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—For section.....Voices/Primary Sources
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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 For education in Windham, both House and Senate
2 redistricting plans fail

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 'Neither plan protects local choice, or transportation.
4 Neither plan supports local governance nor offers real,
5 sustainable tax relief. Both plans threaten to shift governance
6 away from local decision-making.'

####END SUBHED####

7 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

8 TO OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS,
9 In the town of Windham on March 3, 2026, the below
10 articles passed unanimously at the Annual Town Meeting:

11 • Article 7: Shall the Town of Windham declare that the
12 current statewide education funding system has failed the people
13 of Windham and is no longer capable of providing the equitable
14 and convenient education guaranteed under the Vermont
15 Constitution, and that repeated legislative inaction, including the
16 flawed implementation of Act 73, has produced unsustainable
17 property tax burdens that disproportionately harm small rural
18 towns?"

19 • Article 8: Shall the Town direct the Schoolboard to
20 formally communicate this position to the Vermont Legislature
21 and to notify state officials that Windham is prepared to explore
22 all available legal and political avenues to protect its taxpayers
23 and students unless meaningful, structural reform is enacted
24 during the current legislative session?

25 We, the Windham District School Board, formally
26 decided in an open meeting on March 23 to send the following
27 information to the Vermont State House and beyond.

28 This vote asked the question: "Is Vermont's system of
29 education funding, including Act 73, working for the children
30 and families of Windham?"

31 Our collective view concerns whether our kids can get to
32 school safely, have real choices, and learn in a fair system, as the
33 Vermont Constitution promises.

34 In *Brigham v. State*, the Vermont Supreme Court found
35 that our education funding system was unconstitutional. Why?
36 Because it lets children's opportunities depend on how wealthy
37 their town is.

38 The court said education must be equitable and
39 accessible. Nearly 30 years later, Vermont spends some of the
40 highest per-student amounts in the nation. Enrollment is down,
41 student performance is slipping fast, and property taxes keep
42 climbing.

43 Higher spending should mean better outcomes and
44 stable taxes. We in Windham have not seen this to be the case.

45 * * *

46 WINDHAM IS not a typical district.

47 Our district does not operate an elementary school; we
48 tuition students elsewhere. Our middle and high schools are
49 governed by the West River Education District.

50 We run our own school bus because the Windham
51 Central Supervisory Union contractor will not serve our town due
52 to geographic challenges.

53 Our student population is small with a quarter growth
54 compared to prior year. About half of our elementary students go
55 to Townshend or Chester public schools, and half go to The
56 Mountain School at Winhall, an independent school.

57 On average, Windham residents, as a district, face some
58 of the largest property tax increases in Vermont, despite being
59 efficient and tuitioning.

60 The statewide funding formula simply has not been
61 effective for our town.

62 * * *

63 ACT 73 PROMISED to set a foundation funding formula,
64 consolidate districts, reduce fragmentation, and control long-term
65 costs.

66 What Windham has observed:

- 67 • Redistricting maps do not account for geography.
- 68 • Consolidation plans are still unclear.
- 69 • Current tax relief depends on temporary surpluses, not
70 real reform.

- 71 • Major costs, such as health insurance, transportation,
72 and special education, are still unaddressed.

73 For Windham, consolidation will:

- 74 • End elementary school tuition choice.
- 75 • Threaten our school bus service.
- 76 • Move governance to a multi-town board where

77 Windham has little or no voice.

78 Equity is not abstract — meaning kids can get to school.

79 Right now, Windham School district guarantees transportation.

80 Larger districts may not have the same luxury.

81 * * *

82 Currently, there are two proposals: the House of
83 Representatives' 27-District Map and the Senate's
84 Voluntary/Multi-Stage Plan.

85 The House plan would collapse 119 districts into 27.
86 Decisions would be made by a large, multi-town board.
87 Windham would lose elementary choice and transportation, with
88 no guaranteed tax relief.

89 The Senate plan starts with voluntary mergers, eventually
90 forming 11 large districts. Autonomy would only be temporary,
91 and transportation is still at risk.

92 Neither plan protects local choice, or transportation.
93 Neither plan supports local governance nor offers real,
94 sustainable tax relief. Both plans threaten to shift governance
95 away from local decision-making.

96 * * *

97 WHAT OUR DISTRICT would like to communicate to
98 legislators:

99 • We are required to provide equity and access.

100 Transportation is essential. Without it, equity fails.

101 • We value choice and community: Families need public
102 and independent school options that work. Current consolidation
103 proposals prioritize large cookie-cutter districts over local needs,
104 which would remove choice and force families to send students
105 to far-flung schools in other towns.

106 • Case law has provided for constitutional guarantees.

107 *Brigham v. State* promised real, enforceable equity. Neither plan
108 safeguards it for Windham.

109 • We must convey to our elected officials our
110 frustrations. [Act 73](#), as it stands, continues to tax out local
111 property owners and continues to cause harm to Windham and
112 Vermonters.

113 * * *

114 OUR RECENT VOTE on both articles signals an intention to:

115 • Declare the current system has failed Windham.

116 • Demand real equity, accountability, and reform.
117 • Protect school choice, transportation, governance, and
118 fair taxes.
119 It does not withdraw Windham from the system or cancel
120 funding. We would like to call for meaningful reform.
121 Our board intends to contact our state representatives
122 and senators advocating for:
123 • School choice for all of Windham’s students, Pre-K
124 through 12.
125 • Real equity in funding.
126 • Guaranteed transportation and school choice.
127 • Tax relief tied to real structural reform, not temporary
128 fixes.
129 We are asking for real accountability, fairness, and a
130 future where Windham has a voice.
131 We look forward to future discussions on how legislative
132 actions will align with our community’s values and support our
133 students.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

134 **THE WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD** (Abigail
135 Pelton, Kate Fellows, and Dan Roth) recently sent this letter to
136 state officials and lawmakers, as well as to the media. (Editor’s
137 note: We have very lightly formatted and copy edited the text for
138 readability.)

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

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####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

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####BEGIN LINKS####

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

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####BEGIN VIDEO####

####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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####BEGIN LOGLINE####

####END LOGLINE####