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Lee Sease

Testimony Before the VT. House Education Committee - March 18, 2014

House Education

Thomas Jefferson said, in so many words, that this experiment we call democracy will only survive if the public is well educated, capable of making informed choices. Therefore we need a strong system of education.

The system of school governance employed in Vermont hampers that work. We have a responsibility to educate our children from preschool to graduation. It should be a coordinated effort under the jurisdiction of one board.

Now, we have supervisory unions composed of independent school districts. Each school district holds the power of policy and finance. There is no statute or requirement that they come to agreement. Often times they do not. Time and energy that should be devoted to determining and providing a sound education to our children is often wasted upon the management of conflict among adults.

I interject that the defense of the current school governance structure is more about the needs of adults than it is about educating our children. It is about power, 'Who has the power, who wants the power, and who gets the power.'

As for the management of resources, when a supervisory union has five or six independent school districts, the supervisory union is required to duplicate fiscal, policy, and reporting requirements five or six times. How is that considered the proper management of public resources?

It has been my belief for a long time that public schools have two overarching missions. The first one has two parts which are 1) to prepare our children for citizenship and 2) to give them the tools necessary to reach their dreams and aspirations. The second part of that mission is to be good stewards of the resources that the public provides us. I do not think the current system of governance allows us to do either of these justice.

In closing, I will say I am retired from public education. Both our children have completed their high school education here in Vermont and are in pursuit of their on professional and personal lives. I have no personal stake in what you determine. However, I do have a keen interest in the education of our future citizens and believe that we have an enormous responsibility to do right by them. **Thank you,**

Wm Lee Sease

Former Vt. Superintendent and Director of Special Education