

## Meet the Vermonter who represented the state in a voter dialogue published in NYT

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The front page of a special section in the Sunday, Oct. 13, 2019, edition of The New York Times. The photo section sought to represent what U.S. registered voters looked like. Sharon Moore, of St. Johnsbury, was the only person included for Vermont. (Photo: Free Press Staff)

Last month, Sharon Moore packed her bags and got a plane heading for Dallas. The St. Johnsbury-based real estate agent was on her way to a rousing event: a four-day workshop, held at a resort, that would bring over 500 voters from across the country to

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talk about politics.

When Moore, 75, initially received the invitation that she had been selected for a national polling experiment, she almost had to do a double take.

"I remember thinking, 'Oh my gosh, better check this out,'" Moore said. "So my husband and I checked it out and it sounded good."

In the middle of September, 526 registered voters from 48 states were selected to participate in a workshop in the Lone Star State. The event, titled "America in One Room," was organized by [Helena](#), a non-partisan organization, as well as the [NORC](#) at the University of Chicago and the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University.

The gathering was [featured in the Oct. 13 edition of The New York Times in a special photo section](#) showing the face of each participant.



St. Johnsbury realtor and registered voter Sharon Moore, in attendance at the four-day political discussion event "America in One Room" in Dallas, TX. (Photo: Image courtesy of Sharon Moore)

## 'Historic gathering'

Organizers described the event as a "historic gathering that brought together the most representative sample of the American voting electorate in U.S. history," to "participate in a nonpartisan discussion about the major issues of the 2020 presidential election."

Registered voters were randomly selected based on their membership with AmeriSpeak, a research panel headed by NORC. Some states, such as California, had 74 voters represented, whereas as places like Hawaii, Wyoming and Vermont, only contributed one.

A native Vermonter, Moore grew up in Lunenburg, but she's seen her fair amount of the country during her lifetime. Living everywhere from Missouri to Oregon to North Carolina, and attending school in Kansas, Moore and her husband eventually returned to Vermont, where she's remained for the last 25 years.



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"I felt good talking about Vermont. So many other places don't seem to take the environment as seriously as we do. Or the social programs we have."

## Conservative people, liberal people, very liberal people

Voters spent the majority of the day in groups, debating a wide range of topics, from immigration and health care to the economy and environment.

"We broke into groups of 12," Moore said. "It was a mixture of different people. A woman in a wheelchair. A fellow from Montana. They were conservative people. Liberal people. *Very liberal people*. We just talked about our views on these subjects."



Sharon Moore of St. Johnsbury, lower left, was the only person from Vermont in a New York Times feature putting together more than 500 people to represent all registered voters in the United States. (Photo: Free Press Staff)

Going into the event, Moore, a Democrat, kept herself up to date on national issues.

"I'm kind of a political junkie," Moore said. "I watch MSNBC. CNN. Sometimes Fox News. [laughs] I like to hear what's going on."

As discussions proceeded throughout the days, despite differing opinions, everyone remained respectful, she said. While they spent the majority of the time discussing larger, national issues, their conversations were infused with everyone's personal experiences.

### 'We disagreed on things, but we were polite'

"It was all very friendly," Moore said. "We disagreed on things, but we were polite. In my group, nobody got angry. One fellow beside me was very conservative. But he said he just can't vote for Trump, and he's worried Trump will [be reelected] because all the Democrats are very liberal."

When it came to the environment, one topic that came up was the tax on carbon emissions.



Sharon Moore of St. Johnsbury, far left, second row, was the only person from Vermont in a New York Times feature putting together more than 500 people to represent all registered voters in the United States. (Photo: Free Press Staff)

"Most people didn't like it, unless it was on corporations." Moore said. "In Vermont, it would be ridiculous. Because we all have to drive. I'm a Realtor, I have to drive. We all have to heat our homes. We all felt like having taxes was not a good fix."

On other topics like taxes, groups were uncertain about how to go about changing the current state of affairs.

"Nobody seemed to have a good idea of how we could lower taxes and keep our good programs going. There's a lot of things we need to have good taxes for," Moore said.

## 'We can talk to each other'

Moore remains careful about how she discloses her political opinions with potential clients, but stays actively involved in her community, from her membership in a local women's club to her volunteering with the Northeast Kingdom's Habitat for Humanity ReStore.

"I vote, and I express my opinion," Moore said. "It's so controversial right now. Some people get very upset. Especially doing real estate I don't say it a lot. My goal is to sell property."

Gauging its success, Moore would like to see a similar event occur in the future.

"I came back feeling really good that we can get together and talk to each other," she said. "Maybe Washington should look at 'America in One Room' and say 'we ought to be able to do that too'."

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