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—Dateline..... Bellows Falls
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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 More than 700 turn out for march, rally in Bellows Falls

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2 Participants urged to 'build community and keep
3 connecting'

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 The No Kings rally in Bellows Falls on March 28 was by
6 far the largest and most organized of the three to date, with more
7 than 700 people participating.

8 The festive, 90-minute event, organized by Indivisible
9 Greater Falls and Grafton's Supporters of Democracy, was one of
10 38 in Vermont and another eight nearby in New Hampshire and

11 included several speakers and music from dozens of local
12 singers, dance groups, performers, and community choirs.

13 The diverse crowd ranged from toddlers and teens to
14 older marchers with decades of experience fighting for human
15 rights and opposition to war. Dozens of local high school and
16 college students attended, and students from The Putney School
17 ran an activity center at the event for younger children.

18 The main event took place at the Waypoint Center,
19 followed by a 1.5-mile march up Canal Street, across
20 Rockingham Street, down School Street, and through the Square
21 back to the starting point.

22 At one point, the line of participants stretched from the
23 train station to Williams Street, and local police held up traffic on
24 Rockingham Street for several minutes while the large crowd
25 crossed the main street in the village.

26 The first No Kings rally, in June 2025, brought out 5
27 million people nationwide. It was followed by an October rally
28 that drew 7 million protestors nationwide.

29 An estimated 8 million participants took part in more
30 than 3,300 events worldwide on Saturday, likely making it the
31 largest single-day protest in the history of the country.

32 **‘We’re here, we’re not alone’**

33 The various speakers and protest signs carried by
34 participants made clear the many reasons that prompted people
35 to come to the streets.

36 Among the grievances: the Trump administration’s
37 attempts through legislation to limit human rights and create
38 voting restrictions, the war in Iran, the rollback of environmental
39 protections, legislation that will further enrich a super-wealthy
40 oligarchy, alleged corruption in the current administration.

41 President Trump and convicted child sex offender Jeffrey
42 Epstein were the main faces and focus on the signs and posters
43 at the event, which highlighted the administration’s failure to
44 release all the files from the federal government’s investigation of

45 Epstein as promised — and as proscribed by a 2025 law — and
46 to prosecute those implicated in the millions of documents.

47 Charlie Hopkins, 18, of Saxtons River, a senior at
48 Bellows Falls Union High School, was one of the many young
49 people who participated in the march. Hopkins is attending the
50 Community College of Vermont (CCV) this year through the Early
51 College program.

52 He said the demonstrations are just one step and predicts
53 a lot of work ahead.

54 “While I know much more than the No Kings
55 demonstrations needs to be done, I still think they have merit,”
56 Hopkins said. “In a state that is so blue, participation is more to
57 add numbers to the total nationwide count and to show to each
58 other we’re here, we’re not alone, and there are people who want
59 to do the work.”

60 Local artist and activist Charlie Hunter served as master
61 of ceremonies for the event. Rachael Shaw, who organized Boots
62 on the Ground, a dance troupe for the protest, told the crowd
63 that the boots in the group’s name “were dancing boots, not
64 combat boots.”

65 Hunter emphasized that point, reminding the crowd that
66 the event — like the thousands of others nationwide — was a
67 nonviolent one, and he warned that any attempts to disrupt it
68 would be handled by de-escalation, not confrontation.

69 There were no counterprotests and, with a strong and
70 cooperative police presence, no noticeable attempts to disrupt
71 the march or provoke discord.

72 Hunter added some levity to the proceedings with his
73 colorful and frequent directions to the crowd about where and
74 how to find the porta-potties rented for the event. (“I gave the
75 directions to the toilets my all!” Hunter would later joke on social
76 media.)

77 'Pick up the pieces'

78 Rep. Mike Mrowicki, D-Windham-4, of Putney, urged
79 the crowd to "show up like this at the polls" during the upcoming
80 midterm elections.

81 He said that the current administration has "no moral
82 compass. We're up against somebody who has no soul."

83 Rep. Michelle Bos-Lun, D-Windham-3, spoke of her
84 concern when she recently traveled to Washington, D.C. and saw
85 "giant Trump banners" draped from many government buildings.

86 "The person in the White House is playing from Hitler's
87 playbook," she said. "He wants absolute power."

88 She said that a recent serious lung cancer diagnosis
89 reminded her "of what is worth fighting for. It deepened my
90 resolve to fight for all of us."

91 Bos-Lun said that Vermont is working to restrict the
92 "overreach of ICE and other government agencies," and taking
93 steps to protect our election process.

94 "We're working to make sure that Vermont elections are
95 kept safe," she said. "Vote in the midterms!"

96 She concluded by quoting from a 1928 speech by former
97 president and Vermonter Calvin Coolidge.

98 "If the spirit of liberty should vanish in other parts of the
99 union, and support of our institutions should languish, it could all
100 be replenished from the generous store held by the people of this
101 brave little state of Vermont," Coolidge said.

102 Drawing the loudest applause of the event was James
103 Chapman, 17, a high school junior at Brattleboro Union High
104 School who spoke of his pride in being part of the event.

105 Chapman encouraged the protesters to "build
106 community and keep connecting" with one another.

107 The crowd broke into loud, prolonged cheers when
108 Chapman said he looks forward to the time when we can "pick
109 up the pieces and fix what has been broken" by the current
110 administration.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

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####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

113

####BEGIN LINKS####

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VIDEO:

114

####BEGIN VIDEO####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

115

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