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Statewide Referendum 1936: The Green Mountain Parkway

Background: The Green Mountain Parkway was a proposed 260 mile scenic highway, nestled in a 50,000 acre national park stretching along the ridge of the Green Mountains. Modeled after the Blue Ridge Parkway, it offered employment to Vermont's enumerated 16,000 unemployed as well as a boost to the State's efforts to promote tourism and recreation. The State would have to provide \$500,000 in bonding to purchase rights of way.

Issue: While the project would be an employment boon to Depression era Vermont, the required state bonding would be added to the flood relief bonds issued following the 1927 flood. Some southern Vermont entrepreneurs feared that the parkway would drain business northward, passing their own nascent ski and tourist businesses. Perhaps most importantly, the thought of a wide national park dividing the state along the Green Mountains was anathema to a wide range of Vermonters.

Referendum: On December 14, 1935 Act 17 of the 1935 Special Session approved a national park known as the Green Mountain Parkway, established jurisdiction over the park and appropriated money to begin the project. Voters were asked to choose between effective dates of April 1, 1936 (a yes vote) or April 1, 1941 (a no vote).

After a particularly emotional public debate, on town meeting day (March 3), 1936 the voters, by an 11,421 margin, voted no, 42,318 to 30,897. Yes votes carried Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Washington counties.

Result: Since the voters had selected the later effective date, the 1937 legislature, through Act 243 (passed February 5, 1937), repealed the Green Mountain Parkway Act. In the 1950s the national interstate system began construction; no referendum was called to approve the measure.

