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HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'I've worked to try to make a difference with the skills
2 and talents that I have'

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3 Touting her local ties and her record, Molly Gray brings
4 her lieutenant governor campaign to Brattleboro

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5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 Molly Gray wants her old job back.
7 Gray, 42, a Democrat from Newbury, is running for
8 lieutenant governor, a job she held from 2021 to 2023.
9 She came through Brattleboro on May 21 to visit
10 Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, the Downtown Brattleboro
11 Alliance, the agricultural community at the Retreat Farm, patrons

12 at The Works on Main Street, and do a video webcast. She also
13 found time for a sit-down interview with *The Commons*.

14 In 2022, while in her first and only term, Gray
15 challenged Becca Balint in a high-profile, hard-fought race for
16 the seat in the U.S. House of Representatives vacated by Peter
17 Welch, who won the seat of retiring Sen. Patrick Leahy.

18 Balint beat Gray by a 24% margin.

19 “Let’s say on the record, I had the incredible pleasure of
20 working with Becca Balint when she was president pro tem of the
21 Vermont Senate,” Gray said. “And we were in the chamber every
22 day together, sometimes just the two of us, because most senators
23 were working remotely, because it was the height of Covid.”

24 Gray described Vermonters as “so deeply lucky to have
25 Becca Balint in Washington.”

26 “She is exactly where she needs to be, and I hope, if
27 elected, I will have the chance to work with her as a partner in
28 Montpelier,” she said.

29 After leaving state government, Gray went on to head the
30 Vermont Afghan Alliance, a Burlington-based nonprofit that
31 supports Afghans who are resettling in the state.

32 Gray is also an attorney. She graduated Vermont Law
33 School in 2014 and served as an assistant attorney general from
34 2018 to 2020.

35 In the Democratic Party primary on Aug. 11, Gray is
36 competing against Ryan McLaren, who worked for Sen. Peter
37 Welch for a decade, and Esther Charlestin, a first-generation
38 Haitian American, the chair of the Vermont Commission on
39 Women, a small-business owner, and an educator. Charlestin lost
40 a run for governor in 2024.

41 When asked why she wants her old seat back, Gray said
42 Vermont deserves a lieutenant governor who is “going to show
43 up every day fighting for them, for their rights and for their
44 families, and for the future of the state.”

45 In Vermont, the lieutenant governor is elected separately
46 from the governor, giving the job some independence. The

47 governor and lieutenant governor tend to come from competing
48 parties, as was the case with Republican Gov. Phil Scott and
49 Gray. Voters bucked that trend in 2024 by putting John Rodgers,
50 another Republican, into the lieutenant governor's office.

51 The job has three main responsibilities: officially
52 presiding over the Senate (though the actual day-to-day
53 leadership falls to the president pro tempore); breaking tie votes
54 in the Senate; and stepping in to replace the governor in the case
55 of death or incapacitation. When Republican Gov. Richard A.
56 Snelling died in office in 1991, Democratic Lt. Gov. Howard
57 Dean replaced him.

58 The lieutenant governor otherwise has freedom to work
59 on, create public conversation about, and advocate for specific
60 issues.

61 "Vermonters are hungry for leadership right now," Gray
62 said, adding that the lieutenant governor "has a voice to
63 communicate what is right, what is wrong, what is lawful, what is
64 not, and what is possible when we focus our priorities on the
65 urgent challenges and needs facing the state."

66 "A lieutenant governor can elevate the voices of
67 Vermonters, help help drive a focus on policy and lead," she said.

68 **Looking at the record**

69 Gray's term as lieutenant governor came during a
70 stressful time in Vermont, when the state was dealing with the
71 pandemic. Still, she said, she managed to make her voice heard.

72 "When I was lieutenant governor, I hosted a regular seat-
73 at-the-table series, giving Vermonters a voice in Montpelier," Gray
74 said. "I brought students into the State House to serve virtually.
75 They learned to serve as lieutenant governor for a day, making
76 our government accessible to the next generation."

77 She also "traveled to every corner of the state as part of a
78 Recover Stronger tour, trying to assess where we should invest
79 federal Covid relief funds to support Vermonters," she said.

80 "But that is the bare minimum that we should expect,"
81 Gray said. "In this moment, the stakes are so much higher."

82 That is because the federal government appears to be
83 attacking democracy's core values, she said.

84 "Every morning, Vermonters wake up to some new act by
85 the federal government to roll back rights and increase costs,"
86 Gray said. "We, as a state, sometimes have a choice of whether
87 we capitulate, we coordinate, or we hold the line. I believe
88 Vermonters deserve a team of leaders in statewide office who are
89 fighting every day to protect the rights of Vermonters."

90 As examples, Gray pointed to Secretary of State Sarah
91 Copeland Hanzas, a Democrat, who is fighting the Trump
92 administration's demands to hand over Vermont's voter data, and
93 Attorney General Charity Clark, also a Democrat, who has sued
94 the Trump administration 49 times.

95 "Our treasurer, Mike Pieciak, is working to support
96 immigration legal defense for Vermonters who may be unlawfully
97 detained by [Immigrations and Customs Enforcement]," Gray
98 said. "And we deserve a lieutenant governor who has the skills
99 and ability to be on the team holding the line federally every day,
100 while also helping the state invest in key initiatives to support
101 working families."

102 Gray said she has a good relationship with Scott, who is
103 running for an unprecedented sixth term in office.

104 "I'll work with whoever the governor is, and I had a
105 strong working relationship with Phil Scott when I was lieutenant
106 governor," Gray said. "I'm not afraid to work with Phil Scott. And
107 I'm not afraid to speak up when I disagree. I believe that
108 Vermonters deserve a different kind of leadership, someone to
109 speak up when Vermonters' rights are being violated and their
110 needs aren't being met."

111 When asked for some concrete success stories from her
112 first time as lieutenant governor, she pointed to the entire Scott
113 administration's effective leadership during the pandemic.

114 "I helped work with the governor and the Legislature to
115 support our recovery from Covid," Gray said. "That was number
116 one."

117 She also cited her work as "a champion for child care
118 and universal paid family and medical leave," and held the first
119 legislative summit on those two issues. "That helped with the
120 passage of Vermont's landmark child care bill," she said of Act
121 76, which passed in 2023.

122 And in 2021, Gray and then-Secretary of Commerce
123 Lindsay Kurrle, along with Greg Knight, adjutant general of the
124 Vermont National Guard, represented the state in a partnership
125 with North Macedonia.

126 She also presided successfully over the Senate.

127 "I didn't waste a moment of my time in the office,
128 because that's what I believe Vermonters deserve," Gray said.

129 **Roots in Windham County**

130 Gray comes from northern Vermont, but says visiting
131 Brattleboro is like coming home.

132 "I spent my childhood visiting my grandparents," she
133 said.

134 "My dad grew up in Putney," Gray said, and her
135 grandparents, Ed and Mabel Gray, were beloved staff at The
136 Putney School. "My grandfather was the handyman at The Putney
137 School. He helped build it. My grandmother taught home
138 economics."

139 Her mother, Kim Mumford Gray, grew up in
140 Dummerston and was a student at Brattleboro Union High
141 School. Her mother's father, Jack Mumford, founded Brattleboro
142 Tire on Putney Road.

143 "I'll never forget from where I came," Gray said. "The
144 roots run deep. And I think it's important that Windham County
145 have a voice in Montpelier," Gray said.

Working with new Americans

Immigration is an important topic in Vermont, which depends largely on new Americans to help run its agricultural industry.

When she was leading the Vermont Afghan Alliance, Gray became especially aware of the risks taken by Afghans, who helped the U.S. government during its time there and then, when the Taliban regained power, they fled to come to America and restart their lives.

In Afghanistan, “they risked everything for our government,” Gray said.

For refugees who resettled in Vermont, “our agency helped them with things like jobs, housing, driver’s licenses and, unfortunately, immigration legal services. We worked with tremendous community partners like ECDC [the Ethiopian Community Development Council] here in Brattleboro.”

With the openly anti-immigrant policies of the Trump administration, “now they are being targeted as well as every other immigrant in the country,” Gray said. “Unfortunately, the Afghan community is not immune from unlawful ICE detention.”

Gray said she hasn’t “stepped back” from or given up her work for the Afghan community, and she said she would take those experiences with her should she return to state government.

Housing and health care

Addressing Vermont’s need for more housing should be included in a larger strategy for making Vermont affordable that also includes health care, Gray said, noting three related policy points.

“One, we need to continue to reform or remove barriers to costly duplicative permitting so that housing can be built in a faster time frame,” she said.

177 Secondly, "we must continue to invest in the workforce
178 to build housing, so we need electricians, plumbers, and
179 carpenters," Gray continued.

180 Finally, "we need to make sure cities, towns, and [other]
181 municipalities have the support to be able to build through
182 advancements and Act 250 reform," she said.

183 Gray is planning to visit every part of the state before the
184 primary on Tuesday, Aug. 11.

185 "I've worked to try to make a difference with the skills
186 and talents that I have," she said. "I've tried to grow our
187 workforce and tax base and better understand the challenges in
188 finding housing or affording to live in Vermont."

189 "I have a much greater understanding now of the needs
190 of working families," said Gray, who, since her days in the State
191 House, has had a child, now 2½ years old, and is "also caring for
192 my mom, who has multiple sclerosis."

193 "These are the challenges that a generation, my
194 generation, face every single day," she said. "And if we want to
195 meet the needs of working families, then we need to put them at
196 the center and listen to what they're saying about what it means
197 to try to make it work in Vermont."

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