

Vermont Interfaith Action – Current Services Budget

Testimony from the Rev. Dr. Earl Kooperkamp, President
April 5, 2016

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this important issue. I am the President of the Board of Vermont Interfaith Action, an organization of congregations throughout Vermont seeking to improve the quality of life for all and especially the lowest income residents of our state. We have over 40 member congregations from Brattleboro to Chittenden County and represent about 8,000 Vermonters.

Over the past two years our Clergy Caucus has undertaken a campaign, “Toward a Moral Economy.” We have held 16 meetings around the state with members of our congregations and legislators about the elements of making our economy fair for all in accordance with the values we profess from our religious heritage. One of the most important of those values is honesty.

I come here this afternoon to urge the inclusion of language in the appropriations bill for a clear definition of the Current Services Budget. In 2012, the legislature passed a budget which included current services for the first time. This past year, the provision was used by the administration, after a meeting between members of the Vermont interfaith Action Clergy Caucus and Gov. Shumlin and Secretary Johnson, and we appreciate this inclusion. However, the definition of “Current Services” needs to be clarified and made more specific for this to be truly effective.

As I mentioned, this is about honesty. We, and by we I mean all Vermonters, you our Senate representatives and those who serve organizations in our state dedicate to helping others, as well as all our neighbors, we need to be honest and transparent in our state finances. I know this will take a great deal of work. However, this is very necessary work, because without doing this hard work of making a Current Services Budget available to the legislature and the public, we do not truly know the needs of our state. I do not believe that there is a short cut to doing this hard, but necessary, work. Therefore, I urge your kind consideration of the adoption of a definition of Current Service to become part of the Senate appropriation bill this year. Thank you very much for your time.

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