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Vermont Inclusion Week Proclamation

Governor Phil Scott’s proclamation designating May 10–16, 2026 as Inclusion Week in Vermont affirms that the state “embraces people from all backgrounds - welcoming individuals and families with a wide array of skills, traditions, and perspectives to live, work, and build their futures here.”

The Vermont Declaration of Inclusion Initiative, which now encompasses 165 cities and towns, representing over 80% of the state’s population, welcomes the Governor’s continued support in promoting belonging and encouraging newcomers to establish roots in Vermont.

“This is the sixth consecutive year that the Governor has proclaimed the second week of May as Inclusion Week,” said Bob Harnish, co-founder of the Initiative. “The Governor’s leadership, alongside the local efforts happening statewide, is especially courageous given today’s challenges.”

Here are some examples of how towns and cities are promoting inclusion and belonging throughout Vermont:

- Glover, Orleans County (population 1,114): The Glover Equity Group advises the town on equity issues and organizes community events aimed at making Glover welcoming, inclusive, and equitable for all. Their initiatives began with welcome baskets for newcomers and “All Are Welcome” signs throughout town. Recently, the group received a Vermont Humanities grant to host a Juneteenth celebration. Chair Jethro Hayman shared, “We are partnering with the Highland Center for the Arts, Lake Region High School, and the Old Stone House Museum to present the Songs of Slavery and Emancipation tour, focusing on Vermont sites connected to the Underground Railroad and African-American culture.”
- Bristol, Addison County (population 3,782): The Selectboard established the Bristol Equity Committee to carry out the town’s Declaration of Inclusion. This committee advises on equity, recommends actions, and supports residents and businesses in creating a welcoming environment. Bristol also published a Driving Equity Toolkit to help town department heads and committees integrate inclusion into their everyday decision-making.
- Hartford, Windsor County (population 10,686): Hartford’s Committee on Racial Equity and Inclusion works alongside the local school district on an Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan aimed at embedding inclusive practices and eliminating race-based disparities. Town Manager John Haverstock notes that Hartford has passed a “Welcoming Hartford” ordinance which articulates guidelines regarding the communications and enforcement relationship between the Town and the federal government on immigration, establishes town procedures concerning immigration status and enforcement of federal civil immigration laws, implements an Inclusion and Accessibility Plan for the Parks & Recreation Department, and ensures its town website and town hall comply with accessibility standards.

In Vermont’s most populous and diverse region, Chittenden County, there are numerous inclusion initiatives underway:

- Burlington: Voters approved a charter amendment on Town Meeting Day 2026 making the Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) office a permanent fixture in city government. This change, pending approval by the state legislature and governor, will provide long-term stability for the office.
- Winooski: The city’s Advisory Commission for Inclusion and Belonging has been part of its city

charter since 2022. The city and the Winooski School District are conducting equity audits to highlight inequities and adopt focused policies and practices to address shortcomings. In addition, the mayor has requested that the city's Declaration of Inclusion be readopted annually.

"Cities and towns across the state are doing so many exciting things," said Barbara Noyes Pulling, of the Vermont Declaration of Inclusion Initiative, an all-volunteer organization. "Sharing these ideas and helping others build on them is one of our fundamental goals."

For more information about the Vermont Declaration of Inclusion, visit vtdeclarationofinclusion.org which is generously maintained by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce.

The Vermont Declaration of Inclusion Initiative is also supported by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and the Vermont Council on Rural Development.

Contact: Barbara Noyes Pulling, Vermont Declaration of Inclusion, barbaranoyespulling@gmail.com.