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Act No. 176 (H.727). Education; union school districts; union school district withdrawal; school closures

An act relating to the exploration, formation, and organization of union school districts and unified union school districts

This act makes changes to the processes of union school district governance and other related processes.

16 V.S.A. chapter 11 governs the processes involved in union school district governance. This act redesignates the statutes governing joint schools from 16 V.S.A. chapter 11 to 16 V.S.A. chapter 9 and repeals chapter 11 entirely and replaces it with a new chapter 11. This act updates the processes involved in union school district governance, from the process to explore formation of a union school district through the routine processes involved in governing a union school district once formed. This act also updates the process to withdraw from a union school district. It requires the use of a study committee to initiate the withdrawal process, a detailed analysis of and plan for the withdrawal, review of the analysis and plan by the State Board of Education, and a vote of the electorate within the union school district to make the final determination of whether withdrawal will occur.

This act also creates four distinct, temporary processes to govern the withdrawal process for communities that began but did not complete the withdrawal process prior to the passage of this act. It requires certain information to be reported to the State Board of Education and allows the withdrawal process in these specific communities to stop and the union district to remain intact under certain circumstances.

This act creates a two-year moratorium on the closure of a school building located within a union school district and requires the Agency of Education to report back to the Senate and House Committees on Education with an examination of such school building closures, or attempted closures, and recommendations for school building closure standards and processes and any recommended legislative action.

This act also requires the Agency of Education to make an annual report to the Senate and House Committees on Education regarding recent union school district withdrawal actions.

This act also adds a new section to 16 V.S.A. chapter 53 that creates a process for the transition of employment contracts when a new school district is created upon withdrawal from a union school district.

Effective Date: June 7, 2022