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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....Opinions - Letters to the Editor - Special
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43182



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Let's keep Town Meeting — and our democracy

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2

####END SUBHED####

3 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

4 I've been confused by the push to switch Brattleboro to
5 voting only by Australian ballot. I think that is a terrible idea for
6 our town and for democracy in general.

7 Getting rid of Town Meeting would put much more
8 power in the hands of Selectboard. The people who are very
9 actively advocating for purely Australian ballot are local
10 conservative activists who have spoken up loudly in recent years
11 for a smaller, less progressive town government, especially

12 around funding for social services. Whatever your politics, having
13 so much power concentrated in the hands of just five people is a
14 terrible idea for moving policies forward that are good for a
15 whole community.

16 You only need to look at what is happening at the federal
17 level to see the danger in power concentrated in the executive
18 branch and the representative branch failing to balance it out.
19 Town Meeting plays an important role of checks and balances
20 with the Selectboard. We can discuss and adjust the budget, ask
21 for clarity and transparency on how decisions were made, put
22 forward articles or amendments, and so much more.

23 If there were ever a time for more people to become
24 involved with more decision-making power, this is it. Voting
25 against Town Meeting is voting against people having the ability
26 to make important decisions about things that impact us in our
27 town. Why on earth would we vote away such an important right,
28 especially as broader democratic rights are being threatened all
29 over the country?

30 Could we and should we make Town Meeting more
31 accessible? Yes, for sure! I spent a year on a committee coming
32 up with many recommendations to do just that — almost none of
33 which have come to pass.

34 Could and should more of us attend Selectboard
35 meetings and make our voice heard that way? Yes, for sure!
36 However, I've also been at Selectboard meetings where members
37 of the public make comments for over an hour that collectively
38 support one point of view before board members voted the other
39 way.

40 Selectboard members have the right to make their own
41 voting decisions — members of the public can only do their best
42 to sway their opinions, and that is the limit of our power in that
43 space. Town Meeting is the only room where so many people can
44 really debate issues, and then their votes can have a real impact.

45 Join me in voting to keep Town Meeting and expand
46 participation in it. To ensure our democracy, I'll be voting no on
47 Article 2, no on Article 3, and yes on Article 4.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

48 The writer represents District 9 as a member of
49 Brattleboro's Representative Town Meeting.

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

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

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LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

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####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

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####END LOGLINE####