

The Retail Review

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Candidates Views on Retail Sector

The VRA recently asked the Democratic and Republican candidates for Governor some questions of importance to retailers in Vermont. Below are their answers.

Lt. Governor Brian Dubie:

What role do you believe the retail sector plays in Vermont's economy and what will you do, specifically, to strengthen that role?

I have talked with hundreds of retailers and have walked around dozens of downtowns since launching my first Jobs Tour in January. I have asked how the economic downturn has affected you, and what Montpelier could do differently to help. I have listened to your concerns – about high taxes, onerous and redundant regulations and permitting requirements, energy costs, and others.

I have a clear agenda. I will work to cut taxes, control state spending, cut red tape, improve the climate for job growth in Vermont, and get our economy moving again.

What will you do, specifically and measurably, to help small business?

I have a 10- point policy plan entitled “A Blueprint for Job Growth and Economic Expansion” you will find at my website, www.briandubie.com

I hope you'll take a look at it. It's a plan about securing a foundation for progress, adopting pro-jobs policies from day one, making state government smarter, and investing in Vermont's future. In it, I detail how, together, we'll

- Hold spending at affordable levels
- Provide tax relief for families and employers

(Continued on page 2)

Senator Peter Shumlin:

What role do you believe the retail sector plays in Vermont's economy and what will you do, specifically, to strengthen that role?

The retail sector plays an incredibly important part in Vermont's economic health, and must continue to do so in the future. I have worked hard with our retailers on many issues including fighting sales tax increases, credit card abuse and regressive taxes that target our retailers. I led the effort to pass the toughest law in the country that takes on the credit card company's bills and fees. I also led the fight to exempt clothes and shoes from the sales tax. These taxes drive business out of state and help to empty our downtowns.

What will you do, specifically and measurably, to help small business?

I have built and operated a successful small business in Vermont. I know what it takes to make it work. One of our biggest burdens is health insurance. Like all other small business owners I have watched my health care costs skyrocket. Statewide we have gone from 2.5 billion dollars spent on health care eight years ago to more than 5 billion today. That's a hidden tax of 2.5 billion on all businesses and all Vermonters. I will pass a health care plan that will take that burden off the backs of Vermont business. A business should not pay their employees health insurance anymore than it should their car, life or fire insurance. Relieving this burden will also be a huge job creator.

(Continued on page 2)



Vermont Retail Association

Lt. Governor Dubie's responses *(Cont. from page 1)*

- Focus like a laser on job creation
- Market Vermont's strengths
- Streamline permitting and regulation
- Lower health care costs
- Provide steady leadership for long-term challenges
- Build a next-generation business infrastructure
- Strengthen education and training, and
- Power up our energy future

Please state your positions on the Vermont sales tax and on local option taxes.

Vermont should work to reduce all tax rates: property taxes, income taxes, corporate taxes, sales taxes, all taxes.

I would support efforts to apply the sales tax to internet sales, to level the playing field for Vermont's bricks and mortar retailers.

If residents in a community vote to raise a local option tax, I would respect their will.

What is your position on Sales Tax Holidays?

I have joined with Vermont's retailers in support of Sales Tax Holidays. I would like to make every day a sales tax holiday in Vermont.

What specific policies and actions will you put in place to help vibrant downtowns?

On page 15 of my Blueprint for Job Growth and Economic Expansion, I detail my plan to expedite downtown development.

The State must do all it can to encourage economic growth in designated growth centers, downtowns and village centers. Vermont should allow municipalities to apply for an Act 250 permit without a developer in hand but based upon planned capacities (traffic, water, sewer, open space, etc.). Such an approach would streamline the permit process where growth is desired, eliminate redundant reviews, and engage

Senator Shumlin's responses *(Continued from page 1)*

Please state your positions on the Vermont sales tax and on local option taxes.

I have discussed my long time fight against sales tax increases. As far as local option taxes I have never been a big fan. They can make it tough for Vermont to compete. But I am open to revisiting this debate.

What is your position on Sales Tax Holidays?

I have been a big supporter of sales tax holidays. I have worked closely with Tasha Wallis and others to make them happen, at times to the chagrin of some of my colleagues.

What specific policies and actions will you put in place to help vibrant downtowns?

I have supported the downtown and village center tax credit program. I will continue that support. These credits have made it easier to install sprinkler systems and elevators designed to make downtown buildings more useful and to encourage development in our town centers. A small increase in this program — if possible — would have a substantial impact.

You have been involved in Vermont politics for years. What have you done to help Vermont's retail community during that time?

As a Connecticut Valley resident I have been particularly sensitive to the issues of Vermont retailers, especially in regard to sales tax issues. I have always opposed the "junk food" tax as well. One person's "junk food" is another person's lunch. I believe that we teach people to eat healthy food through education not through tax policy.

What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment, thus far, as a political leader?

I am a leader who gets things done. As the longest serving President of the Vermont Senate in the state's history, I have a reputation for bringing together bipartisan coalitions to get tough things

Lt. Governor Dubie's responses *(Continued)*

local governments more actively in the job creation process. The select board/ city council could obtain the permit, recover its costs, and save the developer time by selling the rights of the permit to a developer. The developer would only have to go back to the Act 250 process for those development criteria not covered at the local level by the capacity analysis and associated permit.

You have been involved in Vermont politics for years. What have you done to help Vermont's retail community during that time?

I have advocated consistently for Vermont's retail sector on a wide variety of issues, from Sales Tax Holidays to license fees on retail scanners and minimum credit card purchases, to plastic bag taxes, sales taxes, "Buy Local", and efforts to attract tourists – especially Canadian tourists – to come to Vermont to shop.

Just last week, I was honored to accept a strong endorsement from the Vermont chapter of the National Federation of Independent Business, which represents 1,800 independently owned small businesses in Vermont. The NFIB endorsed me on the strength of my ten-point plan for job creation and economic growth.

My plan to grow Vermont's economy, grow jobs, grow personal income, grow economic security and freedom and let Vermonters keep more of what they earn will be good for the Vermont retailers who depend on consumer confidence and a strong economy.

What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment, thus far, as a political leader?

I would have to say my greatest accomplishment is my role in the execution of a new, 26-year power contract between Vermont's two largest electric utilities and Hydro Quebec.

My first outreach to Canada and Quebec took place

Senator Shumlin's responses *(Continued)*

accomplished. Small business has been a priority of mine — creating jobs and raising incomes for all Vermonters. I want others to have the same kind of opportunities I've had. I am a pro-jobs and pro-growth Democrat.

Studies have shown that shopping is the single most popular activity for visitors to Vermont. What will you do, specifically, to stimulate tourism?

Having been raised in a county that relies on tourism — largely built around the ski industry — I understand the importance of tourism as an economic engine for jobs and jobs growth. We need to think collaboratively. Small business owners and entrepreneurs must work together to promote Vermont as the best place to visit, recreate, enjoy our locally grown agricultural products and, perhaps, own a second home.

Vermont tourism has a vibrant future if we promote our strengths more. I will not be a Governor who says repeatedly what a terrible place Vermont is to do business. I have never sold my product that way. And Vermont has never sold Vermont that way. We have a unique "brand." And we have to tell our story.

One of the greatest challenges facing small-business startups is access to capital. What will you do to ensure that entrepreneurs here have such access?

This is a tremendous challenge. Getting credit from banks right now is difficult to say the least, with many business owners having difficulty borrowing in order to expand. I led the effort to direct 5 million dollars of federal stimulus funds to the Vermont Economic Development Authority [VEDA] to provide capital to small businesses. We also need to build private/public partnerships with venture capital leaders. We need to make Vermont an easy place to grow a startup into a thriving business.

Please tell us about yourself, including anything that will help us get to know you and understand your goals, methods, and style if you become governor.

Lt. Governor Dubie's responses *(Continued)*

In December 2002, a month after I was first elected lieutenant governor, and a month before I took the oath of office. I recognized then that Canada and Quebec would be critical to Vermont's energy future, our border security and our economy. In April 2003, I sat in the front row at Premier Jean Charest's initial swearing-in, as the only invited foreign government official. At the reception following the ceremony, I met then Hydro-Quebec president and CEO Andre Caille. He offered to show me his dams at James Bay in Northern Quebec, and in August 2003, he did.

It has been very rewarding to see these eight years of cooperation between Vermonters and Quebecers, on many levels, now coming to fruition in an energy contract that promises a stable, green, renewable energy supply for Vermonters and Vermont jobs.

Studies have shown that shopping is the single most popular activity for visitors to Vermont. What will you do, specifically, to stimulate tourism?

Vermont is known worldwide for its spectacular fall foliage, world-class skiing and snowboarding, and summertime recreation. We need to leverage this reputation to bring even more visitors to Vermont. The state is within a day's drive of more than 80 million people. We should find more opportunities to share the Vermont we love. To support this objective, competitive funding should be allocated for marketing and tourism promotion. We should explore every opportunity to co-market with private sector partners – such as our current programs with Cabot and the Vermont Ski Areas Association. With the significant return on investment and the 60,000 Vermont jobs in this industry, it is important that we continue to grow the tourism sector.

One of the greatest challenges facing small-business startups is access to capital. What will you do to ensure that entrepreneurs here have such access?

As Governor, I will be a relentless advocate for entrepreneurs and small business owners. My door will always be open to hear concerns and provide a

Senator Shumlin's responses *(Continued)*

This is the most important job interview Vermonters conduct, so it is critical that you know what makes me tick.

I am dyslexic. I remember being called into the principal at a young age with my parents. They told them what I already knew. I was having difficulty reading.

I had a teacher— later teacher of the year — who believed in me. She took me home after school and taught me how to read. Ever since then I have worked seven days a week to try and be successful at what ever I do. I will do the same as Governor.

And this experience has always stuck with me. I will always fight for those who are struggling, for those who don't have a voice, for those were not born on a level playing field, and for those who have more potential than society thinks they might have.

I am running for Governor to give something back to the state I love and the state that believed in me.

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RCSC is a member of the Electronic Transactions Association.

Lt. Governor Dubie's responses *(Continued)*

helping hand to those seeking to invest in jobs and Vermont's future.

I propose bolstering VEDA's successful programs, and increasing support for the Small Business Development Centers.

Please tell us about yourself, including anything that will help us get to know you and understand your goals, methods, and style if you become governor.

As a husband, father, and middle child in a family of seven kids, I know leadership and political skills begin at home: listening, bringing people together, and getting along.

I love my state. My Vermont roots go back 5 generations or more. I am running for Governor to lead Vermont into a period of job growth, income growth and economic security for families, farmers, small business owners, young people starting their careers and seniors who have worked hard for a secure retirement.

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FACEBOOK**



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to date with the VRA**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Tattersall's Clothing Emporium Celebrates 15 Years in Downtown Rutland

When Tattersall's Clothing first opened their doors in August of 1995, they promised their customers good value, well made products at reasonable prices, exceptional, personal service, and a friendly and cheerful ambiance.

Over the years, Tattersall's has never deviated from their original promise. However, the product mix has changed significantly. Today Tattersall's features "Fun, occasionally Funky, and always Funktional" natural fibre clothing and accessories.

This month, Tattersall's will celebrate **15** years in business. For **15** days from the 16th of September through the 30th of September, they will be offering **15%** off the first item.

As Rutland has changed, so has Tattersall's changed the focus of its products. Today a Tattersall's shopper will find mainly natural fibre clothing in 100% cotton, alpaca wool, linen, hemp and cotton. And in their accessory lines such things as hemp and cotton socks, hemp purses and wallets, scarves in cotton, Pashmina and silk/cotton, as well as funky, and unusually fun, earrings and barrettes.



Jenn Pattillo and Christine Tattersall

But as much as the store has changed, many things have not. The staff is still the same. Christine Tattersall, owner of Tattersall's for these 15 years, is honored that her store manager and buyer Jenn Pattillo has been an integral part of the management of Tattersall's for most of those 15 years.

Both Christine and Jenn are actively involved in many local efforts to improve the life and economy of Rutland. Christine serves on a number of boards and committees in the Rutland area, and participates in local road races, both for the thrill of competing and to keep slim and fit.

Jenn is an avid and creative knitter, an active volunteer at the Rutland Natural Food Market-The Coop, and a member of the Downtown Rutland Partnership Special Events Committee. She also enjoys many outdoor sports, including biking, hiking, and running.

To learn more about what's happening at Tattersall's, click on www.TattersallsClothing.com. There you will find Jenn's posts to their website for what has just arrived and what to expect.

To find out even more about Tattersall's they urge people to contact either Christine or Jenn by phone at (802)773-5007, email them at info@TattersallsClothing.com...or just stop by.

Tattersall's is open Monday-Friday from 10am until 6pm, Saturdays from 9am until 6pm, and Sundays from 11am until 4pm.

August Retail Sales Increase Still Reflects Cautious Consumer, According to NRF

The back-to-school shopping season finished on a positive note as retailers' aggressive promotions and state sales tax holidays helped lure families into the stores last month. According to the National Retail Federation, August retail industry sales (which exclude automobiles, gas stations, and restaurants) rose 0.5 percent seasonally adjusted over July and increased 3.0 percent unadjusted over last year.

NRF's **2010 Back to School** survey, released in July, found the average family planned to spend \$606.40 on apparel, shoes, electronics and supplies for children in grades K-12 while average spending on college students was expected to reach \$616.13. Back-to-school spending was forecast to hit \$55.12 billion this year, far surpassing 2009 levels.

"Most Americans are in a much better financial position than a year ago, but they are still spending cautiously, looking for bargains and comparing prices before buying," said NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay. "After leveraging aggressive promotions to bring in back-to-school shoppers, retailers are putting the finishing touches on promotions and pricing for the upcoming holiday season."

August retail sales released by the U.S. Commerce Department show total retail sales (which include non-general merchandise categories such as autos, gasoline stations and restaurants) increased 0.4 percent seasonally adjusted over July and increased 3.5 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

"While the underlying trends remain positive, shoppers are still focused on getting their finances in order," said NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz. "The challenge for retailers is to convince consumers that the recession is over and to buy accordingly."

Led by traditional back-to-school categories, retail sales across the board showed strength. Clothing and clothing accessory stores sales increased a solid 1.6 percent seasonally adjusted and a 3.0 percent unadjusted over last year. Sales at health and personal care stores sales increased 0.6 percent seasonally adjusted over July and 2.2 percent unadjusted over last August.

Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores sales increased 0.9 percent seasonally adjusted over July and 4.2 percent unadjusted year-over-year. Building material and garden equipment stores sales were flat from last month and increased a strong 6.6 percent unadjusted from last August.

Courtesy National Retail Federation

VRA REUSABLE BAGS

The VRA has our own reusable bag. It is made from recycled materials and is recyclable; durable and lightweight; perfect for any occasion. By using it you reduce the number of plastic bags used and help to promote the Vermont Retail Association.

If you would like to receive one of our complimentary bags please let us now. Call or email to request one: (802) 658-8560 or mail@vtretailers.com.





President's Corner

Bonnie Hawley, President
VRA Board of Trustees

THE POWER OF ONE

You hear a lot of talk these days about “The Power of One.”

I’ve been thinking about that recently, and how it relates to VRA. In the last two years, we’ve seen VRA’s membership grow significantly. In addition, the list of benefits and services we offer has grown, now including free National Retail Federation membership. Large retailers pay thousands of dollars for membership in NRF, and with good reason. The national federation benefits are many, varied, and powerful. We’ve also added extremely attractive FedEx shipping rates. Our Board of Trustees, too, has seen growth with the addition of new members with new experience and ideas. Our visibility and impact statewide have both grown, thanks to a successful communications campaign. Many of Vermont’s major media sources now recognize that VRA is the authoritative “go to” resource for information about local, state, and national retail news. Thanks to all of the above, our impact in Montpelier has grown, and VRA has had positive influence on a number of key legislative issues of importance to retailers.

Of all these, membership growth is the most important. Our membership base is really the lifeblood of our association, providing energy, ideas, communication, legislative influence, and financial stability. We currently conduct vigorous, ongoing campaigns to gain new members and bring former members back into the association. We use a variety of methods including direct mail, telephone calling, email, and others. However, there’s another method, arguably the most important of all, and you are the key to its success.

What am I referring to here? It’s a straightforward, cost-free, and incredibly effective means to grow. It

works so well that it’s a commonplace in other industries—filmmaking, book publishing, and many more—that without it, success is unlikely. What am I talking about? You’ve probably guessed already—WOM. Word of mouth. Publishers will tell you that all the advertising in the world won’t make a best-seller. Only word of mouth can do that. The same is true for new movies, cars, cell phones...on and on.

So I’d like to close by asking for your help with a very specific challenge. Let’s use “The Power of One” to each bring one new member to the VRA family. If we all do our part, the association’s membership could double. That’s great for VRA and its existing members, of course. But think how great it would be, as well, for your retail friends and neighbors who don’t currently have access to all the services and benefits that you know to be so valuable!



Vermont Retail Association

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1-800-649-1698

If you have a question about federal or state government, we are here to help.

If you don't know which department or agency of government to work with we will assist you.

If you need help understanding a regulation or policy, we will find you the right person to help you.

If you prefer email contact us at **mail@vretailers.com**.



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Waste Management Isn't Just "Green"— It's Essential!

Whether your business is a one-person, part-time hobby or a multinational Fortune 500, there's one thing all operations have in common: You're all producing waste and it's taking a bite out of your bottom line.

With all the pressures facing business people these days, managing your trash may not be at the top of your "to do" list. Here's why it should be:

Bottom-Line Benefits

Keeping recyclables out of your trash may very well save you money, especially in Chittenden County, where 60% of the state's recycling is processed.

"Retailers have woken up to the idea that not only is this going to be good from a public-relations perspective but also from a profitability perspective," said Mary Brett Whitfield, senior vice president at consultant TNS Retail Forward in a 2007 interview with *MarketWatch*. "If a company can do things like switch to less expensive energy uses and reduce waste and packaging, there is a bottom-line benefit regardless of whether it wins them increased loyalty from the consumer."

Trash disposal in Chittenden County costs about \$100/ton, while it costs haulers only \$7/ton to dispose of in-county recycling. Haulers pay just \$12/ton to dispose of recycling from elsewhere in Vermont at the Chittenden County facility. Any hauler that is contracted for trash pickup by a Chittenden County business must also offer recycling pickup. Your business may have to pay for a second Dumpster or Toter for recycling, but keeping recyclables out of the trash often results in a smaller trash receptacle or less-frequent pickups.

It's The Law

In Chittenden County, the law requires that you separate these items from your trash for recycling

(check with your district for local rules):

CORRUGATED CARDBOARD & BOXBOARD

Includes 6- and 12-pack soda and beer carriers, tissue boxes, paper towel and toilet paper cores, cracker and cereal boxes, etc.

PAPER (but *not* paper food containers designed to be refrigerated or frozen)

Includes bags, office paper, newspaper, magazines, catalogs, envelopes, and paperback books, non-spiral phone books

PLASTIC CONTAINERS (must be larger than 2" x 2" and smaller than 2' x 2'; no plastic bags or other filmy plastic, no Styrofoam, no automotive fluid containers, no pesticides)

Includes #1-7 food, cleanser and personal hygiene bottles, tubs and clamshell containers

METAL CONTAINERS & FOIL

Includes steel and aluminum cans, empty aerosol cans, pie plates

GLASS BOTTLES & JARS

Bottles and jars only, emptied of food or drink. No light bulbs, glass panes, mirrors, etc.

Vermont law requires that these items also be separated from your regular trash for proper disposal:

Appliances (also known as "white goods")
Fluorescent, mercury vapor, metal halide and sodium lamps
Hazardous waste (chemicals, motor fluids, oil-based paints and stains, etc.)
Tires
Lead Acid (automotive) and rechargeable batteries
Mercury-containing products (e.g. old-style thermostats and thermometers)

Besides paying needlessly high trash disposal fees instead of lower recycling fees, any business that is disposing of mandatory recyclables with their regular trash may be subject to a warning and possible fines. Businesses that opt to haul their own recycling, or market it directly themselves--some large retailers choose to bale and sell their cardboard, stretch wrap, printing paper, etc.—must file a Recycling Service Exemption Form with the Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD), the government entity charged with managing all of the solid waste generated in Chittenden County.

CSWD Offers Free Help And Publicity

CSWD provides many free services to help Chittenden County businesses of all kinds effectively manage their waste streams:

- Waste-assessments to identify ways you can cut waste, save money and make recycling easy
- Presentations and training on recycling and composting, tailored to your company, your staff, your needs
- Up to 50 desk-side recycling bins, plus larger ones for common areas
- Easy-to-understand posters, stickers, and brochures to educate and guide your staff
- Tips for making your purchasing decisions deliver the biggest, “greenest” bang for your hard-earned buck.
- Connections with other businesses and organizations that can use what you need to get rid of.
- We’ll promote your business’s success at reducing, reusing and recycling your waste stream. Tell us how your waste-reduction efforts are making a difference in your bottom line or employee and customer satisfaction and loyalty, and we’ll help share your story with other businesses and potential customers throughout Chittenden County.

Many towns outside of Chittenden County send their recycling to CSWD for processing. If you aren’t sure what your local requirements are, check with

your local waste management organization. A map and local contacts are available at the state Agency of Natural Resources. Call (802) 241-3888 or go to www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/swmdlist.htm.

For more information and free assistance in Chittenden County, contact Michele Morris, CSWD Business Outreach Coordinator, at 872-8100 x237 or mmorris@cswd.net.

Newest Membership Benefits for Retailers

As part of your VRA membership the NRF State Leadership Group (SLG) offers retail small business members daily electronic newsletters that touch on valuable industry information. **In order for these electronic offerings to be activated, you must OPT-IN.** Don’t miss out on this important benefit please follow the directions below to **opt-in** for the daily emails and the e-newsletter.

NRF SmartBrief, a free daily email featuring top retail news. A quick, two-minute read, NRF SmartBrief is a one-stop-shop for the news you need to stay informed. Each Tuesday and Thursday features a “Main Street” section filled with tactical advice specifically for small retailers. You may subscribe for free to this valuable service by visiting the following websites, www.smartbrief.com/nrf. **Small Business SmartBrief sign-up.**

Washington Retail Insight E-Newsletter. Stay informed about Washington. As your early warning system, NRF keeps you informed about proposed federal legislation that can impact both your bottom line and how you conduct your business; the Washington Retail Insight is our weekly update e-newsletter message to you.



VRA MEMBER BENEFITS

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