Testimony Before the VT. House Education Committee - April 22, 2015

I am retired from public education. My children have graduated and are pursuing their own careers. In the not to distant future, I will be leaving Vermont for my beloved Blue Ridge in N.C. I have no personal investment in what you decide other than that I am committed to the proper development of our children.

I believe the system of school governance employed in Vermont hampers that effort. 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 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. ***Thank you,***

Wm Lee Sease
Former Vt. Superintendent and Director of Special Education