keep in mind, some outlets – such as VTDigger – allow for longer commentaries, so if you have a longer version, don't be shy about submitting that! Finally, let us know if you are published and send us a clipping in case we missed seeing it!

**Staying on message is also key to a successful LTE. Try to incorporate one or more of these themes into your LTE, but remember short and sweet is the way to go, unless you're submitting a longer commentary:**

#### **A MORE AFFORDABLE VERMONT**

Putting a price on carbon pollution raises revenue by taxing something we all want less of – dangerous and dirty fossil fuels. These revenues can then be dedicated to helping Vermonters **save money** by lowering other taxes, investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy, or both. A well-crafted carbon pollution tax benefits the environment AND the economy.

#### **ENERGY INDEPENDENCE FOR ALL**

Many Vermonters have already weatherized their homes and businesses, put up solar panels, and switched to cold-climate heat pumps. But for many, these technologies – which help households, individuals, and businesses become less dependent on imported dirty energy – are just out of reach. Revenues from a carbon pollution tax could help thousands of low and middle income Vermonters reach energy independence.

#### **LEAVING A STRONG LEGACY**

This past year has been the hottest on record. Unmitigated global warming will leave our grandchildren with a Vermont that we wouldn't recognize. We are lucky to enjoy our beautiful state and want future generations of Vermonters to as well. Our actions now will make that possible and leave a legacy our grandchildren can be proud of.

**SAMPLE LETTER:**

Saving energy saves money. We need to support those with the biggest energy burden, low-income Vermonters, in efforts to weatherize homes and implement the efficient, non-fossil fuel heating options, like cold climate heat pumps, that are available today. Establishing an Energy Independence Fund — paid for with a carbon pollution tax on the big oil and gas companies — will help us all, especially those struggling to heat their homes. This plan will save money, create jobs, reduce global warming emissions, and keep more money here in Vermont. Our legislators should take up the carbon pollution tax proposal. It's the game-changing policy we need to pursue if we're serious about tackling climate change and meeting our clean energy goals, while also lifting low-income Vermonters up.

**IT'S YOUR TURN. PRACTICE WRITING YOUR OWN LETTER TO THE EDITOR!**

## Climate Organizing in Your Community

### The Basics:

- ⇒ **Recruit people to your team**, the goal being to have about 10-20 people per district who are building power within your legislative district, sharing information, and liaising with your legislature.
- ⇒ **Host a Climate Organizing Party**. The best way to start this process is to host a fun action-oriented meeting which involves inviting folks over to your home (or to a local café or watering hole!) to meet with an EIV organizer who can facilitate setting up a successful core of climate champs for this campaign and beyond. (See the How To Host a House Meeting memo for more helpful tips for success.)
- ⇒ **Make sure everyone** on your team is on the EIV email list—signup here: [www.energyindependentvt.org/ActionTeam](http://www.energyindependentvt.org/ActionTeam)
- ⇒ **Set up a platform to communicate with each other** (e.g. a private Facebook group or a GoogleGroup)
- ⇒ **Dive in!** Don't be scared to start taking action!

### Quick Tips:

- ⇒ **Give people roles**. Everyone in the group should have something to do and/or a specific role -- and a reason to stay involved. (See sample roles on other side.)
- ⇒ **Use the EIV communication tools and best practices**. How we talk about the EIV campaign makes a huge difference in whether or not our community and candidates are going to support this campaign. Stick to the message!
- ⇒ **Have fun!** Celebrate when your Letter to the Editor gets published, add social times to your actions, etc.

### Pitfalls to Avoid:

- ⇒ **Don't be all talk and no action!** Get out into your neighborhood and spread the word! The best way to build a strong group is to have a strong message. Be sure to have a plan with goals you can win! -- Contact EIV HQ for assistance.
- ⇒ **Don't get into the weeds!** Be sure to see the forest for the trees. You don't have to be a policy expert or know all the answers to make a huge difference! -- Stick to the messaging memo!
- ⇒ **Don't do it alone!** Communicate with EIV HQ and use their resources, because supporting you is our job! Brainstorm campaign actions, and share incremental victories!



## **Sample Roles for your EIV Climate Action Team**

*Designating roles within your Climate Action Team is a great way to take your advocacy to the next level and get people bought in and feeling a sense of ownership over the success of the campaign in your district. Here are some broad roles, each of which could be carried out by a really ambitious member of the team or by small sub-committees collaborating for success:*

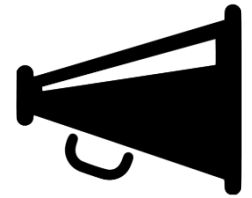
### **Legislative Liaison**

With support from EIV organizers and the phone bank team, the legislative liaison works to build and maintain the list of participants in the legislator meetings, set up the time and place, and confirm the legislator's attendance. Once the phone bank has helped recruit local residents for the CLIMATE ACTION MEETING, EIV organizers will provide a list of names who the Legislative Liaison can call the day before to confirm attendance. The Legislative Liaison also can work closely with EIV staff to ensure the best messaging is used based on your particular legislator. Finally, the Legislative Liaison sends any feedback forms the Team produces back to EIV HQ to better inform our strategy in the statehouse.



### **Community Events Coordinator**

The best way to get the word out about the Energy Independent Vermont campaign is... to get the word out! Tabling for Energy Independent Vermont at farmers markets, the local co-op, or other public events is the best way to grow your list of supporters, educate more people about the issue, and collect more phone numbers and emails to enhance the power of your local CLIMATE ACTION TEAM. The Community Events Coordinator is responsible for signing up for great tabling opportunities, recruiting others from the Action Team to join them, and identifying opportunities for an EIV HQ representative to present to a group or committee.



### **Media Guru**

"Whoever controls the media, controls the mind" - Jim Morrison; Sharing information about the Energy Independent Vermont campaign through Letters to the Editor, writing editorials, and social media, is critical to victory. The Media Guru keeps Action Team members in the know about key times to weigh in on media stories. The Media Guru also monitors the EIV Facebook page for the latest news items that could be shared with the Team or on your local Front Porch Forum. Hot Tip: Join the Emergency Media Team listserv so you never miss the latest (email zach@vpirg.org to join!)



### **Policy Wonk**

Some of us just like to geek out on policy! The Policy Wonk stays in close communication with EIV staff and the Legislative Liaison about the development of the policy and eventual legislation. Policy can move quickly when a bill is moving through various committees so the Policy Wonk is the key player in making sure the Local Team knows what the latest bill is and, working with EIV organizers and the Legislative Liaison, how best to advocate for it.



***What other roles might you want to include on your action team? It's important to remember:***

- (a) these are suggested roles and your team's needs and composition may necessitate different roles, and***
- (b) The EIV organizers and staff are at your disposal in thinking through what the optimal approach will be.***

## Have a party, for climate action!

Climate Action Parties are a really fun way to recruit people to your team, educate your network about the campaign and execute a plan for making sure your legislator supports bold climate action. As with any burgeoning group or organization the key to success is getting smart passionate people to show up and feel invested! **Below is a sample timeline and some hot tips for how to build an awesome local team.**

### Before the Meeting

1. Chat with an EIV organizer and set a date, time and location for your meeting. Give yourself 2 weeks to recruit. Work with EIV organizers to set up a recruitment schedule supported by the EIV phone bank. **Contact David at [dfischer@vpig.org](mailto:dfischer@vpig.org).**
2. Brainstorm a list of people to personally invite. Cast a wide net of folks you know are concerned about global warming and interested in ways to create a greener and more affordable Vermont.
3. Make personal phone calls to your network and follow up the day before with folks who the EIV phone banking team recruits. Make sure folks bring their calendars and are ready to take notes!



### At the Meeting

1. Work with an EIV organizer to present a very brief campaign update and discuss the importance of influencing your legislator to re-commit to the 90% renewable energy by 2050 targets, join the Climate Caucus, and ultimately support carbon pricing in Vermont.
2. Have everyone take out their calendars and agree on 3 different times and dates (a few weeks after the meeting) they would be available to meet with your legislator (during session legislators are usually in-district Saturday-Monday).
3. Discuss and set up roles that work for your team (see the Sample Roles sheet for ideas). If everyone in the room feels they are responsible for some part of moving this campaign forward they are more likely to stay actively engaged!

### After the Meeting

1. Send a thank you email to everyone on the team and offer a brief summary of next steps. Invite them to join a private Facebook or Google Group to stay up-to-date.
2. Call or email your legislator asking for an in-district meeting with a group of concerned constituents. Tell your legislator that you have mutually agreed on a few times that work for everyone. Give your legislator an idea of how many constituents to expect.
3. Keep sharing more in your community about reasons for bold climate action and don't stop recruiting!

### Hot Tips:

- ⇒ Stay in touch with your EIV organizer: Don't hesitate to ask your EIV organizer for help or advice!
- ⇒ Make your invites personal: Let people know why you want them there.
- ⇒ Be proud and have fun! Recruiting others is one of the most important things anyone can do to strengthen the campaign. Thank you for your efforts!!

## Citizen Lobbying 101

### *Setting up an in-district legislative meeting*

#### **What is lobbying and how do I know if I am doing it?**

Simply put, lobbying is advocating a point of view, and is done either by groups or individuals. A *special interest* is an identified group promoting their point of view — be it colleges and universities, businesses, hospitals and even state, local or foreign governments. A *public interest* is an identified group promoting the general public's interest- whether that be clean air, water or healthy communities. While most people think of lobbyists only as paid professionals, there are also many independent, volunteer lobbyists — all of whom are protected by the First Amendment.

#### **The Citizen Lobbyist**

You don't need to be a high powered, big name, professional lobbyist to make an impact. It is to your advantage that you are a Vermonter concerned about the consequences of unmitigated global warming and you have come to speak to your legislator. *As a constituent, you have a level of credibility that professional lobbyists do not.* No elected official can survive with a reputation for ignoring constituents.

#### **Know Your Target**

In our campaign to put a price on carbon pollution, the targets are state legislators who will vote on the issue. Your legislator is accountable to her/his constituents, so think about which groups in your town might be major influences on them. Major employers and institutions are examples of groups that influence your representative. Also, go online and find information on your legislators by running a Google search, looking up their LinkedIn profile, or simply reading profiles at [www.leg.state.vt.us](http://www.leg.state.vt.us) or their campaign websites or Facebook pages. You will feel more confident in your dealings with your legislator if you know their background.

#### **Know What You'd Like to Say**

First, *you don't need to be an expert.* A few talking points on the benefits of a price on carbon pollution combined with your personal concerns will do just fine. You're a constituent and that means a lot to the legislator. Also, only say what you know, as exaggeration or misinformation can cause the legislator not to listen to you in the future. And you do want your conversation to be brief (especially if the legislator is running off to a committee room) so being prepared is key.

#### **Know What Your "Ask" Is**

Be prepared with an action that your legislator can take to address your concerns. Be specific and direct. The more specific the "ask" the better. In our case the we are asking legislators for

1. Renewed commitment to the state's 90% renewable energy by 2050 goals,
2. Provide their take on what specific policies can get us there, and
3. Join and/or help strengthen the Climate Caucus

Then, call us at Energy Independent Vermont and we can help you! This is also a great opportunity to use the *Legislator Feedback Form*.

# Citizen Lobbying Visit

## Goals/Purpose of a citizen lobby visit:

1. To meet with your Senators and Representatives face-to-face.
2. Form a relationship with your legislators so that in the future, when they are deciding how to vote, they will remember you, and your story.
3. Ask them to renew their support for the state's 90% by 2050 renewable energy goal, find out what kinds of policies they think would help us reach these goals, and ask them join and/or strengthen the Climate Caucus.

## Make sure you

### Make it personal

Everyone in the room should identify themselves and where they live/vote. You might consider using name tags to make it very easy for everyone to be identified. Several folks in the meeting should tell first-person accounts of why acting on climate change is so personally important to them. If possible, these should come from a variety of perspectives (e.g., business growth, changing outdoor recreation landscape, liveable communities, etc.) But above all, these accounts should be the most passionate thing your legislator hears all day and likely what will go through their head just before they vote.

### Stay focused and be prepared

*Briefing* materials, if any, should be just that: brief. Elected officials will read a well-assembled one-page fact sheet, but usually not much more. They have a lot of issues demanding their attention. Everyone attending the meeting should meet at least one hour beforehand to go over speaking roles and practice what you'll say. Any handouts you want to share should be in place a few days in advance. Work with our field organizers to make sure you have all the documents you feel like you need!

### Anticipate the arguments of your opponents

It is better to address your opponent's arguments early in the dialogue. Do this directly and openly without being defensive. These are the questions you should expect from your Representatives. We can provide you with a list of some of the most common objections along with the best responses.

## Pitfalls

### Rambling or K.I.S.S.

Keep your story powerful by keeping it short (2 minutes) and don't give a lecture! A few facts/anecdotes are great but avoid the laundry list. Pick 2-3 and discuss them. Put any other facts and stats you think are important on handouts and leave them with the legislator.

### Not getting a commitment

Legislators may not want to commit to joining the Climate Caucus in person. If they don't, be sure to create a follow up plan and let us know what it is.

### Not being professional

Every meeting needs forethought and preparation. As citizen lobbyists we are competing for attention with the fossil fuel industry and other powerful special interests. Respecting our opposition by being prepared and organized will impress your legislator and make your argument more powerful.