

# **Newsflash**

## **Vermonters Vote on the Earth Charter**

Every March, voters in Vermont, USA gather in their town halls for the Annual Town Meetings, which serve as an opportunity to make democratic decisions on the town's budget for roads, schools, fire engines, trash removal, water, and social services. In many communities, they also consider issues of national and global importance. To be placed on the agenda for the Town Meeting, 5% of the registered voters in town need to sign a petition.

For the Town Meeting 2002, 30 towns in Vermont had an article on their agendas that read: "Shall the voters of [town] endorse the Earth Charter, and recommend that the Town, the State of Vermont, the United States of America, and the United Nations use the Earth Charter to guide decision-making on issues of local, state, national, and international importance."

Most of the Town Meetings in the state have taken place over the past several days, and 21 towns have now endorsed the Earth Charter, despite some fairly strong opposition. Many towns that participated in the campaign are now asking for assistance in implementing the principles of the Charter in their community.

The towns that endorsed the Charter are: Bethel, Bristol, Bolton, Charlotte, Granby, Hinesburg, Huntington, Isle La Motte, Lincoln, Marlboro, Marshfield, Middlebury, Monkton, Norwich, Plainfield, Randolph, Ripton, Starksboro, Warren, Weston, and Weybridge.

Gwendolyn Hallsmith led the endorsement campaign inspired by the endorsement of the Earth Charter by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, an international coalition of municipal organizations working on sustainable development initiatives. Hallsmith served as the Town Manager of Randolph, Vermont, and has worked with municipalities in several countries to help them plan for sustainability.

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