

—Slug:.....COMM-0869.opin.view.levinson  
—Contributor.....Dora Levinson  
—Contributor email.....dorothy.levinson@gmail.com  
—For section.....Voices/Viewpoint  
—Format.....Opinions  
—Dateline.....Saxtons River  
—Article Number:.....43729



**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

Thanks, Dora. Nice job.



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Scott is no longer the governor many of us voted for

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 The governor who once treated the people doing the  
3 slow work of policy — the commissioners, the senators, the  
4 teachers — as partners now treats them as scapegoats and  
5 obstacles

####END SUBHED####

6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 WHAT HAPPENED to the Phil Scott we knew? The governor  
8 who brought us through Covid together is not the Phil Scott on  
9 the ballot this year.

10 In the spring of 2020, when no one knew what the  
11 pandemic would bring next, Phil Scott stood at a podium twice a

12 week with his health and education team and told us the truth.  
13 He asked Vermonters to be smart, stay safe, and be kind.

14         When his own party leadership pressured him to ease up  
15 on public health measures, he held the line. When some  
16 Vermonters pressed him to take a harder line against the  
17 unvaccinated, he refused, calling it “counterproductive.” He  
18 treated Vermonters, and our Legislature, as part of the same team.

19         I voted for that Phil Scott. Many of us did, more than  
20 once. That is not the governor on the ballot this fall.

21         \* \* \*

22         JUMP FORWARD four years. In April 2024, after weeks of  
23 hearings and historic levels of constituent input, the Vermont  
24 Senate voted 19 to 9 against confirming Zoie Saunders as  
25 education secretary. Three Democrats crossed over to vote for  
26 Scott’s choice; it was not a partisan stunt.

27         Within minutes, Scott named Saunders interim secretary,  
28 going around the rejection. The next day at his press conference,  
29 he called the Senate’s vote “a partisan political hit job.”

30         The governor who had once asked us to be kind in a  
31 crisis was now calling the considered judgment of our senators a  
32 hit job.

33         That was not a small shift in tone. It was the language of  
34 someone who no longer saw the Legislature as a coequal branch,  
35 but had started seeing and positioning it as an enemy.

36         \* \* \*

37         THAT SUMMER AND FALL, Scott did something he had not  
38 done at this scale before: He campaigned hard. Not for himself,  
39 but against members of his own Legislature. He hit the trail for  
40 Republican Senate candidates in five competitive races,  
41 hammering Democrats on the clean heat standard and property  
42 taxes.

43         And it worked. Republicans flipped six Senate seats,  
44 breaking the supermajority.

45         On election night, Scott framed the win this way: “Can  
46 you [...] afford to live and thrive in Vermont, if we don’t make a

47 course correction on the path set by legislative leaders over the  
48 last two years?" Vermonters are the "we" in that sentence. We  
49 made the team. The legislative leaders did not.

50 By 2025, this had become the norm. Scott was routinely  
51 going around bodies that disagreed with him.

52 He released his own sweeping education plan in January,  
53 bypassing the Commission on the Future of Public Education that  
54 the Legislature had created the year before (and which he had  
55 unsuccessfully vetoed).

56 Then, last November, when the School District  
57 Redistricting Task Force voted 8-3 to recommend voluntary  
58 mergers instead of forced consolidation maps, Scott said the Task  
59 Force had "failed." He went on to say that members who "didn't  
60 fulfill their obligation are okay with the ever-increasing property  
61 taxes."

62 These were volunteer Vermonters who had spent four  
63 months reviewing the data and weighing what consolidation  
64 would mean for Vermont communities, including a former state  
65 college president Scott himself had appointed. He was accusing  
66 them of not caring about their neighbors' tax bills.

67 Then this past January, Scott devoted his entire State of  
68 the State address to a single topic, the first governor to do so  
69 since Shumlin in 2014. The message: "I will not sign a budget or  
70 an education bill or a tax bill that deviates from Act 73 or fails to  
71 fix what's broken."

72 Vermont Public, not a partisan critic but our public  
73 radio, reported it plainly: Scott "has taken the state budget  
74 hostage."

75 For five months he held that position, through repeated  
76 press warnings of a government shutdown that would have  
77 furloughed state workers and frozen services Vermonters depend  
78 on. While Scott and the Legislature were locked in his fight over  
79 maps and mergers, Vermont's housing shortage deepened, federal  
80 Medicaid cuts pressured our healthcare system, and the motel  
81 voucher program continued to evict Vermonters into

82 homelessness. He finally yielded on forced school district  
83 mergers in late May, just days before he filed for re-election.

84 \* \* \*

85 WHAT STAYS WITH ME is this.

86 The governor who once stood with our Legislature now  
87 campaigns against it.

88 The governor who once treated the people doing the  
89 slow work of policy — the commissioners, the senators, the  
90 teachers — as partners now treats them as scapegoats and  
91 obstacles.

92 The governor who once asked us to be kind now uses  
93 must-pass legislation as leverage and the language of “hit jobs” to  
94 publicly discredit the people we send to Montpelier.

95 Vermont continues to face real problems. Housing. A  
96 workforce that is aging while young Vermonters can’t afford to  
97 stay. Children who aren’t thriving.

98 The current approach of ultimatums has not moved the  
99 needle. We need a different approach, one that brings Vermonters  
100 together and does the slow, hard work of building good policy.

101 Vermont deserves better, and this year we have real  
102 options.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

103 **DORA LEVINSON** is an early childhood data and policy  
104 professional.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

105 0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

106

###BEGIN LINKS###

###END LINKS###

VIDEO:

107

###BEGIN VIDEO###

###END VIDEO###

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

108

###BEGIN LOGLINE###

###END LOGLINE###