

Memo

To: Senate Education Committee

From: Steven John, VSBPE Chair and Windham Central SU Superintendent

Date: March 12, 2014

Re: **Educator License Renewal Requirements and Process**

I offer the following questions and perspectives in response to a proposal from the VEA/NEA to simplify and standardize the requirements and process for educators practicing in Vermont to renew their licenses. At this time, I am unable to represent the VSBPE on the question because the full Board intends to discuss the issue at our next meeting on March 19. As VSBPE Chair I can assure you that the VSBPE's goal is to simplify the educator's license renewal requirements and process. The Licensure Committee of the VSBPE has discussed specific changes, which they will present for the full board's consideration.

Should the renewal requirements and process for a VT Educator's License be changed? Yes, but perhaps not as radically as proposed. By all indications, including national NCLB exams and high school completion rates, Vermont's public school students are quite successful. In my experience as a teacher and administrator the present VSBPE license renewal requirements and process have been a contributing factor in our state's continuing effort to improve student learning. The state should carefully weigh the intended and unintended consequences of any changes to VT Educator's License renewal. The VSBPE is doing so balancing the best interests of the teaching profession and the public we serve. The renewal process will be simplified while still supporting the Commissioner of Education's Model for Public School Accountability.

What interest does the state of Vermont have in the teaching profession that obliges a different license renewal process than medical professionals and others such as barbers, cosmetologists, and plumbers?

1. People who are dissatisfied with the service they receive from other professions can take their business to another licensed professional, e.g. doctor, lawyer, dentist, or electrician. Most of the students in our public schools are unable to move to another teacher or school. They are obliged to accept the teachers employed in their local school.
2. An effective Model for Public School Accountability requires coherent continuing education focused on the needs of individual teachers and the school as an effective instructional unit. In testimony before the House Ed. Committee, Rebecca Holcombe shared that: "In VT, licensure and re-licensure are the

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only levers the state has to ensure a minimum of quality and continuous professional learning and development by teachers."

3. The state's investment in education is far greater than any other public endeavor. Over 80% of any school's budget is in personnel, primarily teacher contracts. The public has a high stakes interest in being certain that our educators meet high standards for preparation and continuing education.

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