

Alice Anand
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TESTIMONY TO VERMONT STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE, April 9, 2014

From: Alison Lane Anand, Richmond, VT. (M.A., M.S. University of Vermont)
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Bill H883, and thank you for embarking on this brave and essential project to improve Vermont's educational system.

I am an 8th generation Vermonter and am very proud of our state for its beauty, fine citizens, tradition of independent thinking, and an educational system which seeks to give equal opportunities to all. In general, our system has served most students well for some time.

Vermonters value democracy and know that democracy can only succeed with an educated population and as much public participation as possible. I believe our forefathers had it right: Power comes from the people, from the bottom up and not from the top down. This is clearly stated in the Vermont State Constitution. Therefore, our structures of education and government should reflect this ideal. So I am urging you to support these ideals by keeping the local school boards. Local board members can provide better resolution of local issues and contribute their time and expertise to the community.

Our current society faces serious economic challenges, which depending on how they are addressed, can improve or exacerbate these problems. Some things raising budgets are:

1. Legislative directives without supportive funding have created the need for local districts to cover the shortfall. (eg. The No Child Left Behind law)
2. Economic stresses have created the need for two income earning parents. This causes less time to be spent with children.
3. Schools have increasingly had to take more responsibility for the rearing of children. This created needs for more staffing and resources.

This has set up a downward spiral, where our funding needs expand as resources become more scarce.

I submit that the corporate invasion into our legislative, legal, and educational structures is behind the growing gap between the rich and poor. Our democracy with a market economy is becoming a market society in which almost everything is for sale. For example, in our current education law, Act 153, opinion about appropriate educational structure is given to two people, research is for sale through financial rewards for research favoring redistricting, and public votes are for sale through tax incentives for voting for the redistricting agenda. We need to maintain local control and prevent further erosion of our democratic ideals.

Please take the time needed to enact a fair, equitable, and enlightened law based on valid research into other experiences of redistricting, true financial representation of costs (not just temporary tax incentives), and most importantly consideration of the needs of children. Let us make sure that our children and our integrity are NOT FOR SALE.

Alison Lane Anand