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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....Opinions - Letters to the Editor - Special
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43010



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Australian ballot doesn't silence voices — it amplifies
2 them

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3

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4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Australian ballot is about inclusion. Open Town Meeting
6 and Representative Town Meeting are not.

7 They automatically exclude large portions of our
8 community — not because people don't care, but because they
9 simply can't be there.

10 I want to tell you about my aging neighbor. She watches
11 every Selectboard meeting on Brattleboro Community Television.

12 She is informed. She is engaged. She cares deeply about this
13 town. But she doesn't have transportation, and she doesn't have
14 the physical stamina to sit through a 10-to-12-hour meeting just
15 to make her voice heard.

16 Why should participation in democracy require physical
17 endurance? Why would we deny her a say when a simple
18 absentee ballot would allow her to vote from her own kitchen
19 table?

20 I also want to tell you about another neighbor — a single
21 working mother with a precarious job, struggling to put food on
22 the table for her kids.

23 Asking her to take an entire day off work, risk her
24 employment, and arrange child care just to participate in open
25 Town Meeting or Representative Town Meeting is not reasonable.
26 It's exclusion by design. She cares about this town too. She
27 deserves a vote too.

28 Democracy should not be limited to those with flexible
29 schedules, reliable transportation, financial security, or the ability
30 to sit in a meeting all day. That's not representative. That's not fair.
31 And it's not who we say we are.

32 Australian ballot doesn't silence voices — it amplifies
33 them. It allows seniors, working parents, people with disabilities,
34 caregivers, and hourly workers to fully participate. It meets
35 people where they are.

36 If we truly believe in broad participation and equal
37 access, the choice is clear. For these reasons alone, we should
38 vote for Australian ballot — so that everyone can vote.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

39

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

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

40

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

41

####BEGIN LINKS####

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

42

####BEGIN VIDEO####

####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

43

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

####END LOGLINE####