**QUESTION 1: Do you have designated advisors and clear processes for making decisions on disability issues? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. Disability issues are very personal for me, and are critical to address. As a Vermonter, I will always support the rights of all people to live with dignity and independence. Being self-­sufficient is both a source of personal pride and the key to economic prosperity. My father fought in World War II and lost both of his legs in combat. I lost him when I was 11 years old, but when I think of him, I don’t remember him as a man with a disability. I remember him for all the things he did for me, my mother and my brothers, how involved he was in our lives, and how he never let anything stand in his way.

In my 16 years of public service, I’ve supported the right of individuals to live as my father did, and his experience, along with regular discussions with the disability advocacy community, has guided my decision-­‐making and leadership in this area For example, as Chair of the Senate Institutions Committee, I supported the continuation of and increase in appropriations for ADA improvements to historic buildings and community gathering spaces, the Austine School for the Deaf and the Vermont State Hospital, as well as transitional, supportive, and affordable housing for persons with disabilities. I have a long relationship with those in the disability advocacy community, and will of course look to them for guidance when I am elected Governor.

**QUESTION 2: Is your campaign accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Much of our website and video content is accessible, but we’d like to be 100 percent accessible, and aren’t quite there yet. We are continuing to make improvements every day and understand how critical online accessibility is. We try to make all of our events as ADA compliant as possible, given the limitations posed by the outdated structure of many Vermont buildings.

**QUESTION 3: Do you have a proven record on improving or a plan to improve the lives of people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. As I mentioned in my first answer, I spearheaded the effort to both continue and increase the appropriation for ADA improvements to historic buildings and community gathering spaces, the Austine School for the Deaf and the Vermont State Hospital, as well as transitional, supportive, affordable housing for persons with disabilities. I also continue to work with the Vermont National Guard on ADA compliance and integration of people with disabilities into the Armed Forces. Specifically, I led the effort to secure funding that allowed the Vermont Air National Guard to make its facility compliant with the ADA so that it is now accessible to all of our veterans and VTANG’s employees and visitors.

**QUESTION 4: Do you have a plan/commitment to reduce the stigmas about people with disabilities that are barriers to employment, independence and equality? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. In 2014, I was invited to write the opening message for the Statewide Independent Living Council’s K-­12 curriculum that teaches the history of Americans with disabilities. I received this invitation because of my close connection and commitment to reducing the stigmas and challenges facing people with disabilities and their ability to live and work independently. As Governor, I will uphold Vermont’s equal opportunity employment policy, which ensures fair hiring practices based solely on personal skill and merits. Inspired by my father, I frequently participate in charity events, especially bike rides, which raise money and awareness for adaptive sports, athletes with disabilities and more robust accommodations and services for all people with disabilities.

**QUESTION 5: Do you have a proven record on enabling, or a plan to enable, people with disabilities to have jobs, careers and to start their own businesses? Do you have specific strategies for youth employment for people with disabilities and/or sector strategies such as jobs and careers in STEM, hospitality, healthcare and elder care? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. I believe all of us, regardless of how we are born, deserve the opportunity to be self-sufficient, independent and prosperous. I believe all Vermont youth need stronger connections to the business community, so I will continue to build partnerships between the education and private sectors to provide those opportunities. The key is that these opportunities must truly be open to all, which may mean exploring initiatives such as transportation assistance for those who are unable to drive.

**QUESTION 6: Do you have a plan to enable students with disabilities, including those from historically marginalized communities and backgrounds, to receive the diagnosis, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and accommodations/services they need to succeed in school and be prepared for competitive employment? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. I am a strong advocate for school choice in Vermont, in large part because every student is different and not every student is best served by the public school in his or her district but ultimately, parents should be empowered to find the right fit for their children’s needs. I believe when students, parents and educators work together to create the best learning environment, students are much more likely to be engaged in their education and feel motivated to develop those skills for future employment. I strongly support expanding the use of flexible learning plans so that each student can learn in the manner and setting that is most constructive for his or her strengths, requirements and needs.

**QUESTION 7: Do you have a plan to reform the benefits system (Medicaid, Medicaid buyin) to enable people with disabilities to work to the best of their capacities without losing supports they need to work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. As Governor, one of my first acts will be to order an independent examination of all agencies and departments of state government. This includes the Agency of Administration, the Department of Health Access, the Division of Health Care Reform, and Green Mountain Care – all of which oversee the implementation of Medicaid and coordinate access to Medicaid. The scope of this analysis would include examining asset and income restrictions, as well as the portability of benefits, within the administration of Medicaid. From the results of these audits, I plan to work on a reform package to improve and modernize these areas of state government, and provide better service to all of our citizens

**QUESTION 8: Do you have a plan to ensure people with disabilities are eligible for affordable health insurance regardless of preexisting conditions? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes, I support the provisions in the Affordable Care Act which prevent insurance providers from discriminating against those with pre-­existing conditions, and I have no plans, nor will I support any, to change this protection. I would be open to discussions between the Legislature and Vermont’s insurance providers to make sure necessary accommodations such as wheelchairs are covered, available and affordable.

**QUESTION 9: Do you have a plan to provide home and community-based services to people with disabilities who would rather live in their own homes instead of institutions, and have the community attendant supports they need to work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. During the mid-­2000s, when I served in the Vermont State Senate, the federal government granted Vermont a waiver for our long-­term care program, Choices for Care. This waiver allowed Medicaid to pay for the setting that was appropriate for each individual – including nursing facilities, home-­based care, and enhanced residential home care. This helped those on Medicaid achieve a better quality of life by remaining in the care setting that was most suitable to their needs, while also saving the state resources by better coordinating the provision of care. I was a supporter of this initiative as a member of the Senate. As Governor, I will continue to build on and expand these types of proven models to ensure the provision of the appropriate services to those with disabilities.

**QUESTION  10: Do you have a plan to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive services that would prevent them from being swept up into the criminal justice system, divert individuals with disabilities who are arrested to treatment options in lieu of jail where appropriate, receive needed accommodations in the criminal justice process and while incarcerated, and offer appropriate reentry support to help individuals with disabilities leaving jails and prisons reintegrate into their communities and secure jobs? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. I’m proud of the progress certain areas of Vermont, such as Chittenden County, have made with programs like Rapid Intervention Community Courts (RICCs), which offer opportunities to seek a diversion – prior to charges even being filed – for those whose actions are driven by mental health issues or disabilities. I plan to work on the proven success of programs like these and expand them throughout the state. In addition, part of my plan to combat opiate addiction in Vermont would provide law enforcement with the discretion to direct those suffering from addiction to treatment programs, rather than placing them in jail for certain non-­violent crimes. I would look to expand this type of approach for those suffering from mental and physical disabilities as well. Finally, I would look to states like Kentucky, which has created a Criminal Justice Policy Assessment Council, in order to reduce recidivism rates and improve the overall criminal justice system. Kentucky has also created an expungement program for certain non-­‐violent crimes to make the transition from jail to re-­‐integration easier for those seeking education, employment, and reentry into communities. I would seek to replicate these types of proven models.

**QUESTION 11: People with disabilities are twice as likely to be victims of crime as those without disabilities. People with disabilities also are far more likely to suffer from police violence, partially because manifestations of disability can be misunderstood as defiant behavior. Do you have a plan to address these issues? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes, I plan to continue my partnership with the law enforcement community in order to ensure mental and physical health needs are taken into account during police responses and subsequent actions. I am proud to say Vermont’s law enforcement community is respectful and not prone to acts of violence, and we are already making large inroads on best police practices and recognition tools.

**QUESTION 12: Both children and adults with disabilities are more likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault. Do you have a plan to address this issue? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. Rape and sexual assault are inexcusable, period. Vermont’s laws carry harsh penalties for those who abuse our most vulnerable, and I will uphold and defend those laws for all Vermonters.

**QUESTION 13: Do you have a plan for veterans with disabilities facing barriers transitioning from active duty to civilian employment? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes. I plan to work with the Vermont National Guard on a scholarship program for those who serve and have served our country, providing them access to higher education and thus laying the foundation for consistent, future employment. When my father returned from World War II as a double amputee, he found work with the State of Vermont in the Transportation Department. This speaks to our State’s record of open hiring practices and, in honor of my father’s legacy, that will never change under my watch.

**QUESTION  14: Do you have a plan for accessible, affordable, integrated housing to allow people with disabilities to live in the communities where they work or are seeking work? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**As Governor, I will make investing in affordable housing programs a top priority, in order to advance economic development across Vermont. The state budgets that I propose and sign into law will reflect this key initiative to expand economic prosperity. I will also work to ensure that affordable housing programs are accommodating and accessible to those with disabilities.

**QUESTION 15: Do you have a plan to address the lack of accessible transportation options that is a barrier to work for people with disabilities? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes, I will continue Vermont’s accessible public transportation initiatives and look to make them more robust. This access is critical, as we live in a rural state and very few have the option of living right where they work. Our current public transportation vehicles are ADA compliant and as we build out transportation options and routes, those additions will meet those same standards.

**QUESTION 16: Do you have a plan to advance innovations (i.e., assistive technologies, devices) that can help people with disabilities become more successfully employed, productive and independent? If yes, please describe.**

**ANSWER:**Yes, I think Vermonters are innovative by nature and I’m proud of our reputation for helping our neighbors. I would restore the Research and Development Tax Credit, which will encourage advances in technology by incentivizing outside-­‐the-­‐box thinking and product creation. Every employee is an important part of our workforce and I think we have the opportunity to be a national leader in these areas. My dad had a long career after losing his legs in World War II through the support of assistive technology so I know how important these advances can be for individuals and their autonomy.