

As we listen to the ever changing rationale for the need for H.361, I can't help thinking about the unintended ramifications of this unnecessary bill. Over and over I have asked to see a map of the ideal division of school districts in our state. I have asked the bureaucrats who are promoting this scheme. I have asked the legislators who are writing the bill. I am told there is no map. Common sense tells me that the people who hatched this scheme know full well which schools should be in which district and which schools they feel deserve to be closed. The Governor says this bill is not "top down" and that every town will decide the fate of its own schools. I say dividing Vermont in to school districts of 900 or more students would be a daunting task. To attempt it without consulting a map would be folly. To entice our towns to redistrict themselves will be chaos.

Our own home district presently has the magical number of students to avoid pressure to merge. However everyone is going to want to be a "merged district" rather than sitting on the sidelines paying for the tax breaks of other districts. So who can predict where each town will land? I personally am looking at Claremont but am told New Hampshire is off limits.

So let's say just like in musical chairs each town in Vermont begins to consider which district map is best for their school. And let's remember the point of musical chairs is to identify the loser, take away their chair, then play again. I asked my niece, Emilie, who has played musical chairs much more recently than I, what she thought of this game. She said, "It's stinks."

It's not too late to reconsider and decide to step back and have a real comprehensive conversation across the state about the real problems we face in education. All of this nonsense can be avoided if you would just allow more time to try to do the right thing for education.

Tom Gilbert