

Bristol Town Administrator

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Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 8:56 AM
To: MUNINET@LIST.UVM.EDU
Subject: Our Unsung Heroes of Democracy

November 17, 2020

For immediate release

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Our Unsung Heroes of Democracy By Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos

As Vermonters we should be proud. The November General Election saw Vermonters voting in record numbers, exercising our civic duty both safely and securely during circumstances that are anything but ordinary.

Much of the conversation nationally is focused on the results of the election. I think it's equally important to discuss the hard work done by local election officials administering our democratic process.

The elections process is different across all 50 states. How votes are received, and when they are counted, may be dissimilar across county or state lines. However, every state in the nation shares one common underpinning: hardworking election officials focused on the integrity and security of our elections.

In Vermont, these heroes of democracy are the Town and City Clerks. While my office and the Legislature get much of the credit for big picture policy setting, none of that would matter were it not for the diligent, steadfast work of the Clerks. From Town Meeting Day to the Presidential Election, the Clerks keep the front door open to democracy for Vermont voters, working long days and late hours before, on, and after Election Day.

Their list of responsibilities is a lengthy one, from assisting local voters with the registration process, to recruiting election officials and processing early/absentee ballots. Across every acre of this state, the Town and City Clerks conduct these tasks with excellence. The same is true of local Boards of Civil Authority members and election workers who assist the Clerks in this work.

This year was no exception, despite the significant challenges that the COVID-19 health crisis has posed to our normal elections process. In response, the Clerks went above and beyond. They worked in advance with my office to put measures in place to make the elections process as safe as possible for every voter, ensuring that no Vermonter eligible to vote would have to choose between their health and their right to vote. They processed the enormous influx of early ballots to ensure that every vote cast by an eligible voter was counted. They designed safe polling place layouts, so that in-person voting on Election Day could be done as safely as possible at the polls. After all that, they were still able to tabulate and provide unofficial election night results for over 98% of Vermont precincts by midnight that night. In the ensuing days they carefully reviewed and certified results, in a deliberative process that ensures accuracy in the count.

When I hear rhetoric, conspiracy theories, and baseless claims denigrating the security and integrity of our elections process, one of the things that bothers me most is complete dismissal of the hard work done by these sworn officials who care deeply about the integrity of the process, and the sanctity of democracy.

Every election cycle, and even more so this year, I am grateful for the diligence and dutifulness of Vermont's Town and City Clerks. I hope that you will join me in thanking our local heroes of democracy.

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Jim Condos

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