

Good evening. My name is Steve Mason and I am the chair of the Lowell Graded School Board and the North Country Supervisory Union Board and I thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee in support of maintaining our current and appropriate supervisory union structure allowed as an 'alternative structure' in Act 46.

You will receive testimony this evening from people that come with facts and figures and very compelling arguments. Mine is a testimony born of a love for my community and a deep and abiding respect for the people who live there.

When people ask me if I know why my dog is barking, I tell them I absolutely do know why my dog barks. It is because he wants to be heard. I come here from the Northeast Kingdom, to do a little barking. Rest assured, like my dog I rarely bite the hand that feeds me.

Like most of my constituents, when someone comes to the door of our old farmhouse, I listen to what they have to say, even if their first words are "*Good day, I'm from Montpelier, and I'm here to help you.*"

Now, I have read Act 46 and I would like to say that its goals vary not one single word from my own beliefs; however, I do take exception with the interpretation of the act being that the preferred model is the only acceptable model. This interpretation **DOES NOT** recognize the *fact* that there may be some *existing* examples of governance that, through hard work, Vermont ingenuity and close working relationships — already accomplishes the goals in the act.

I am left with two questions:

1. Our supervisory union is 519.8 square miles in size, comprised of 13 towns. By area, it is the largest single supervisory union in the state — with one superintendent and *no* assistant superintendents — why did no one ask us how we work together to produce some of the lowest per-pupil costs in the state?
2. Why do you think the vast majority of our voters in a recent poll feel that it is a system that works best for them and their children?

Hear my bark — One size — the Preferred Model — does not fit all.

On behalf of the board members of the 13 schools in the North Country Supervisory Union, I want to thank - the members of the committee - for your time and thoughtful consideration of my testimony. I ask that my written testimony be entered into the record.