

From: Clark Stearns [scotlandselect1@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 22, 2009 8:17 PM
To: Friis, John
Subject: Public Hearing Testimony - HB 6493*** Education Committee- February 23, 2009

Chairman Gaffey, Chairman Fleischmann, members of the Education Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony relating to HB 6493. As the First Selectman for the town of Scotland and Chairman of the District 11 Dissolution Study Committee, I must state for the record that the opinion stated herein is mine personally, and not an official statement of the Board of Selectmen, or the Dissolution Study Committee.

I would strongly request an affirmative recommendation by this committee to the full Legislature for this bill.

The method of voting as currently prescribed by state statutes is counter to all that is democratic. The method of voting is structured in a way so as to all but ensure the defeat of any action taken in the attempt to change the status quo.

By requiring an affirmative vote in all towns in the region, an inordinate amount of influence is afforded the no votes, while making the yes vote almost worthless. Our region is comprised of three towns, all roughly the same size. If we were to hold a vote under the current statutes, and 100% of the voters in 2 towns voted in the affirmative for dissolution, and only 3 people voted in the 3rd town, 1 voting yes, 2 voting no, the referendum would fail. This is clearly not following the will, or desires of the true majority of the people paying the taxes to support this region.

By favorably referring HB 6493 to the full legislature for passage, this committee is taking the first of several steps needed to bring this very divisive issue called Regional District 11 to a conclusion. By giving every voter in our three towns the same weighted vote, we will have a vote that is truly representative of the majorities will.

The State is looking at a very bleak financial picture for the foreseeable future, and as such, so are the towns, as we all look to the state for a significant amount of education funding. District 11 is at an impasse, because we can't make any changes to the way we operate our high school, or the manner in which we deliver educational opportunities and programs to our students. District 11 has the highest cost per student in the state, bar none. We are spending close to what a private school would charge to provide what I'm sure would be a far more comprehensive educational experience.

Unless our hands are unbound by the state, so that the majority of the voters are truly represented, and we are allowed to make the decisions that must be made so we may provide the best educational choices, at the most economical cost, I am sure we will be back again and again, arguing over the same old issues.

Passage of this proposed amendment cannot be construed as an endorsement of dissolution, but it would be a reaffirmation of the democratic process.

2/23/2009

I urge you to refer this bill to the full legislature for passage.

Respectfully,

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