

## **The Importance of Temperance in the Green Mountain State**

“For Pleasure, Delight, Peace and Felicity live in method and temperance.”

-Margaret Cavendish.

There are many important virtues in Vermont that we as Vermonters follow in daily life. The Vermont constitution states, “That frequent recurrence to fundamental principles, and a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality, are absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty, and keep government free; the people ought, therefore to pay particular attention to these points, in the choice of officers and representatives, and have a right, in a legal way, to exact a due and constant regard to them, from their legislators and magistrates, in making and executing such laws as are necessary for the good government of the State.” Out of all these principles, the one that can really be attributed to Vermont is temperance. Temperance can be described as self-control or avoiding excesses. Temperance can also be described as the practice of moderation and frugality, other key virtues, and justice along with industry can fall under the heading of temperance, too. Temperance is the most important virtue for Vermonters to aspire to because it embodies the other virtues.

Vermont differs in many ways from other states. We pride ourselves in having a green, healthy state that can be independent and efficient and temperance has a lot to do with this. Under the heading of temperance comes moderation, frugality, justice, and industry. Having self-control means knowing when to stop and how much is too much, which in essence is moderation. Self-control also means not over indulging or throwing money away. Being frugal can be very hard, but if you have control of your money then you won't find yourself in huge debt as the U.S. does today. Temperance can pertain to justice because without self-control, there could not be fairness in the world. Lastly, temperance can always be found in the virtue of industry. Having restraint when working hard will allow citizens to push themselves, while still knowing their limits.

Vermont encourages its citizens to practice moderation in an effort to lead a healthier life. Recently, Vermont Legislators have come up with tax bills that focus on unhealthy habits or addictions.

Examples of these are the cigarette tax and tax on sodas and other sugary drinks. The tax on cigarettes would be a 27 cent increase and some Vermont legislators are pushing for a bill to add a one cent per ounce tax on soda and other sugar sweetened beverages. These bills will employ taxes on things that could be making Vermonters unhealthy. By putting these taxes in place, Vermont would be encouraging its citizens to practice self-control and moderation, the very definition of temperance. Vermont cares that its citizens get help when they have an addiction to something that is making them sick. They want all Vermonters to practice temperance and if they can get kids to start young with the soda tax, then the healthy habits will carry throughout their life, hopefully reducing obesity.

Temperance doesn't just have to be self-control and moderation in health or wellness, it can also be in money which is why frugality can come under this heading too. A quote to explain this relationship was said by British writer, Samuel Johnson, "Frugality may be termed the daughter of Prudence, the sister of Temperance, and the parent of Liberty." Vermont does not waste its money or spend what it does not have. The governor controls the budget and for the most part Vermont is doing well economically. When money needs to be raised, the legislators propose bills that will not only bring in revenue, but help keep Vermonters healthier. One important issue in the news with frugality is single-payer health care. Vermont wants its citizens to all have access to proper health care without feeling like they are wasting their money. No one should be denied a healthy life because of their financial status and hopefully the single-payer health care will prove this message.

Temperance can also hold in it justice as without self-control, we couldn't have fairness in our world. In the news there has been talk of Vermont putting harsher penalties on repeat drunk drivers after a 19 year-old and 43-year-old Vermonter were killed by repeat drunk drivers. The bill would encourage judges to give these offenders a five-year minimum sentence "in the interest of justice and safety." It is not fair for these drunk drivers to be allowed back onto the road because it is only a matter of time before they hurt someone else. Putting them in jail for longer will hopefully teach them temperance and make them think twice before getting on the road. The bill could make it so less people will be hurt or seriously

injured by repeat drunk drivers.

In industry there has to be temperance because you need self-control to push yourself forward and know your limits. In the words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Temperance and labor are the two best physicians of man; labor sharpens the appetite, and temperance prevents from indulging to excess.”

Vermonters by nature are very hard workers. Historically many Vermonters have made their living as farmers and miners which can be very grueling work. Living in Vermont is not easy and can test even the most rugged persona as weather is ever changing and the conditions of roads can be hard to predict, but this is outweighed by the beauty and uniqueness of our state. Vermonters are always hard at work to make our state this way and keep up the great reputation of the Green Mountain State. We work to make our state independent and have a government that listens to the people. Vermont shows its citizens the value of the virtue of industry everyday and all Vermonters have developed a strong work ethic because of this.

Temperance is an important virtue for all Vermonters to follow and by following this one virtue they will also be practicing some of the others including, moderation, frugality, justice, and industry. Vermont is very unique and without self-control it would be a very different place. We are the healthiest state and very independent when it comes to our way of life. Following the virtues of our constitution, we can live a happy and fulfilling life as Vermonters. Without these virtues would our state still be unique?