

# out in the mountains

VERMONT'S VOICE  
FOR THE LESBIAN,  
GAY, BISEXUAL &  
TRANSGENDER  
COMMUNITY  
SINCE 1985

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**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE** The purpose of Out In The Mountains [OITM] is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

**EDITORIAL POLICY** We will consider for publication any material that broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of Out In The Mountains. This paper, as a non-profit organization, cannot and will not endorse any political candidates. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic.

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## Voting Is...

**V**oting. It's one of the best ways to participate in the democratic process. Voting is the right of Vermont residents who are 18 and older on election day and who are U.S. citizens.

Voting is important in determining how our laws will be shaped in the future. By choosing elected officials who are responsive to your interests and needs, you will have taken part in one of the fundamental processes of our democracy, and you will have spoken your mind at the ballot box.

The outcome of races nearly too close to call can sometimes be determined by only one voter. That one voter could be you, and your vote will affect decisions made that will affect your future and that of your community.

In our local election this past March, Democratic candidate and R.U.1.2? member Joanna Cole came very close to upsetting an incumbent on Burlington's City Council, 503 to 534 votes, in a four-way race. And that's just one example among many.

Promote the Vote, a project of the National Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Centers, was launched in New York City nearly a decade ago to organize, register and educate voters.

Several board members of this National Association were in Burlington last month for a meeting, and had some interesting stories to tell about voter registration drives in their respective parts of the country.

Ann DeGroot, Executive Director of OutFront Minnesota, said registering folks from the gay-lesbian-transgender-bisexual community potentially impacts public policy for years to come. She said candidates like groups that register people and get out the vote. Doing this work then gives the organization clout with newly elected officials.

"They'll listen to you," DeGroot said. In 2004, OutFront registered a remarkable one percent of all newly registered voters in Minnesota, or 1,000 people, she said.

Registering voters is "a simple thing to add to any event," said Kent Burbank, Executive Director of Wingspan, another community center in Tucson, Arizona.

Wingspan is now "kicking into high gear," Burbank said, with elections coming up in November. Two years

ago, Arizona passed Proposition 200 in order to discourage immigrant Mexican voters, by requiring additional identification and other measures, Burbank said. To counter the effects of the law, Wingspan is working to register voters and is encouraging people to vote early by mail.

In Vermont, it's clear that by voting for candidates who support our rights - the rights of same-sex couples to marry, and the rights of transgender citizens and public school students to live without fear of harassment - makes a big difference in our lives.

Several candidates who identify as gay or lesbian are running for office this year. As a nonprofit organization, OITM cannot endorse any political candidates. What we can do is offer a glimpse into a few of the campaigns, and encourage our readers to also seek information elsewhere and make informed decisions at the ballot box.

Of course, while one or a few voters may determine the outcome of a local race, they won't have quite the same impact in national elections. But the more people who vote and get involved in the electoral process, the greater our chances of getting results that reflect the will of the people, and of having truly fair elections.

A convenient way to vote in Vermont is to request an absentee ballot up to 30 days prior to the primary or general election (20 days for municipal elections). Voters may fill out their ballots at the city or town clerk's office, or mail them back. No need to miss work, wait in line or find transportation to the polls.

If you're not registered, or have moved and want to vote at your new location, the deadlines to register are Tuesday, September 5th to vote in the September 12th primary; and Monday, October 30th to register to vote in the general election on November 7th.

You may register to vote with your town or city clerk, or at the Department of Motor Vehicles. If you don't know where to find your town or city clerk, call 1-800-439-VOTE for information. You can also download a voter registration form by going to the Vermont-elections.org website.

Anyone may register to vote at R.U.1.2? at 34 Elmwood Avenue across from the main post office, at Outright Vermont at its new location in the Multigenerational Center at 241 North Winooski Avenue in Burlington, or go to OITM's website at mountainpridemedia.org and register there. ▼

## WITT'S END BY LEAH WITTENBERG



Mother Earth Sings The Blues