

## Comments on the Memo from House Appropriations

In a separate thread I provided my comments on the E.400 and E.500.1 changes as requested. Those comments were basically that I'm a little concerned if funding for big IT projects is now covered by a fund that may not have sufficient legislative oversight. I believe that this weakness can be corrected by requiring additional reporting on these projects, including past costs, future estimates, and overall performance of the IT projects.

With regards to AOE and their tech issues, two of their biggest systems that are in development right now are the Shared School District Data Management System (SSDDMS) and the Vermont Automated Data Reporting (Longitudinal Data System). SSDDMS is estimated to have an \$8.9M lifecycle cost (\$2.6M development, \$6.3M maintenance/operation), and LDS is estimated to have an \$8.1M lifecycle cost (\$5.5M development, \$2.6M maintenance/operation). SSDDMS is the system referred to in E.500.1, and the proposal is to pay for it from the Education Fund. LDS is funded from a mix of federal and general funds. LDS made the news last month when [VTDigger reported](#) on the delays experienced in getting the system properly operational.

LDS has a different purpose than SSDDMS, and has been in development longer, but there is an issue that is common to both. The primary problem is something encountered fairly frequently in IT system development: setting a firm deadline for a new IT system without a full understanding of the technical challenges involved, or the availability of resources to actually make it happen. One of the best examples of this was Vermont Health Connect, where a go-live date (10/1/2013) was set in stone before anyone had a good grasp of what would be required to build such a system.

With regards to the AOE systems, SSDDMS is going fairly well from a straight IT perspective, but the schedule set in legislation ([2018 Special Session Act 11](#), Section. E.500.1) is in doubt. Since much of the work to convert existing data and get the system up and running relies on people outside of state government (supervisory unions, supervisory districts, etc.) it's difficult to keep control of the schedule and meet targets. In the case of LDS, the VTDigger report indicated that a new requirement was mandated but the resources to fulfill the requirement were not provided.

I believe that SSDDMS will ultimately be successful, but will probably not meet the mandated schedule. Going forward, while future legislation involving IT systems may have to include schedules and target dates to ensure that things actually happen as directed, ideally they will be developed with enough input from the involved parties that they are realistic and achievable.

Catherine Benham had recommended that you get a briefing on this from Emily Byrne, the CFO of AOE, and I concur.

Please let me know if I can be of any additional assistance.

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