On April 12, forty students from UVM’s Environmental Program traveled to Montpelier for the annual VPIRG Youth Lobby Day. Students and Teaching Assistants from Katlyn Morris’ ENVS 002 course attended as an optional field trip for the class to witness local governance firsthand, and to take a stand in support of climate legislation. Below, several students share photos and reflections from the experience.

Isabel Lisle

Wow! Such a powerful experience to be surrounded by a group of young committed activists. I loved listening to the speeches made by young adults because it reminded me that our generation has the power and responsibility to make a change. The representative I talked to, Brian Cina, mentioned that change is only possible when people speak up. When they lobby, and demand for something different, the politicians are forced to listen. Bill McKibben mentioned that the engineers have done all the work because we have the technology to use wind power and solar power. All we need now is to transition from using fossil fuels to using renewable energy. In order to accomplish this, we also need more environmentalists involved in politics. Specifically, females are underrepresented, as one passionate speaker, Kesha Ram, mentioned. I am inspired to teach young people more about the environmental impacts humans have on the planet so that more generations will be involved in this movement towards preserving our world!
Annie Brown

As an Elementary Education major and an aspiring environmental educator, it was truly an incredible experience to be alongside the future innovators of our nation. I was amazed at how passionate the students were about the wellbeing of our environment and how confident they were in expressing themselves and their beliefs. I was also incredibly impressed by their profound knowledge of how politics are impacting the current state of our environment. I loved seeing the multitude of school groups attending this Lobby Day and felt particularly grateful to be studying environmental education in Vermont since many other states would not value an event such as an environmental lobby day within the school curriculum. I regained a sense of hope within the future of our nation after observing how dedicated the younger generations are about making a positive difference in the world. After attending this lobby day, I am more inspired and determined than ever to educate my peers and younger students about the importance of preserving our environment, because the change starts with us. The smallest voices and the smallest actions can make the biggest impact.

Zachary Guillian

The climate change march in Montpelier, VT demonstrated the power of the small. This large gathering led by high school students, is a representation of the way we must combat the problems of our future. When individuals on the ground choose to come together and express their values, it can have a great influence on decisions and policy of those higher up. We must all take action, in any shape or form, and that is how change will happen.
Victoria Nash
The experience I had at the Youth Lobby Day in Montpelier was not only educational, but inspiring as well. I was in awe of how many younger kids participated in this event, and I couldn’t help but reflect on my own experience when I was young and having never participated in a lobby day, let alone even knew what a lobby day was. I thought it was so interesting to see that many kids aware of pressing issues regarding climate change that are present in our world today. Their social awareness of these issues they have been exposed to from a young age will help provide them with adequate knowledge to become leaders in this movement now and in the future as well. Keynote speaker Kesha Ram stressed this point to the crowd of youth when she spoke at the event. She stated the importance of running for office and being the voice that has an impact on issues that we feel passionate about. She is an inspiring speaker, and someone I look up to as a woman, and as an advocate for the climate as well. All in all, this experience has inspired me to understand more about what is happening on the political level in terms of climate legislation, and to attend more events like this. I took away from Youth Lobby Day that knowledge and awareness are powerful tools to use in order to make change, so now going forward, I am excited to put these tools to good use!
Photos below by Zachary Guillian