

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred House Bill No. 727  
3 entitled "An act relating to the exploration, formation, and organization of  
4 union school districts and unified union school districts" respectfully reports  
5 that it has considered the same and recommends that the Senate propose to the  
6 House that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and  
7 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

8 Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. chapter 11, subchapter 1 is redesignated to be chapter 9,  
9 subchapter 6 to read:

10 Subchapter 16. ~~GENERALLY~~; CONTRACTS BETWEEN DISTRICTS  
11 TO OPERATE SCHOOLS JOINTLY

12      § 571. CONTRACTS TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE JOINT SCHOOLS

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17 Sec. 2. REPEAL  
18 16 V.S.A. chapter 11 (union schools) is repealed on passage of this act.

19 Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. chapter 11 is added to read:

1      § 701. POLICY

2      It is the policy of the State to provide substantially equal educational  
3      opportunities for all children in Vermont by authorizing two or more school  
4      districts, including an existing union school district, to form a union school  
5      district for the purpose of providing for the education of its resident students in  
6      the grades for which it is organized, and for the new union school district to be  
7      a body politic and corporate with the powers incident to a municipal  
8      corporation, with all of the rights and responsibilities that a town school district  
9      has in providing for the education of its resident students. Formation of union  
10     school districts shall be designed to encourage and support local decisions and  
11     actions that provide substantial equity of educational opportunities statewide,  
12     lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards,  
13     maximize operational efficiencies, promote transparency and accountability,  
14     and be delivered at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.

15     § 702. DEFINITIONS

16     As used in this chapter:

17     (1) "Board clerk" means the individual selected to be clerk of the board  
18     of a union school district by the members of the board from among their  
19     number pursuant to the provisions of sections 714 (initial members of union  
20     school district board), 729 (unified union district board members), and 747

1       (union elementary and union high school district board members) of this  
2       chapter.

3       (2) “District clerk” means the individual elected as clerk of a union  
4       school district by the voters of the district pursuant to the provisions of  
5       sections 715 (union school district organizational meeting), 735 (unified union  
6       school district officers and election), and 753 (union elementary and union  
7       high school district officers and election) of this chapter.

8       (3) “Forming districts” means all school districts, including union  
9       school districts, that are located within the geographical boundaries of a  
10      proposed or voter-approved union school district prior to the operational date  
11      of the union school district, which will potentially merge or have merged to  
12      form the new union school district.

13      (4) “Member district” means a school district, which can be a union  
14      school district, that is a member of a union elementary school district or a  
15      union high school district for certain grades, prekindergarten through grade 12,  
16      and is a distinct district organized to provide for the education of its resident  
17      students for all other grades, whether by operating one or more schools or  
18      paying tuition.

19      (5) “Operational date” means the date on which a union school district  
20      formed pursuant to the provisions of this chapter assumes full and sole

1       responsibility for the education of all resident students in the grades for which  
2       it is organized.

3       (6) “School district” means a school district organized as a town school  
4       district, city school district, incorporated school district, or union school  
5       district, unless clearly inapplicable.

6       (7) In addition to its plain meaning, “town” means a city or incorporated  
7       village.

8       (8) In addition to its plain meaning, “town school district” means a city  
9       school district, or incorporated school district, and does not mean a union  
10      school district.

11      (9) “Town within a unified union school district” means each town  
12      located inside the geographic boundaries of a unified union school district and  
13      in which the district’s resident students live.

14      (10) “Transitional period” means the period of time beginning on the  
15      day on which a union school district becomes a legal entity pursuant to section  
16      713 (certification of votes) of this chapter and continuing until its operational  
17      date.

18      (11) “Unified union school district” means a union school district  
19      organized to provide for the education of the district’s resident students in all  
20      grades, prekindergarten through grade 12.

1           (12) “Union elementary school district” and “union high school district”  
2        mean a union school district organized to provide for the education of the  
3        district’s resident students in fewer than all grades, prekindergarten through  
4        grade 12.

5           (13)(A) “Union school district” means a municipality formed under the  
6        provisions of this chapter that is governed by a single publicly elected board  
7        and that is responsible for the education of students residing in two or more  
8        towns in the grades for which the district is organized by:

9               (i) operating a school or schools for all grades;  
10              (ii) operating a school or schools for all students in one or more  
11        grades and paying tuition for all students in the remaining grade or grades; or  
12              (iii) paying tuition for all grades.

13           (B) Use of the term “union school district” or “union district”  
14        includes a union elementary school district, union high school district, and  
15        unified union school district unless the context clearly limits it to fewer than all  
16        options.

17           (14) “Weighted voting” means a system, sometimes used in the  
18        “proportional to town population” model of union school district board  
19        membership, set forth in subdivisions 711(d)(1), 711(e)(1), 730(a)(1),  
20        748(a)(1), and 748(b)(1) of this chapter, where proportionality is achieved by  
21        assigning a different number of votes to each board member.

1       § 703. APPLICATION OF OTHER LAWS AND ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

2       (a) Other education laws. The provisions of this chapter are intended to be  
3       in addition to the general provisions of law pertaining to schools, school  
4       districts, and supervisory unions. General provisions of law shall apply to  
5       union school districts unless inconsistent with or otherwise provided in this  
6       chapter.

7       (b) Existing articles of agreement.

8       (1) If a union school district joins with other school districts to form a  
9       new union school district pursuant to the provisions of sections 706–715  
10      (process of exploration, formation, and organization of a union school district)  
11      of this chapter, then the articles of agreement of the existing union school  
12      district are repealed, and the articles of agreement of the new union school  
13      district shall govern.

14      (2) If a union school district joins another existing union school district  
15      pursuant to the provisions of section 721 (joining an existing union school  
16      district) of this chapter, then the articles of agreement of the joining district are  
17      repealed, and the articles of agreement of the enlarged union school district  
18      shall govern, unless the districts agree otherwise.

19       Subchapter 2. Exploration, Formation, and Organization

20       Article 1. Process

21       § 706. PROPOSAL TO FORM STUDY COMMITTEE; BUDGET AND

1           MEMBERSHIP

2           (a) Establishment of committee. When the boards of two or more school  
3           districts vote to establish a study committee to study the advisability of  
4           forming a union school district or are petitioned to do so by at least five  
5           percent of voters in the school district, the boards shall meet with the  
6           superintendent or superintendents of each school district. With the advice of  
7           the superintendent or superintendents, the boards shall establish a budget for  
8           the study committee's work and shall determine the number of persons to serve  
9           on the study committee pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

10          (b) Budget and membership. Each participating school district's share of  
11          the established budget and membership on the study committee shall be the  
12          same as the proportion of the school district's equalized pupils to the total  
13          equalized pupils of all school districts intending to participate formally in the  
14          study committee. As used in this subsection, "equalized pupils" has the same  
15          meaning as in section 4001 of this title.

16          (c) Existing union school districts.

17           (1) Existing union elementary or union high school district; proposed  
18          unified union school district. If the board of an existing union elementary or  
19          union high school district votes to participate in a study committee to consider  
20          formation of a unified union school district, or is petitioned by the voters to do  
21          so, then:

1           (A) The interests of the existing union school district shall be  
2           represented by its member districts on the study committee.

3           (B) Any warning and vote on the study committee budget pursuant to  
4           section 707 of this chapter and the warning and vote on any resulting proposal  
5           to form a unified union school district pursuant to section 710 shall be at the  
6           member district level.

7           (C) If the existing union school district does not have any member  
8           districts because all towns for which it is organized are members of both a  
9           union elementary school district and a union high school district, then the  
10          existing union school district shall represent its own interests on the study  
11          committee, and the towns within it shall not participate on its behalf.

12          (D) If a town is a member of both a union elementary school district  
13          and a union high school district, is not independently organized as a district  
14          that is responsible for the education of students in any grade, and does not have  
15          a town school district board, then notwithstanding other provisions to the  
16          contrary:

17           (i) To the extent possible, the boards of the union elementary and  
18          union high school districts of which the town is a member shall make a  
19          reasonable attempt, jointly, to appoint a member to the study committee who  
20          resides in the town.

1               (ii) The legislative body or appropriate officer of the town shall  
2               perform electoral functions, including warning meetings and conducting the  
3               voting process, ordinarily performed by and in member districts on behalf of a  
4               union school district.

5               (2) Existing unified union school district; proposed unified union school  
6               district. If the board of a unified union school district votes to participate in a  
7               study committee to consider formation of a new unified union school district  
8               rather than the enlargement of the existing unified union school district  
9               pursuant to section 721 (joining an existing union school district) of this  
10               chapter, or is petitioned by the voters to do so, then:

11               (A) The existing unified union school district shall represent its own  
12               interests on the study committee, and the towns within it shall not participate  
13               on its behalf.

14               (B) To the extent possible, the board of the existing unified union  
15               school district shall make a reasonable attempt to appoint members to the study  
16               committee who reside in each town within the district.

17               (C) Any warning and vote on the study committee budget pursuant to  
18               section 707 of this chapter and the warning and vote of the electorate on any  
19               resulting proposal to form a new unified union school district pursuant to  
20               section 710 shall proceed pursuant to the provisions for commingled

1       Australian ballot voting as set forth in subchapter 3 (unified union school  
2       districts) of this chapter.

3       (3) Existing union elementary or union high school district; proposed  
4       union elementary or union high school district. If the board of an existing  
5       union elementary or union high school district votes to participate in a study  
6       committee to consider formation of a new union elementary or union high  
7       school district rather than enlarging the existing union school district pursuant  
8       to section 721 (joining an existing union school district) of this chapter, or is  
9       petitioned by the voters to do so, then:

10      (A) The existing union school district shall represent its own interests  
11      on the study committee, and the member districts of the existing union school  
12      district shall not participate on its behalf.

13      (B) To the extent possible, the board of the existing union school  
14      district shall make a reasonable attempt to appoint members to the study  
15      committee who reside in each of the member districts within the existing union  
16      school district.

17      (C) Any warning and vote on the study committee budget pursuant to  
18      section 707 of this chapter and the warning and vote of the electorate on any  
19      resulting proposal to form a new union elementary or union high school district  
20      pursuant to section 710 of this chapter shall proceed pursuant to the provisions

1       for commingled Australian ballot voting as set forth in subchapter 4 (union  
2       elementary and union high school districts) of this chapter.

3       § 707. APPROVAL OF STUDY BUDGET; APPOINTMENT OF STUDY  
4       COMMITTEE; PARTICIPATION

5       (a) Proposed budget exceeding \$50,000.00.

6           (1) If the proposed budget established in section 706 of this chapter  
7       exceeds \$50,000.00, then subject to the provisions of that section the board of  
8       each potentially participating school district shall warn the district's voters to  
9       meet at an annual or special school district meeting to vote whether to  
10      appropriate funds necessary to support the district's financial share of a study  
11      committee's costs. The meeting in each school district shall be warned for the  
12      same date. The warning in each school district shall contain an identical article  
13      in substantially the following form:

14       Shall the school district of \_\_\_\_\_ appropriate funds necessary  
15      to support the school district's financial share of a study to determine the  
16      advisability of forming a union school district with some or all of the  
17      following school districts: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_? It is  
18      estimated that the \_\_\_\_\_ school district's share, if all of the identified  
19      school districts vote to participate, will be \$ \_\_\_\_\_ . The total  
20      proposed budget, to be shared by all participating school districts is \$  
21      \_\_\_\_\_ .”

1           (2) If the vote in subdivision (1) of this subsection is in the affirmative  
2        in two or more school districts, then the boards of the affirming school districts  
3        shall appoint a study committee consisting of the number of persons  
4        determined pursuant to section 706 (proposed study committee budget and  
5        membership) of this chapter. At least one current board member from each  
6        participating school district shall be appointed to the study committee. The  
7        board of a school district appointing more than one person to the study  
8        committee may appoint residents of the school district who are not members of  
9        the board to any of the remaining seats.

10          (3) The sums expended for study purposes under this section shall be  
11        considered part of the approved cost of any project in which the union school  
12        district, if created, participates pursuant to chapter 123 of this title.

13          (b) Proposed budget not exceeding \$50,000.00.

14           (1) If the proposed budget established in section 706 of this chapter does  
15        not exceed \$50,000.00, then the boards of the participating school districts  
16        shall appoint a study committee consisting of the number of persons  
17        determined under that section. At least one current board member from each  
18        participating school district shall be appointed to the study committee. The  
19        board of a school district appointing more than one person to the study  
20        committee may appoint residents of the school district who are not members of  
21        the board to any of the remaining seats.

1                   (2) The sums expended for study purposes under this section shall be  
2                   considered part of the approved cost of any project in which the union school  
3                   district, if created, participates pursuant to chapter 123 of this title.

4                   (c) Additional costs.

5                   (1) If the voters approve a budget that exceeds \$50,000.00 but the study  
6                   committee later determines that its budget is likely to exceed the projected,  
7                   voter-approved amount, then the boards of all participating school districts  
8                   shall obtain voter approval for the amounts exceeding the previously approved  
9                   budget in the manner set forth in subdivision (a)(1) of this section before the  
10                  study committee obligates or expends sums in excess of the initial voter-  
11                  approved amount.

12                  (2) If a proposed budget does not exceed \$50,000.00 at the time the  
13                  school boards appoint members to the study committee, but the study  
14                  committee later determines that its total budget is likely to exceed \$50,000.00,  
15                  then the boards of all participating school districts shall obtain voter approval  
16                  for the amounts exceeding \$50,000.00 in the manner set forth in subdivision  
17                  (a)(1) of this section before the study committee obligates or expends funds in  
18                  excess of \$50,000.00.

19                  (d) Grants. Costs to be paid by State, federal, or private grants shall not be  
20                  included when calculating whether a study committee's budget or proposed  
21                  budget exceeds \$50,000.00.

1       (e)(1) Subsequent appointments of persons to the study committee;  
2       vacancy. Subject to the requirement that each school board appoint at least  
3       one current member of the board, the board of a participating school district  
4       shall appoint a person residing in the school district to the study committee if  
5       one of the school district's seats is vacant because a study committee member:  
6           (A) is no longer a member of the school district's board and was the  
7       sole board member appointed by that school district;  
8           (B) has resigned from or is no longer able to serve on the study  
9       committee; or  
10           (C) has not attended three consecutive study committee meetings  
11       without providing notice to the study committee chair of the reason for each  
12       absence and obtaining a determination of the study committee members that  
13       the absences were reasonable.

14       (2) Notice under subdivision (1)(C) of this subsection shall be given in  
15       advance of absences whenever possible.

16       (f) Formal participation in study committee.  
17           (1) A school district shall not be a formal participant in and appoint  
18       members to more than one study committee created under this chapter at any  
19       one point in time.  
20           (2) A school district shall not formally withdraw its participation in an  
21       existing study committee after the school district has appointed members to

1       that committee until the study committee dissolves pursuant to subsection  
2       708(e) of this chapter.

3       (g) Additional formal participants.

4           (1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (f) of this section, a school  
5       district may join as an additional formal participant in a study committee after  
6       creation of the committee if:

7              (A) the school district's board has requested the committee's  
8       approval to participate after either a vote of the school district's board or a  
9       petition by five percent of the school district's voters and if the study  
10      committee votes to approve formal participation by the district; or

11             (B) the study committee has voted to ask the school district to  
12      participate formally and either the board of the school district votes to approve  
13      formal participation or is petitioned by five percent of the school district's  
14      voters to do so.

15             (2) A school district that becomes a formal participant in an existing  
16      study committee pursuant to this subsection is subject to the provisions of  
17      section 706 (proposed study committee budget and membership) of this  
18      chapter regarding financial and representational proportionality and to all other  
19      requirements of study committees set out in this chapter.

20       (h) Informal participation by other school districts.

1           (1) The board of a school district that is not a formal participant in an  
2       existing study committee may authorize one or more of the board's members  
3       to contact the study committee to discuss whether it may be advisable to  
4       include the school district within a proposal to form a new union school district  
5       as an "advisable" district, as described in section 708 (necessary and advisable  
6       districts) of this chapter.

7           (2) An existing study committee may authorize one or more of its  
8       members to contact the board of one or more additional school districts that are  
9       not formal participants in the committee to discuss whether it may be advisable  
10      to include the school district within a proposal to form a new union school  
11      district as an "advisable" district.

12          (3) An existing study committee may invite representatives of a  
13       nonparticipating school district's board to participate informally in the study  
14       committee's deliberations.

15          (4) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the board of a  
16       school district from authorizing informal exploration between and among the  
17       boards of school districts prior to the formation of a study committee.

18      § 708. STUDY COMMITTEE; NECESSARY AND ADVISABLE  
19           DISTRICTS; CONTENTS OF STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT AND  
20           PROPOSED ARTICLES; DISSOLUTION OF COMMITTEE

21          (a) Study committee; process.

1           (1) The superintendent shall convene a study committee's first meeting  
2       when the committee's members are appointed. If the participating districts are  
3       members of more than one supervisory union, then the superintendents shall  
4       decide which of their number shall convene the meeting. The study committee  
5       members shall elect a chair who shall notify the Secretary in writing of the  
6       committee's creation and the chair's election within 30 days following the vote  
7       of the committee's creation.

8           (2) Staff of the supervisory union or unions shall provide administrative  
9       assistance to the study committee.

10          (3) The Secretary shall cooperate with the study committee and is  
11       authorized to make Agency staff available to provide technical assistance to  
12       the committee.

13          (4) The study committee is a public body pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 310(4)  
14       and is subject to the requirements of 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.

15          (5) Although a study committee should try to achieve consensus,  
16       committee decisions shall be reached by a majority of all committee members  
17       present and voting.

18          (b) Necessary and advisable school districts. If a study committee decides  
19       to recommend formation of a union school district, then it shall determine  
20       whether each school district included in the recommended formation is  
21       "necessary" or "advisable" to formation.

1           (1) “Necessary” school district.

2           (A) The study committee shall identify a school district as  
3       “necessary” to formation of the union school district only if the school district  
4       is a formal participant in the study committee.

5           (B) Subject to the provisions of subsection 706(c) of this chapter, the  
6       school board of a “necessary” school district is required to warn a vote of the  
7       electorate under sections 710 (vote to form union school district) and 711  
8       (initial members of union school district board election) of this chapter.

9           (C) A proposed union school district is formed only if the voters  
10      voting in each “necessary” school district vote to approve formation.

11           (2) “Advisable” school district.

12           (A) The study committee may identify any school district as  
13       “advisable” to formation of the union school district even if the school district  
14       is not a formal participant in the study committee.

15           (B) The school board of an “advisable” school district is not required  
16      to warn a vote of the electorate under sections 710 (vote to form union school  
17      district) and 711 (initial members of union school district board election) of  
18      this chapter, except upon application of 10 percent of the voters in the school  
19      district.

20           (C) Voter approval in an “advisable” district is not required for  
21      formation of a new union school district.

1                   (3) Existing union elementary or union high school district.  
2                   Notwithstanding other provisions of this subsection, an existing union  
3                   elementary or union high school district is “necessary” to the formation of a  
4                   unified union school district even though its interests are represented by its  
5                   member districts pursuant to subdivision 706(c)(1) (study committee budget  
6                   and membership for existing union school districts) of this chapter.

7                   (c) Proposal to form union school district; report and proposed articles of  
8                   agreement. If a study committee determines that it is advisable to propose  
9                   formation of a union school district, then it shall prepare a report analyzing the  
10                  strengths and challenges of the current structures of all “necessary” and  
11                  “advisable” school districts and outlining the ways in which a union school  
12                  district promotes the State policy set forth in section 701 of this chapter. The  
13                  study committee shall also prepare proposed articles of agreement that, if  
14                  approved pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, shall serve as the operating  
15                  agreement for the new union school district. At a minimum, articles of  
16                  agreement shall state:

17                  (1) The name of any school district the study committee considers  
18                  “necessary” to formation of the proposed union school district.

19                  (2) The name of any school district the study committee considers  
20                  “advisable” to include in the proposed union school district.

1           (3) The legal name or temporary legal name by which the union school  
2           district shall be known.

3           (4) The grades, if any, that the proposed union school district will  
4           operate and the grades, if any, for which it will pay tuition.

5           (5) The cost and general location of any proposed new school buildings  
6           to be constructed and the cost and general description of any proposed  
7           renovations to existing school buildings.

8           (6) A plan for the first year of the union school district's operation for  
9           transportation of students, assignment of staff, and use of curriculum that is  
10          consistent with existing contracts, collective bargaining agreements, and other  
11          provisions of law. The board of the union school district, if formed, shall make  
12          all subsequent decisions regarding transportation, staff, and curriculum subject  
13          to existing contracts, collective bargaining agreements, and other provisions of  
14          law.

15          (7) A list of the indebtedness of each “necessary” and “advisable”  
16          district, which the union school district shall assume.

17          (8) The specific pieces of real property of each “necessary” and  
18          “advisable” district that the union school district shall acquire, their valuation,  
19          and how the union school district shall pay for them.

20          (9) Consistent with the proportional representation requirements of the  
21          Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution, the method or methods of

1       apportioning representation on the union school district board as set forth in  
2       subsections 711(d) (unified union school district), (e) (union elementary or  
3       union high school district), and (f) (weighted voting) of this chapter.

4           (10) The term of office for each member initially elected to the union  
5       school district board, to be arranged so that one-third expire on the day of the  
6       second annual meeting of the union school district, one-third on the day of the  
7       third annual meeting, and one-third on the day of the fourth annual meeting, or  
8       as near to that proportion as possible.

9           (11) The date on which the proposal to create the union school district  
10      and the election of initial union school district board members will be  
11      submitted to the voters.

12           (12) The date on which the union school district will be solely  
13      responsible for the education of its resident students in the grades for which it  
14      is organized and will begin operating any schools, paying any tuition, and  
15      providing educational services.

16           (13) Whether the election of board members, election of school district  
17      officers, votes on the union school district budget, or votes on other public  
18      questions, or any two or more of these, shall be by Australian ballot.

19           (14) Any other matters that the study committee considers pertinent.  
20           (d) No proposal to form a union school district. If a study committee  
21      determines that it is inadvisable to propose formation of a union school district,

1       then its members shall vote to dissolve the committee. If the study committee  
2       members vote to dissolve, then the chair shall notify the Secretary in writing of  
3       the vote.

4       (e) Dissolution of study committee.

5       (1) If a study committee proposes formation of a union school district  
6       pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, then the committee shall cease to  
7       exist when the clerk of each school district voting on a proposal to establish the  
8       union school district has certified the results of the vote to the Secretary  
9       pursuant to subsection 713(a) of this chapter.

10      (2) If a study committee determines that it is inadvisable to propose  
11      formation of a union school district, then the committee shall cease to exist  
12      when the chair notifies the Secretary of the committee's vote pursuant to  
13      subsection (d) of this section.

14      § 709. REVIEW BY LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARDS:

15      CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL BY STATE BOARD OF  
16      EDUCATION

17      (a) If a study committee determines that it is advisable to propose  
18      formation of a union school district, then the committee shall transmit its report  
19      and proposed articles of agreement to the school board of each school district  
20      that the report identifies as either "necessary" or "advisable" to formation of  
21      the proposed union school district. Each board may review the report and

1       proposed articles and may provide its comments to the study committee. The  
2       study committee has sole authority to determine the contents of the report and  
3       proposed articles and to decide whether to submit them to the State Board  
4       under subsection (b) of this section.

5            (b) If a study committee determines that it is advisable to propose  
6       formation of a union school district, then the committee shall transmit the  
7       report and proposed articles of agreement to the Secretary who shall submit  
8       them with recommendations to the State Board.

9            (c)(1) The State Board:

10              (A) shall consider the study committee's report and proposed articles  
11       of agreement and the Secretary's recommendations;

12              (B) shall provide the study committee an opportunity to be heard;  
13              (C) may ask the Secretary or the study committee, or both, to make  
14       further investigation and may consider any other information the State Board  
15       deems to be pertinent; and

16              (D) may request that the study committee amend the report or the  
17       proposed articles of agreement, or both.

18            (2) If the State Board finds that formation of the proposed union school  
19       district is in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts,  
20       and aligns with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, then it shall  
21       approve the study committee's report and proposed articles of agreement,

1       together with any amendments, as the final report and proposed articles of  
2       agreement, and shall give notice of its action to the study committee.

3       (d) The chair of the study committee shall file a copy of the approved final  
4       report and proposed articles of agreement with the clerk of each school district  
5       identified as “necessary” or “advisable” at least 30 days prior to the vote of the  
6       electorate on whether to form the union school district.

7       § 710. VOTE TO FORM UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

8       Subject to the provisions of subsections 706(c) (proposal to form study  
9       committee; existing union school districts) and 708(b) (study committee;  
10      necessary and advisable districts) of this chapter, the voters of each school  
11      district identified as “necessary” or “advisable” shall vote whether to form the  
12      proposed union school district, as follows:

13      (1) The vote shall be held on the date specified in the final report.

14      (2) The vote shall be by Australian ballot.

15      (3) The vote shall be at separate school district meetings held on the  
16      same day.

17      (4) The opportunity for early and absentee voting pursuant to 17 V.S.A.  
18      §§ 2531–2550 shall be provided.

19      (5) The board of each school district voting on the proposal shall warn  
20      the vote either as a special meeting of the school district or as part of its annual  
21      meeting.

1       § 711. VOTE TO ELECT INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE UNION SCHOOL

2       DISTRICT BOARD

3       (a) Election of initial members of union school district board. At the  
4       meeting warned to vote on formation of a union school district under section  
5       710 of this chapter, the voters shall also elect the initial members who will  
6       serve on the board of the union school district if the voters approve the  
7       district's formation.

8           (1) The vote to elect the initial members shall be by Australian ballot.

9           (2) The opportunity for early and absentee voting pursuant to 17 V.S.A.

10       §§ 2531–2550 shall be provided.

11       (b) Representation and term length. Initial membership on a union school  
12       district board shall be pursuant to the method of representation set forth in the  
13       articles of agreement, for the terms specified in that document, and pursuant to  
14       the provisions of this section and subdivisions 708(c)(9) and (10) (study  
15       committee; proposed articles of agreement; apportionment and terms) of this  
16       chapter.

17       (c) Operational definitions. As used in subsections (d) and (e) of this  
18       section, any term not defined in section 702 of this chapter shall have its plain  
19       meaning, except as provided in this subsection.

20       (1) If, pursuant to section 425 (other town school district officers) of this  
21       title, the voters of a school district have elected a district clerk who is not also

1       the clerk of the town served by the school district, then “town clerk” means the  
2       elected clerk of that school district.

3           (2) Notwithstanding subdivision (1) of this subsection, if a potential  
4       forming district is an existing unified union school district, then:

5              (A) Reference to the voters of the “school district” means the voters  
6       of each town within the existing unified union school district, who shall vote at  
7       a location in their town of residence that is identified in the warning issued by  
8       the existing unified union school district; provided, however, that the total of  
9       all votes cast in the towns shall determine the modified at-large and at-large  
10      election of initial board members pursuant to subdivisions (d)(2) (proposed  
11      unified union district; modified at-large), (d)(3) (proposed union district; at-  
12      large), (e)(2) (proposed union elementary or union high school district;  
13      modified-at large), and (e)(3) (proposed union elementary or union high school  
14      district; at-large) of this section, as well as whether the existing unified union  
15      school district approves formation of the new unified union school district.

16            (B) “Town clerk” means the clerk of each town within the existing  
17       unified union school district; provided, however, that the town clerk of each  
18       town shall transmit the name of each duly nominated candidate to the clerk of  
19       the existing unified union school district, who shall prepare the unified union  
20       school district ballot for that town and transmit the ballot to the town clerk to  
21       make available to the voters.

1           (3) Notwithstanding subdivision (1) (clerk of school district) of this  
2       subsection, if a town is a member of both a union elementary school district  
3       and a union high school district, is not independently organized as a district  
4       that is responsible for the education of students in any grade, and does not have  
5       a town school district board, then:

6           (A) reference to the voters of the “school district” means the voters of  
7       the town that is the member of both existing union school districts, who shall  
8       vote at a location in their town of residence that is identified in the warning  
9       issued by:

10          (i) the existing union elementary school district if the voters are  
11       voting on a proposed unified union school district or a proposed union  
12       elementary school district; or

13          (ii) the existing union high school district if the voters are voting  
14       on a proposed union high school district; and

15          (B) “town clerk” means the clerk of the town that is a member of both  
16       existing union school districts; provided, however, that the town clerk shall  
17       transmit the name of each duly nominated candidate to the clerk of the union  
18       school district identified in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3), who shall  
19       prepare the ballot for that town and transmit the ballot to the town clerk to  
20       make available to the voters.

1       (d) Proposed unified union school district. Subject to the provisions of  
2       subsections 706(c) (existing union school districts) and 708(b) (necessary and  
3       advisable school districts) of this chapter, the voters of each school district  
4       identified as “necessary” or “advisable” shall vote whether to elect initial board  
5       members of a proposed unified union school district, as follows

6           (1) Proportional to town population. When representation on the board  
7       of a proposed unified union school district is apportioned to each potential  
8       town within the proposed district in a number that is closely proportional to the  
9       town’s relative population:

10           (A) Voters of each school district identified as either “necessary” or  
11       “advisable” to formation of the proposed unified union school district shall file  
12       a petition nominating a candidate for the office of unified union school district  
13       board member based on town population. A petition shall be valid only if:

14              (i) the candidate is a current voter of the town;  
15              (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
16       candidate is nominated;

17              (iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the town  
18       or one percent of the legal voters in the town, whichever is less;

19              (iv) the voters file the petition with the town clerk of the town in  
20       which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday  
21       preceding the day of the election; and

1               (v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the  
2               printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.

3               (B) The town clerk shall place the name of each duly nominated  
4               candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the school district.

5               (C) The voters of the school district for the town in which the  
6               candidate resides shall elect as many board members to the unified union  
7               school board as are apportioned based on the town's population.

8               (2) Modified at-large model: allocation to town; at-large representation.  
9               When representation on the board of a proposed unified union school district is  
10               allocated to each potential town within the proposed district, but the allocation  
11               is not closely proportional to the town's relative population and the board  
12               member is elected at-large:

13               (A) Voters of each school district identified as either "necessary" or  
14               "advisable" to formation of the proposed unified union school district shall file  
15               a petition nominating a candidate for the office of unified union school district  
16               board member allocated to the voters' town. A petition shall be valid only if:

17               (i) the candidate is a current voter of the town;  
18               (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
19               candidate is nominated;  
20               (iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the town  
21               or one percent of the legal voters in the town, whichever is less;

1                   (iv) the voters file the petition with the town clerk of the town in  
2                   which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday  
3                   preceding the day of the election; and

4                   (v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the  
5                   printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.

6                   (B) Upon receipt of a petition for a unified union school district  
7                   board member allocated to a potential town within the proposed district but to  
8                   be elected at-large under the modified at-large model, the town clerk shall  
9                   place the name of the duly nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to  
10                  the voters of the school district and shall notify the town clerks preparing the  
11                  ballots for the voters of each of the other "necessary" school districts and of  
12                  each "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed unified  
13                  union school district to place the candidate's name on the ballot presented to  
14                  the voters in those districts. Alternatively, at their discretion, the town clerks  
15                  may meet jointly to prepare a uniform ballot.

16                  (C) The voters of each "necessary" school district and of each  
17                  "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed unified union  
18                  school district shall vote for the board members to be elected at-large under the  
19                  modified at-large model; provided, however, that ballots shall be included in  
20                  the calculation of total votes cast pursuant to the provisions of subdivision  
21                  714(a)(2) (calculation of votes) of this chapter.

1           (3) At-large representation. When representation on the board of a  
2           proposed unified union school district is not apportioned or allocated to the  
3           potential towns within the proposed district pursuant to subdivision (1)  
4           (proportional to town population) or (2) (modified at-large) of this subsection  
5           and the board member is elected at-large:

6           (A) The voters of one or more school districts identified as  
7           “necessary” to formation of the proposed unified union school district shall file  
8           a petition nominating a candidate for the office of unified union school district  
9           board member at-large. A petition shall be valid only if:

10           (i) the candidate is a current voter of a school district identified as  
11           “necessary” to the formation of the proposed union school district;

12           (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
13           candidate is nominated;

14           (iii) the petition is signed by at least 60 voters residing in one or  
15           more school districts identified as “necessary” to the formation of the proposed  
16           unified union school district;

17           (iv) the voters file the petition with the town clerk in the  
18           “necessary” school district in which the candidate resides not later than  
19           5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and

20           (v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the  
21           printing of the candidate’s name on the ballot.

1           (B) Upon receipt of a petition for a unified union school district  
2        board member elected at-large, the town clerk shall place the name of the duly  
3        nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the school  
4        district and shall notify the town clerks preparing the ballots for the voters of  
5        each of the other “necessary” school districts and of each “advisable” school  
6        district voting on formation of the proposed unified union school district to  
7        place the candidate’s name on the ballot presented to the voters in those  
8        districts. Alternatively, at their discretion, the town clerks may meet jointly to  
9        prepare a uniform ballot.

10           (C) The voters of each “necessary” school district and of each  
11        “advisable” school district voting on formation of the proposed unified union  
12        school district shall vote for the members to be elected at-large; provided,  
13        however, that ballots shall be included in the calculation of total votes cast  
14        pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 714(a)(2) (calculation of votes) of  
15        this chapter.

16           (e) Proposed union elementary or union high school district. Subject to the  
17        provisions of subsections 706(c) (existing union school districts) and 708(b)  
18        (necessary and advisable school districts) of this chapter, the voters of each  
19        school district identified as “necessary” or “advisable” shall vote whether to  
20        elect initial board members of the proposed union school district, as follows:

1           (1) Proportional to town population. When representation on the board  
2        of a proposed union elementary or union high school district is apportioned to  
3        each potential member district of the proposed district in a number that is  
4        closely proportional to the potential member district's relative population:

5           (A) Voters of each school district identified as either "necessary" or  
6        "advisable" to formation of the proposed union school district shall file a  
7        petition nominating a candidate for the office of union school district board  
8        member representing the potential member district. A petition shall be valid  
9        only if:

10           (i) the candidate is a current voter of the potential member district;  
11           (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
12        candidate is nominated;

13           (iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the  
14        potential member district or one percent of the legal voters in the district,  
15        whichever is less;

16           (iv) the petition is filed with the town clerk not later than  
17        5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and  
18           (v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the  
19        printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.

1           (B) The town clerk shall place the name of each duly nominated  
2           candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the potential member  
3           district.

4           (C) The voters of the district shall elect as many board members as  
5           are apportioned to the potential member district based on population.

6           (2) Modified at-large model: allocation to town; at-large representation.  
7           When representation on the board of a proposed union elementary or union  
8           high school district is allocated to each potential member district, but the  
9           allocation is not closely proportional to the potential member district's relative  
10          population and the board member is elected at-large:

11          (A) Voters of each school district identified as either "necessary" or  
12          "advisable" to formation of the proposed union school district shall file a  
13          petition nominating a candidate for the office of union school district board  
14          member allocated to the potential member district. A petition shall be valid  
15          only if:

16          (i) the candidate is a current voter of the potential member district;  
17          (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
18          candidate is nominated;

19          (iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the  
20          potential member district or one percent of the legal voters in the district,  
21          whichever is less;

1                   (iv) the petition is filed with the town clerk of the school district in  
2                   which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday  
3                   preceding the day of the election; and

4                   (v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the  
5                   printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.

6                   (B) Upon receipt of a petition for union school district board member  
7                   allocated to a potential member district but to be elected at-large under the  
8                   modified at-large mode, the town clerk shall place the name of the duly  
9                   nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the potential  
10                  member district and shall notify the town clerks preparing the ballots for the  
11                  voters of each of the other "necessary" school districts and of each "advisable"  
12                  school district voting on formation of the proposed union school district to  
13                  place the candidate's name on the ballot presented to the voters in those  
14                  districts. Alternatively, at their discretion, the town clerks may meet jointly to  
15                  prepare a uniform ballot.

16                  (C) The voters of each "necessary" school district and of each  
17                  "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed unified union  
18                  school district shall vote for the board members to be elected at-large under the  
19                  modified at-large model; provided, however, that ballots shall be included in  
20                  the calculation of total votes cast pursuant to the provisions of subdivision  
21                  714(a)(2) (calculation of votes) of this chapter.

1           (3) At-large representation. When representation on the board of a  
2           proposed union elementary or union high school district board is not  
3           apportioned or allocated to the potential member districts pursuant to  
4           subdivision (1) (proportional to town population) or (2) (modified at large) of  
5           this subsection and the board member is elected at-large:

6           (A) The voters of one or more school districts identified as  
7           “necessary” to the formation of the proposed union school district shall file a  
8           petition nominating a candidate for the office of union school district board  
9           member at-large. A petition shall be valid only if:

10           (i) the candidate is a current voter of a school district identified as  
11           “necessary” to the formation of the proposed union school district;

12           (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
13           candidate is nominated;

14           (iii) the petition is signed by at least 60 voters residing in one or  
15           more school districts identified as “necessary” to the formation of the proposed  
16           union school district;

17           (iv) the petition is filed with the town clerk in the “necessary”  
18           school district in which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the  
19           sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and

20           (v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the  
21           printing of the candidate’s name on the ballot.

1           (B) Upon receipt of a petition for a union school district board  
2        member to be elected at-large, the town clerk shall place the name of the duly  
3        nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the school  
4        district and shall notify the town clerks preparing the ballots for the voters of  
5        each of the other “necessary” school districts and of each “advisable” school  
6        district voting on formation of the proposed union school district to place the  
7        candidate’s name on the ballot presented to the voters in those districts.  
8        Alternatively, at their discretion, the town clerks may meet jointly to prepare a  
9        uniform ballot.

10           (C) The voters of each “necessary” school district and of each  
11        “advisable” school district voting on formation of the proposed union school  
12        district shall vote for the board members to be elected at-large; provided,  
13        however, that ballots shall be included in the calculation of total votes cast  
14        pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 714(a)(2) (calculation of votes) of  
15        this chapter.

16           (f) Weighted voting. If representation on a union school district board is  
17        apportioned based upon population pursuant to subdivision (d)(1) or (e)(1) of  
18        this section, then the union school district may achieve proportionality through  
19        a system of weighted voting.

§ 712. CONTENTS OF WARNING ON VOTES TO ESTABLISH THE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT AND ELECT THE INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD

The warning for each school district meeting to vote on formation of a union school district shall contain two articles in substantially the following form. The language used in Article 1 shall be the same for each "necessary" and "advisable" district voting on formation of the new district. Article II of the warning shall not include names of candidates for the union school district board.

## WARNING

The voters of the \_\_\_\_\_ School District are hereby notified  
and warned to meet at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_, to vote by  
Australian ballot between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_, at which time the polls will  
open, and \_\_\_\_\_, at which time the polls will close, upon the following articles  
of business:

## Article I. FORMATION OF UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Shall the \_\_\_\_\_ School District, which the proposed articles  
of agreement have identified as [“necessary” or “advisable”] to the formation  
of the proposed union school district, join with the school district[s] of  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, which are identified as  
“necessary” to formation, and potentially the school district[s] of

1 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, which are identified as  
2 “advisable” to formation, for the purpose of forming a union school district, as  
3 provided in Title 16, Vermont Statutes Annotated, upon the following  
4 conditions and agreements:

5           (a) Grades. The union school district shall be organized to provide for the  
6        education of resident students in grades           through           and shall assume  
7        full and sole responsibility therefor on July 1, 20\_\_\_.  
8

8       (b) Operation of schools. The union school district shall operate and  
9       manage one or more schools offering instruction in grades       through  
10                      . [Amend as necessary if the district will pay tuition for any or all grades  
11      for which it is organized.]

12           (c) Union school district board. [State method by which representation of  
13           each member of the union school board is to be determined pursuant to section  
14           711 (vote to elect initial members) of this chapter.]

15                   (d) Assumption of debts and ownership of school property. The union  
16                   school district shall assume the indebtedness of forming districts, acquire the  
17                   school properties of the forming districts, and pay for them, all as specified in  
18                   the final report and proposed articles of agreement.

19                   (e) Final report. The provisions of the final report and proposed articles of  
20                   agreement approved by the State Board of Education on the     day of

, 20 , which is on file in the office of the clerk of each school district  
named in this warning, shall govern the union school district.

Article II. ELECTION OF INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE UNION

SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD

To elect a total of ( ) member(s) to serve as initial members of the  
proposed union school district board for the terms established in the final  
report and proposed articles of agreement: [Amend as necessary to reflect  
method for determining school board membership pursuant to section 711  
(vote to elect initial members) of this chapter.]

(a) [Insert number] Board Member[s] to serve until the second annual  
meeting of the union school district, in 20 .

(b) [Insert number] Board Member[s] to serve until the third annual  
meeting of the union school district, in 20 .

(c) [Insert number] Board Member[s] to serve until the fourth annual  
meeting of the union school district, in 20 .

§ 713. CERTIFICATION OF VOTES; DESIGNATION OF DISTRICT AS  
UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT; RECORDING BY SECRETARY OF  
STATE

(a) Within 45 days after the vote or 15 days after a vote to reconsider the  
original vote under 17 V.S.A. § 2661, whichever is later, the clerk of each  
school district voting on the proposal to form a union school district shall

1       certify the results of that vote to the Secretary of Education. The clerk shall  
2       submit the certification regardless of whether the district voters approved the  
3       proposed formation of a union school district.

4       (b) If the voters voting in each school district identified as “necessary” to  
5       formation of the proposed union school district vote to form the district, then  
6       the “necessary” school districts constitute a union school district, together with  
7       any school district designated as “advisable” that votes to form the proposed  
8       union school district.

9       (c) If the voters approve formation of a union school district pursuant to  
10      subsection (b) of this section, then upon receiving the certification of each  
11      clerk pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, but not sooner than 30 days  
12      after the initial vote, the Secretary shall designate the newly formed district as  
13      a union school district. The Secretary shall certify that designation and send  
14      the certification together with the clerks’ certifications to the Secretary of  
15      State, who shall record the certification.

16      (d) When the Secretary of State records the certification of the Secretary of  
17      Education, the union school district shall be a body politic and corporate with  
18      the powers incident to a municipal corporation, shall be known by the name or  
19      number given in the recorded certification, by that name or number may sue  
20      and be sued, and may hold and convey real and personal property for the use of  
21      the union school district. The recorded certification shall be notice to all

1       parties of the formation of the union school district with all the powers incident  
2       to such a district as provided in this title.

3       (e) The Secretary of State shall file a certified copy of the recorded  
4       certification with the clerk of each member district of a new union elementary  
5       or union high school district and with the town clerk of each town within a new  
6       unified union school district. The Secretary of State shall file the certified  
7       copies not later than 14 days after the date on which the Secretary of Education  
8       certifies the existence of the union school district to the Secretary of State.  
9       Filing a certified copy with each clerk shall be prima facie evidence of full  
10      compliance with the requirements for the formation of a union school district  
11      as set forth in this subchapter.

12      § 714. INITIAL MEMBERS OF UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD;

13      TALLYING OF AT-LARGE VOTES; OATH OF OFFICE AND  
14      ASSUMPTION OF DUTIES

15      (a) Tallying of at-large votes for initial members of board. If the voters  
16      have elected some or all of the initial members of the union school district  
17      board under either model involving at-large voting as set forth in subdivision  
18      711(d)(2) (proposed unified union school district; modified at-large), (d)(3)  
19      (proposed unified union school district; at-large), (e)(2) (proposed union  
20      elementary or union high school district; modified at-large), or (e)(3)  
21      (proposed union elementary or union high school district; at-large) of this

1       chapter, then the total votes cast for each of the at-large candidates shall be  
2       calculated as follows:

3        (1) Within seven days after the vote, the clerk of each school district  
4       voting on the proposal to form a union school district shall transmit  
5       electronically to the Secretary of Education the total number of votes cast in  
6       that school district for each at-large candidate.

7        (2) The Secretary shall calculate the total votes cast for each candidate  
8       and transmit those calculations to the clerks for verification. Ballots cast by  
9       the voters of any “advisable” district that does not approve the proposal to  
10      form a new union school district shall not be included in the calculation.

11      (3) When each clerk has verified the calculations, the Secretary shall  
12      prepare and execute a certification of the votes cast for each candidate.

13      (b) Notification. If the voters approve formation of a new union school  
14      district, then within 30–45 days after the vote or 15 days after a vote to  
15      reconsider the original vote to form the district, whichever is later, the  
16      notification of the election of initial board members shall be sent to the  
17      Secretary of State as follows:

18      (1) The clerk of each forming district shall transmit the names of board  
19      members elected in a manner that is proportional to town population as set  
20      forth in subdivision 711(d)(1) (proposed unified union district; proportional to

1       town population) or (e)(1) (proposed union elementary or union high school  
2       district; proportional to town population) of this chapter.

3           (2) The Secretary of Education shall transmit the names of board  
4       members elected under either model involving at-large voting.

5           (c) Oath of office; assumption of duties; election of chair and clerk. The  
6       superintendent of the supervisory union serving the new union school district  
7       shall cause the initial board members to be sworn in. Although the swearing-in  
8       may occur prior to the organizational meeting required by section 715 of this  
9       chapter, it shall not occur before the Secretary of State files the certified copy  
10      of the recorded certification with each clerk pursuant to subsection 713(e) of  
11      this chapter. The initial board members shall assume office upon being sworn  
12      in and shall meet to elect one of their number to serve as the board chair and  
13      one other of its number to serve as the board clerk, and to transact any other  
14      business within its jurisdiction; provided, however, such meeting shall not  
15      occur prior to the organizational meeting required by section 715.

16      § 715. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING; NOTICE; BUSINESS TO BE  
17           TRANSACTED

18           (a) Meeting. The union school district shall hold an organizational  
19      meeting within 60 days after the Secretary of State files the certified copy of  
20      the recorded certification with each clerk pursuant to subsection 713(e) of this  
21      chapter.

1        (b) Notice.

2            (1) The Secretary of Education shall prepare and execute a warning for  
3            the organizational meeting. The warning shall give notice of the day, hour,  
4            and location of the meeting and shall itemize the business to be transacted.

5            (2) The Secretary of Education shall transmit the signed warning to the  
6            superintendent, who shall post the warning in at least one public place in each  
7            town within the union school district and shall cause the warning to be  
8            published once in a newspaper of general circulation in the towns within the  
9            union school district. Posting and publication shall be made not more than 40  
10          days nor less than 30 days before the date of the meeting.

11          (3) The union school district shall bear the cost of posting and  
12          publishing the warning.

13        (c) Business to be transacted.

14          (1) The Secretary or a person designated by the Secretary shall call the  
15          organizational meeting to order and the registered voters shall consider the  
16          following items of business:

17            (A) Elect a temporary presiding officer and a temporary clerk of the  
18            union school district from among the voters present at the organizational  
19            meeting.

1                   (B) Adopt Robert's or other rules of order, which shall govern the  
2                   parliamentary procedures of the organizational meeting and all subsequent  
3                   meetings of the union school district.

4                   (C) Elect a moderator of the union school district from among the  
5                   voters.

6                   (D) Elect a clerk of the union school district from among the voters  
7                   or vote to authorize the school board to appoint a clerk of the union school  
8                   district from among the voters.

9                   (E) Elect a treasurer of the union school district or vote to authorize  
10                  the school board to appoint a treasurer of the union school district. The  
11                  treasurer may also be the supervisory union treasurer and need not be a  
12                  resident of the union school district.

13                  (F) Determine the date and location of the union school district's  
14                  annual meeting, which shall be not earlier than February 1 nor later than June  
15                  1, if not previously determined by the voter-approved articles of agreement.

16                  (G) Determine whether compensation shall be paid to the moderator,  
17                  clerk, and treasurer of the union school district elected at the organizational  
18                  meeting and at subsequent annual meetings of the union school district and, if  
19                  so, the amount to be paid to them.

20                  (H) Determine whether compensation shall be paid to members of the  
21                  union school district board and, if so, the amount to be paid to them.

1           (I) Establish provisions for payment by the union school district of  
2           any expense incurred or to be incurred by or on behalf of the district for the  
3           period between the date on which the voters approved formation of the union  
4           school district and the first annual meeting of the union district.

5           (J) Determine whether to authorize the initial board of the union  
6           school district to borrow money pending receipt of payments from the  
7           Education Fund by the issuance of its note payable not later than one year from  
8           the date of the note. Regardless of whether the voters provide this  
9           authorization, the initial board is authorized to borrow sufficient funds to meet  
10          pending obligations until the voters approve a budget for the initial year of  
11          operation pursuant to subdivision 716(b)(3) of this chapter.

12          (K) Transact any other business, the subject matter of which has been  
13          included in the warning, that the voters have power to transact at any annual or  
14          special meeting and transact any nonbinding business that may legally come  
15          before the voters.

16          (2) When there is only one nominee for temporary presiding officer,  
17          temporary clerk, moderator, district clerk, or district treasurer, the voters may,  
18          by acclamation, instruct an officer to elect the nominee by casting one ballot,  
19          and upon the ballot being cast, the nominee shall be legally elected and shall  
20          thereupon be sworn.

1                   (3) The elected officers listed in subdivisions (1)(A) (temporary  
2                   presiding officer and temporary clerk), (C) (moderator of the union school  
3                   district), (D) (clerk of the union school district), and (E) (treasurer of the union  
4                   school district) of this subsection shall be sworn in before entering upon the  
5                   duties of their offices and a record made by the district clerk. They shall  
6                   assume office upon being sworn in. The officers listed in subdivisions (1)(C),  
7                   (D), and (E) of this subsection shall serve terms as set forth in section 735  
8                   (unified union school districts; officers) or 753 (union elementary and union  
9                   high school district; officers) of this chapter unless the voters extend the term  
10                  length up to three years.

11                  (4) Any member of the union school district board not sworn in before  
12                  the organizational meeting pursuant to section 714 of this chapter may be  
13                  sworn in at or after the organizational meeting.

14                  Article 2. Transition; Dissolution, Reorganization, and Discontinuation of  
15                  Forming Districts; Sale of Real Property; Supervisory Unions  
16                  and Supervisory Districts

17                  § 716. TRANSITION TO FULL OPERATIONS

18                  (u) Operational date. The operational date of a union school district is the  
19                  July 1 next following the date on which the voters vote to approve formation of  
20                  the district, unless the voter-approved articles of agreement establish a  
21                  different date.

1           (b) Roles and authority during transitional period. During the transitional  
2           period:

3           (1) The forming districts, through their boards, shall continue to be  
4           responsible for the education of their respective resident students.

5           (2) The board of the new union school district shall develop school  
6           district policies; adopt curriculum, educational programs, assessment  
7           measures, and reporting procedures; negotiate and enter into contractual  
8           agreements; negotiate and enter into collective bargaining agreements; set the  
9           school calendar for the fiscal year that begins on the operational date; prepare  
10          and present to the voters the proposed budget for the fiscal year that begins on  
11          the operational date; prepare for the annual and any special meetings of the  
12          new union school district that may occur during the transitional period; and  
13          transact any other lawful business coming before it.

14          (3) During the transitional period and continuing until the voters  
15          approve a budget for the initial fiscal year of operation, the board of the new  
16          union school district shall have the authority to borrow sufficient funds to meet  
17          pending obligations. The board shall vote whether to include the total sum  
18          borrowed under this subsection as education spending in the board's proposed  
19          budget for the initial fiscal year or to treat the sum as a deficit pursuant to  
20          24 V.S.A. § 1523(b) (municipal and county government; duties of selectboards  
21          as to a deficit).

1        (c) Assets.

2            (1) Definition. For purposes of this subsection, the “assets” of a  
3            forming district shall include all real and personal property, operating fund  
4            accounts, special fund accounts, trust fund accounts, accounts receivable, and  
5            any other property to which the forming district holds title or over which it has  
6            control.

7            (2) Transfer and acquisition of title. On or before the operational date,  
8            the forming districts shall transfer and the union school district shall acquire  
9            ownership of all assets of the forming districts that are owned by the forming  
10          districts on or before the June 30 immediately preceding the operational date,  
11          unless the voter-approved articles of agreement explicitly provide for an  
12          alternative disposition of a specific asset. The transfer of an asset shall be  
13          subject to all encumbrances and conditions of record, unless the voter-  
14          approved articles of agreement explicitly provide otherwise.

15           (3) Prohibition. A forming district shall not transfer ownership of an  
16          asset to any entity other than the union school district between the date on  
17          which the vote occurs pursuant to section 710 (vote to form union school  
18          district) of this chapter and the operational date unless explicitly authorized in  
19          the voter-approved articles of agreement or approved by the voters of the union  
20          school district during the transitional period.

1           (4) Trust funds. A union school district shall hold and apply all trust  
2 funds transferred to it by a forming district as the terms of the trust indicate. If  
3 the trust allows, a union school district may use the funds to benefit union  
4 school district students who reside, or buildings that are located, outside the  
5 geographical boundaries of the forming district that originally held the trust.

6           (5) Reserve funds. A union school district shall hold and apply all  
7 reserve funds transferred to it by a forming district pursuant to the conditions  
8 imposed prior to the date on which the forming district voted to approve  
9 formation of the union school district.

10          (d) Liabilities.

11           (1) Definition. For purposes of this subsection, the “liabilities” of a  
12 forming district shall include all contractual obligations, all indebtedness  
13 including principal and interest, and any other legal commitment of a forming  
14 district.

15           (2) Transfer and assumption of liabilities. On or before the operational  
16 date, the forming districts shall transfer and the union school district shall  
17 assume all liabilities of the forming districts that exist on the June 30  
18 immediately preceding the operational date, unless the voter-approved articles  
19 of agreement explicitly provide otherwise.

20           (3) Prohibition. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (2) of  
21 this subsection (d), a union school district shall not assume liabilities that a

1       forming district incurs between the date on which the vote occurs pursuant to  
2       section 710 (vote to form union school district) of this chapter and the  
3       operational date unless explicitly authorized in the voter-approved articles of  
4       agreement or approved by the union school district board during the  
5       transitional period; provided, however, that a union school district shall in all  
6       cases assume the contractual obligations of the member districts regarding  
7       each collective bargaining agreement or other employment contract entered  
8       into during the transitional period until the agreement's or contract's  
9       expiration.

10      (e) Unpaid expenses. At the district's first annual meeting following  
11       assumption of full operations or at a later meeting as necessary, the voters of a  
12       new union school district shall vote a sum sufficient to pay any unpaid balance  
13       of expenses, as defined in subdivision 715(c)(1)(H) of this chapter, that was  
14       incurred by or on behalf of the union school district during the transitional  
15       period.

16      § 717. DISSOLUTION, REORGANIZATION, AND DISCONTINUATION

17       OF FORMING DISTRICTS

18      (a) Unified union school district; dissolution of forming districts. On its  
19       operational date, a unified union school district shall supplant all forming  
20       districts and the forming districts shall cease to exist; provided, however, that  
21       if the voter-approved articles of agreement explicitly provide for it, then the

1       supplanted forming districts and their boards may continue to exist for up to  
2       six months after the operational date for the sole purpose of completing any  
3       outstanding business that cannot legally be performed by the new unified union  
4       school district.

5       (b) Union Elementary and Union High School Districts.

6           (1) Reorganization of forming districts. On its operational date, a union  
7       elementary or union high school district shall supplant each forming district for  
8       the grades for which the union elementary or union high school district is  
9       organized (the supplanted grades). Each forming district shall cease to be  
10      organized to provide for education in the supplanted grades but shall continue  
11      to be responsible for the other grades for which it is organized; provided,  
12      however, that if the voter-approved articles of agreement explicitly provide for  
13      it, then the forming districts and their boards may continue to exist for the  
14      supplanted grades for up to six months after the operational date for the sole  
15      purpose of completing any outstanding business that cannot legally be  
16      performed by the new union elementary or union high school district.

17           (2) Dissolution of forming districts. If a forming district is organized to  
18      provide for education solely in the grades for which the new union elementary  
19      or union high school district is organized and the forming district is a member  
20      district of another union school district for all other grades, prekindergarten  
21      through grade 12, then the forming district shall cease all educational

1       operations on the new union district's operational date, the new union school  
2       district shall assume all powers and responsibilities of the forming district, and  
3       the forming district shall cease to exist; provided, however, that if the voter-  
4       approved articles of agreement explicitly provide for it, then the forming  
5       district and its board may continue to operate for up to six months after the  
6       operational date for the sole purpose of completing any outstanding business  
7       that cannot legally be performed by the new union elementary or union high  
8       school district.

9       § 718. TRANSFER OF REAL PROPERTY TO TOWN IN WHICH IT IS  
10      LOCATED

11      If the original voter-approved articles of agreement require sale of real  
12      property to the town in which the property is located and the sale is scheduled  
13      to occur after the operational date, or if after the operational date and after  
14      completing any statutory and contractual prerequisites the union school district  
15      offers to sell any of its real property to the town in which the property is  
16      located, then the town may assume title to the real property for a price that is  
17      less than the fair market value only as follows:

18        (1) The conveyance to the town shall be made subject to all  
19        encumbrances of record, the assumption or payment of all outstanding bonds  
20        and notes, and the repayment of any school construction aid or grants that may

1       be required by law if any such obligation was incurred before the operational  
2       date.

3       (2) The conveyance to the town shall be conditioned upon the town  
4       owning and using the real property for community and public purposes for a  
5       minimum of five years.

6       (3) If the town sells the real property prior to five years of ownership,  
7       then the town shall compensate the union school district for all capital  
8       improvements and renovations initiated after the operational date and prior to  
9       the sale to the town.

10      § 719. SUPERVISORY UNION; SUPERVISORY DISTRICT

11      (a) The State Board shall assign each union school district formed under  
12      this chapter to a supervisory union for administrative, educational, and  
13      planning services, effective on the day on which the union school district  
14      becomes a body politic and corporate pursuant to subsection 713(d) (Secretary  
15      of State records the certification of the Secretary of Education) of this chapter.

16      (b) If a union school district formed under this chapter is a unified union  
17      school district, then the State Board may designate it as a supervisory district  
18      pursuant to the provisions of this title, to be effective not earlier than the  
19      operational date of the unified union school district.

20      (c) If a supervisory union includes at least one district that is a unified  
21      union school district, then the State Board, on its own initiative or at the

1       request of the board of the supervisory union or the board of one or more  
2       districts in the supervisory union, may at any time, adjust the supervisory  
3       union board representation required by section 266 of this title to more fairly  
4       and accurately reflect the relative number of students for which each district is  
5       responsible and the grades for which the district operates a school or schools.

6           Article 3. Changes in Union District Membership and

7           Other Amendments to Articles of Agreement

8       § 721. JOINING AN EXISTING UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

9        (a) Action initiated by district outside the union school district.

10       (1) After preliminary study, if the board of a school district determines  
11       that it would be advisable to join an existing union school district, then the  
12       board of the interested school district shall request approval of the State Board  
13       to pursue this possibility.

14       (2) If the State Board determines that it is in the best interests of the  
15       State, the students, and the districts involved and aligns with the policy set-  
16       forth in section 701 of this title for the interested school district to join the  
17       existing union school district, then at a meeting of the interested school district  
18       warned for the purpose, the voters shall vote whether to apply to the existing  
19       union school district for admission.

20       (3) If the voters of the interested school district approve the proposal to  
21       apply to the union school district for admission, then the clerk of the interested

1       school district shall certify the results of the vote to the Secretary and to the  
2       clerk of the union school district.

3       (4) If the voters of the union school district approve the application of  
4       the school district within two years after the vote in subdivision (2) of this  
5       subsection, then the clerk of the union school district shall certify the results of  
6       the vote to the Secretary.

7       (b) Action initiated by union school district.

8           (1) After preliminary study, if the board of a union school district  
9       determines that it would be advisable to enlarge the district, then the board of  
10      the union school district shall submit a plan to the State Board requesting  
11      approval to incorporate a distinct school district into the union school district.

12       (2) If the State Board determines that it is in the best interests of the  
13      State, the students, and the districts involved and aligns with the policy set-  
14      forth in section 701 of this title for the school district to join the existing union  
15      school district, then at a union school district meeting warned for the purpose,  
16      the voters shall vote whether to enlarge the union school district to include the  
17      school district.

18       (3) If the voters of the union school district approve the proposal to  
19      include the school district, then the clerk of the union school district shall  
20      certify the results of that vote to the Secretary and to the clerk of the school  
21      district.

1           (4) If the voters of the school district approve the offer to join the union  
2       school district within two years after the vote in subdivision (2) of this  
3       subsection, then the clerk of the school district shall certify the results of the  
4       vote to the Secretary.

5           (c) Certification; Secretary of State. Upon receipt of the clerk's  
6       certification pursuant to subdivision (a)(4) (school district application  
7       approval) or (b)(5) (school district approval of offer to join the union school  
8       district) of this section, the Secretary of Education shall designate the existing  
9       union school district to be enlarged pursuant to the votes and shall certify the  
10      enlargement to the Secretary of State. When the Secretary of State records the  
11      certification of the Secretary of Education, the union school district shall be  
12      enlarged accordingly, although the union school district and the school district  
13      that will join it may decide in advance of the votes that the enlarged union  
14      school district shall have a later operational date. The Secretary of State shall  
15      file a certified copy of the recorded certification with the clerks of the union  
16      school district and of the district that is joining it. The Secretary of State shall  
17      file the certified copies not later than 14 days after the date the Secretary of  
18      Education certifies the designation to the Secretary of State. Filing a certified  
19      copy with each clerk shall be prima facie evidence of full compliance with the  
20      requirements for enlarging an existing union school district as set forth in this  
21      section.

1       (d) Powers and responsibilities. A union school district enlarged pursuant  
2       to this section shall have all the powers and responsibilities given to a union  
3       school district by this title. Unless otherwise approved by the voters of the  
4       union school district and the school district that will join it, if the operational  
5       date is delayed pursuant to an agreement under subsection (c) of this section,  
6       then the joining school district shall share in the expenses of the union school  
7       district beginning on the date the Secretary of State records the certification of  
8       the Secretary of Education.

9       (e) Australian ballot. All votes of the electorate under this section shall  
10      occur by Australian ballot.

11      § 722. AMENDMENTS TO ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

12      (a) The union school district voters. Only the voters of a union school  
13      district may amend a specific condition or agreement in the district's articles of  
14      agreement if the condition or agreement was set forth as a distinct subsection  
15      in the warning required by section 712 (warning on vote to establish union  
16      school district and elect initial members of the board) of this chapter to form  
17      the union school district or in a subsequent warning to amend the articles  
18      pursuant to this section, which the voters approved.

19      (b) The union school district board. The board of a union school district  
20      may amend a specific condition or agreement in the district's articles of  
21      agreement only if the condition or agreement was not set forth as a distinct

1       subsection in a warning required in subsection (a) of this section, but was  
2       instead incorporated into the warning by reference pursuant subsection 712(e)  
3       of this chapter (warning on vote to establish union school district and elect  
4       initial members of the board), or if the original articles of agreement or voter-  
5       approved amendments authorize the board to amend a specific condition or  
6       agreement.

7        (c) Reduction of grades operated. Notwithstanding the provisions of  
8       subsection (a) (union school district voters) of this section, the voters shall not  
9       vote whether to reduce the grades that the union school district operates, and to  
10      begin paying tuition for those grades, unless the State Board finds it is in the  
11      best interests of the State, the students, and the districts involved and aligns  
12      with the policy set-forth in section 701 of this title and gives prior approval to  
13      the proposed amendment.

14      (d) Number of board members. Notwithstanding the provisions of  
15      subsections (a) (union school district voters) and (b) (union school district  
16      board) of this section, if membership on a union school district board is  
17      proportional to town population as set forth in subdivisions 711(d)(1)  
18      (proposed unified union school district) and (e)(1) (proposed union elementary  
19      or union high school district) of this chapter, and if the district's articles of  
20      agreement direct the board to adjust board membership when necessary to  
21      conform to each new decennial census, then the board shall amend the articles

1       to adjust the apportionment of board seats without presenting the amendment  
2       to the voters for approval.

3       (e) Districts created by State Board order. Notwithstanding the provisions  
4       of subsections (a) (union school district voters) and (b) (union school district  
5       board) of this section, the authority to amend the articles governing any union  
6       school district formed by the State Board's Final Report and Order issued on  
7       November 30, 2018 pursuant to 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46, as amended,  
8       vests either with the electorate or the board pursuant to the provisions of  
9       Article 14, as that article was issued by the State Board or subsequently  
10      amended by the voters of the union school district.

11      (f) Process. A vote by the voters of a union school district to amend the  
12      articles of agreement shall be by Australian ballot and shall proceed pursuant  
13      to sections 737 (warnings of unified union school district meetings) and 739–  
14      742 (vote by Australian ballot) of this chapter for unified union school districts  
15      and sections 755 (warnings of union elementary and union high school district  
16      meetings) and 757–759 (vote by Australian ballot ) for union elementary and  
17      union high school districts. The warning shall contain each proposed  
18      amendment as a distinct question to be determined separately. The provisions  
19      of this subsection shall not apply to any issue to the extent that a different  
20      section of law provides a specific amendment procedure.

1       § 723. DECISION TO VOTE BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT

2       (a) If a union school district's articles of agreement do not provide that the  
3       election of board members or district officers, budget votes, or votes on other  
4       public questions shall proceed by Australian ballot, then the voters of a union  
5       school district may vote to do so at any annual or special meeting of the union  
6       school district where the question has been duly warned.

7       (b) Any category of vote to be taken by Australian ballot shall proceed in  
8       this manner in all towns within or member districts of a union school district.

9       (c) If voting in a unified union school district proceeds by Australian ballot,  
10      then the provisions of sections 739–742 (vote by Australian ballot) of this  
11      chapter shall apply to all votes taken by Australian ballot.

12      (d) If voting in a union elementary or union high school district proceeds  
13      by Australian ballot, then the voters shall also determine whether the ballots  
14      shall be commingled prior to counting total votes cast by Australian ballot in  
15      the union district.

16      (1) If the voters determine that the ballots shall not be commingled for  
17      counting in this manner, then the board of civil authority of each town within  
18      the union elementary or union high school district shall count the ballots cast in  
19      that town and report that town's results to the clerk of the union elementary or  
20      union high school district, who shall calculate the total votes cast within the  
21      district and report the total result to the public.

1           (2) If the voters determine that the ballots shall be commingled for  
2       counting, then the ballots shall be deposited in separate ballot boxes at each  
3       polling location and the provisions of sections 757–759 (vote by Australian  
4       ballot) of this chapter shall apply.

5           (e) The vote on whether to proceed by Australian ballot shall be taken by  
6       paper ballot.

7           (f) Unless clearly inconsistent, the provisions of 17 V.S.A. chapter 55 shall  
8       apply to actions taken under this section.

9       § 724. WITHDRAWAL FROM OR DISSOLUTION OF A UNIFIED  
10           UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

11           (a) Definition. As used in this section, “petitioning town” means the town  
12       within a unified union school district that seeks to withdraw from the union  
13       district pursuant to the provisions of this section.

14           (b) Withdrawal study committee.  
15           (1) To initiate the process set forth in this section, the voters residing in  
16       the petitioning town shall submit petitions to the clerk of the unified union  
17       school district indicating the petitioners’ desire to withdraw the petitioning  
18       town from the union district. Individual petitions shall be signed by at least  
19       five percent of the voters residing in each of the towns within the union school  
20       district, with each town having its own petition. The petitioners shall submit  
21       each petition to that town’s town clerk for verification of the voting

1       registration status of the signors. On a form created by the Secretary of State's  
2       Office, and appended to each petition, shall be the names of three voters  
3       residing in the petitioning town to serve on a withdrawal study committee and  
4       a signed statement by each of the three named voters consenting to serve.  
5       Once each petition has been verified by the subject town clerk, the petitioners  
6       shall submit the petitions to the clerk of the unified union school district.

7               (2) Within 30 days after receiving the petition, the board of the union  
8       district shall recognize the creation of the withdrawal study committee and  
9       shall appoint a board subcommittee to serve as a liaison between the board and  
10      the withdrawal study committee and to represent the interests of the union  
11      district.

12               (3) Within 30 days after the board's appointment of the liaison  
13      subcommittee, the superintendent of the union district shall convene the first  
14      formal meeting of the withdrawal study committee. The study committee shall  
15      elect one committee member to serve as chair.

16               (4) Before beginning any analysis under subsection (c) of this section or  
17      seeking technical or analytical services from the union district staff or  
18      supervisory union staff, or both, the withdrawal study committee shall obtain a  
19      letter of commitment from a supervisory union board to explore the provision  
20      of supervisory union services if withdrawal is ultimately approved.

1           (5) The withdrawal study committee is a public body pursuant to  
2           1 V.S.A. § 310(4) and is subject to the requirements of chapter 5, subchapter 2  
3           of that title.

4           (c) Analysis. The withdrawal study committee shall evaluate the strengths  
5           and challenges of the current union district structure and consider the ways in  
6           which the union district promotes or fails to promote the State policy set forth  
7           in section 701 of this chapter. At a minimum, the withdrawal study committee  
8           shall evaluate:

9           (1) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result from  
10          the proposed withdrawal of the petitioning town from the union district:

11          (A) on the students residing in the proposed new school district; and  
12          (B) on the students remaining in the union district if withdrawal is  
13          approved:

14          (2) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result from  
15          the continued inclusion of the petitioning town as a town within the union  
16          district:

17          (A) on the students residing in the petitioning town; and  
18          (B) on the students residing in the other towns within the union  
19          district;

20          (3) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result from the  
21          proposed withdrawal of the petitioning town from the union district:

- 1                   (A) on the taxpayers residing in the proposed new school district; and  
2                   (B) on the taxpayers remaining in the union district if withdrawal is  
3                   approved;  
4                   (4) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result from the  
5                   continued inclusion of the petitioning town as a town within the union district:  
6                   (A) on the taxpayers residing in the petitioning town; and  
7                   (B) on the taxpayers residing in the other towns within the union  
8                   district;  
9                   (5) the likely operational and financial viability and sustainability of:  
10                  (A) the proposed new school district; and  
11                  (B) the union district if withdrawal is approved;  
12                  (6) any other advantages and disadvantages of withdrawal, including  
13                  any advantages and disadvantages to the students and taxpayers of the region  
14                  and the State; and  
15                  (7) the potential source of supervisory union services for the proposed  
16                  new school district, including discussions with the board of any supervisory  
17                  union to which the report of the withdrawal study committee might propose  
18                  assignment.  
19                  (d) Report, including a plan for withdrawal; decision not to prepare report.  
20                  (1) Report supporting withdrawal.

1           (A) If, after conducting the analysis required by subsection (c) of this  
2           section, the withdrawal study committee votes to advance the withdrawal  
3           process as further outlined in this section, then the committee shall prepare a  
4           report, which it shall deliver electronically to the union district board and  
5           which the superintendent shall publish on the district's website.

6           (B) At a minimum, the report shall include:  
7               (i) the analysis conducted pursuant to subsection (c) of this  
8           section, describing the ways in which the data and analysis:  
9                   (I) support withdrawal; and  
10                  (II) do not support the continuation of the union district in its  
11           current configuration;  
12               (ii) the proposed financial terms of withdrawal, including the  
13           proposed ownership of buildings and other assets and the proposed  
14           responsibility for financial and other contractual obligations, including debts;  
15               (iii) a plan, including a detailed timeline, for the actions the  
16           proposed new school district would take to ensure that, on a proposed  
17           operational date, it could provide for the education of its students in  
18           prekindergarten through grade 12 by operating all grades, tuitioning all grades,  
19           or operating some grades and tuitioning the remainder, in a manner that will  
20           meet educational quality standards as required by section 165 of this title, and  
21           including, if applicable, the process by which the proposed new school district

**Commented [ESJ1]:** "the" changed to "a"

1       would explore formation of a new union school district with one or more other  
2       school districts in the region and would integrate or condition any votes to  
3       withdraw with votes on formation of a new union district; and  
4               (iv) a proposal, including analysis, for the potential source of  
5       supervisory union services for the proposed new school district, including, if  
6       applicable to the proposal:  
7                       (I) a recommendation of one or more potential supervisory  
8       unions to which the State Board could assign the proposed new school district;  
9       and  
10                       (II) a statement from the board of the potential supervisory  
11       union or unions regarding the ability and willingness to accept the proposed  
12       new school district as a member district.  
13               (C) Within 45 days following receipt of the withdrawal study **Commented [ESJ2]:** Timeline added  
14       committee report, the union district board shall invite the members of the  
15       withdrawal study committee to attend a regularly scheduled meeting of the  
16       board to present the contents of its report and to answer any questions posed by  
17       the board. The board shall also invite the members of the liaison  
18       subcommittee to share any analysis and conclusions at the meeting. The  
19       withdrawal study committee has sole authority to determine the contents of its  
20       report.

1           (2) Decision not to propose withdrawal. If, after conducting the analysis  
2           required by subsection (c) of this section, the withdrawal study committee  
3           votes not to approve advancement of the withdrawal process, then:

4            (A) the withdrawal study committee shall prepare a brief written  
5           statement explaining the reasons underlying the votes supporting and not  
6           supporting advancement, which it shall deliver electronically to the union  
7           district board and which the superintendent shall publish on the district's  
8           website;

9            (B) within 45 days following receipt of the withdrawal study  
10          committee report, the union district board shall invite the members of the  
11          withdrawal study committee to attend a regularly scheduled meeting of the  
12          board to present the contents of the written statement and to answer any  
13          questions posed by the board; and

14          (C) the withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist upon  
15          adjournment of the union district board's meeting.

16          (e) Secretary of Education review and opinion.  
17            (1) Review by the Secretary. Within 30 days after attending the union  
18          district board meeting pursuant to subdivision (d)(1)(C) of this section, the  
19          withdrawal study committee shall deliver the report or reports electronically to  
20          the Secretary for review. The Secretary:

21            (A) shall consider the report or reports;

**Commented [ESJ3]:** Timeline added

**Commented [ESJ4]:** AOE does an initial review of the withdrawal proposal

1                   (B) shall provide representatives of the withdrawal study committee,  
2                   the liaison subcommittee, and any supervisory union that has been identified as  
3                   a potential source of supervisory union services for the proposed new school  
4                   district an opportunity to be heard at a meeting held at a location within the  
5                   petitioning town;

6                   (C) may, in the Secretary's discretion, take testimony from other  
7                   individuals and entities;

8                   (D) may ask the withdrawal study committee, or the liaison  
9                   subcommittee, to make further investigation and may consider any other  
10                  information the Secretary deems to be pertinent; and

11                  (E) may request that the members of the withdrawal study committee  
12                  to amend the report.

13                  (2) Advisory opinion of the Secretary with positive recommendation.  
14                  (A) If the Secretary finds that the withdrawal proposal contained in  
15                  the report, including the most feasible options for the provision of supervisory  
16                  union services to the proposed new school district, is in the best interests of the  
17                  State, the region, the students, and the school districts, and aligns with the  
18                  policy set forth in section 701 of this title, then, within 90 days following  
19                  receipt of the report or reports, unless the study committee agrees to an  
20                  extension of the deadline, the Secretary shall:

1                   (i) issue an opinion recommending approval of the withdrawal  
2                   proposal;  
3                   (ii) provide a preliminary assessment of most feasible options for  
4                   the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district  
5                   if withdrawal is approved by the voters; and  
6                   (iii) make any other finding related and necessary to the  
7                   withdrawal proposal.

8                   (B) After the Secretary issues an opinion recommending approval of  
9                   the withdrawal proposal, the proposal shall proceed to a vote of the electorate  
10                  under subsection (g) of this section.

11                  (3) Advisory opinion of the Secretary with negative recommendation. If  
12                  the Secretary finds that the withdrawal proposal contained in the report,  
13                  including the most feasible options for the provision of supervisory union  
14                  services to the proposed new school district, is not in the best interests of the  
15                  State, the region, the students, and the school districts or does not align with  
16                  the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, or both, then, within 90 days  
17                  following receipt of the report or reports, unless the study committee agrees to  
18                  an extension of the deadline, the Secretary shall:

19                  (A) issue a written opinion recommending disapproval of the  
20                  withdrawal proposal, including a written statement detailing the reasons  
21                  supporting this conclusion;

1                   (B) provide a preliminary assessment of the most feasible options for  
2                   the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district  
3                   if withdrawal is approved by the voters;

4                   (C) make any other finding related and necessary to the withdrawal  
5                   proposal; and

6                   (D) post the written opinion on the Agency of Education's website  
7                   and transmit it electronically to the clerk of the union district. After receiving  
8                   the Secretary's opinion, the study committee shall vote pursuant to subsection  
9                   (f).

10                  (f) State Board of Education final review.

11                  (1) Study committee vote. Within 30 days following receipt of a  
12                  negative advisory opinion from the Secretary, the clerk of the union school  
13                  district shall post the document on its website and schedule the contents as a  
14                  topic for public discussion at a special or regular board meeting. Within  
15                  30 days following the public meeting, the study committee shall convene a  
16                  meeting and vote whether to cease efforts to withdraw from the union district  
17                  or whether to request review of the Secretary's advisory opinion by the State  
18                  Board of Education for the withdrawal proposal to proceed to a vote of the  
19                  electorate.

20                  (2) Cease efforts to withdraw. If the study committee votes to cease  
21                  efforts to withdraw from the union district, then the petitioning town shall

**Commented [ESJ5]:** SBE can conduct a final review of the withdrawal proposal if AOE issued a negative recommendation.

1       remain a town within the union district, the withdrawal action initiated  
2       pursuant to this section is concluded, and the withdrawal study committee shall  
3       cease to exist upon adjournment of the meeting.  
4               (3) Proceed with withdrawal; State Board of Education final review and  
5       vote. If the study committee votes to proceed with withdrawal, it shall petition  
6       the State Board of Education for final review of the Secretary's advisory  
7       opinion. The State Board shall review the report and plan of the study  
8       committee required under subsection (d) of this section, review the Secretary's  
9       written negative advisory opinion, and provide the study committee, the  
10      Secretary, and any supervisory union that has been identified as a potential  
11      source of supervisory union services for the proposed new school district an  
12      opportunity to be heard at a meeting held at a location within the petitioning  
13      town. The State Board may, in its discretion, take testimony from other  
14      individuals and entities, including the union school district. Within 90 days  
15      after receiving the petition of the study committee, the State Board shall issue a  
16      final written decision and transmit the decision to the superintendent.  
17               (A) Vote to approve. If the State Board finds that the withdrawal  
18       proposal contained in the report, including the most feasible options for the  
19       provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district, is  
20       in the best interests of the State, the region, the students, and the school

1       districts or aligns with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, or both,  
2       then the State Board shall:  
3                (i) approve the study committee report supporting withdrawal,  
4       together with any amendments, as the final report and proposal of withdrawal;  
5                (ii) provide a preliminary assessment of the most feasible options  
6       for the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school  
7       district;  
8                (iii) declare that the withdrawal process will proceed to a vote of  
9       the union district voters pursuant to subsection (g) of this section; and  
10       (iv) make any other finding or declaration, and approve any other  
11       motion, related and necessary to the withdrawal proposal.  
12       (B) Vote not to approve. If the State Board finds that the plan for  
13       withdrawal, including the most feasible options for the provision of  
14       supervisory union services to the proposed new school district, is not in the  
15       best interests of the State, the region, the students, and the school districts or  
16       does not align with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, or both, then:  
17                (i) the State Board shall not approve the report supporting  
18               withdrawal;  
19                (ii) the process will not proceed to a vote of the electorate;  
20                (iii) the petitioning town shall remain a town within the union  
21       district; and

**Commented [ESJ6]:** If the SBE issues a negative final opinion, the withdrawal proposal is denied and it does not go to a vote of the electorate.

1                   (iv) the State Board's determination and the resulting

2                   consequences imposed by such a determination shall be final and shall

3                   conclude the withdrawal action.

4                   (v) The withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist after the

5                   vote of the State Board.

6                   (g) Vote of the electorate.

7                   (1) Within 30 days following receipt of the Secretary's positive advisory

**Commented [ESJ7]:** Timeframe added

8                   opinion pursuant to subdivision (e)(2) of this section or within 30 days

9                   following the State Board's vote to approve the withdrawal proposal pursuant

10                  to subdivision (f)(3)(A) of this section, the superintendent shall file the

11                  withdrawal study committee's report, the Secretary's written advisory opinion,

12                  the State Board's written recommendation, and any report of the liaison

13                  subcommittee with the clerk of the union district and the town clerk of each

14                  town within the union district.

15                  (2) Within 90 days after the clerk of the union district receives the

**Commented [ESJ8]:** Timeframe added

16                  reports and recommendations described in subdivision (2) of this subsection,

17                  the voters of the union district, including those residing in the petitioning town,

18                  shall vote whether to approve withdrawal as set forth in the report. The

19                  question shall be determined by Australian ballot and shall proceed pursuant to

20                  sections 737 (warnings of unified union school district meetings) and 739–741

**Commented [ESJ9]:** This reference was previously to sections 739-742. § 742 is the commingling statute, so it does not make sense to include the reference here since the results are needed on a per town basis.

1       (vote by Australian ballot) of this chapter. The ballots shall not be  
2       commingled.

3       (3) Withdrawal from the union district shall occur if the question is  
4       approved by a majority vote of the union district voters living in each town  
5       within the district, including the petitioning town. If a majority of the voters in  
6       one or more towns within the union district do not vote in favor of withdrawal,  
7       then the proposed withdrawal shall not occur.

**Commented [ESJ10]:** Since withdrawal only proceeds to a vote of the electorate if AOE or SBE approve the proposal, the 60% requirement for the petitioning town has been removed. All the towns vote on the same day and a majority is needed in all towns for the withdrawal proposal to pass.

8       (4) Within 45 days after the vote or 15 days after a vote to reconsider the  
9       original vote under 17 V.S.A. § 2661, whichever is later, the clerk of each  
10      town within the union district shall certify the results of the vote to the  
11      Secretary of Education, and the Secretary shall advise the State Board of the  
12      certified results. Each clerk shall submit the certification regardless of whether  
13      the voters in that town approved withdrawal. The withdrawal study committee  
14      shall cease to exist when each clerk has submitted a certification to the  
15      Secretary.

16      (h) Election of potential board members. On the day on which they vote  
17      whether to approve withdrawal, the union district voters residing in the  
18      petitioning town shall also vote for three individual registered voters from the  
19      petitioning town to serve as the initial members of the proposed new school  
20      district's board if withdrawal is approved. The nomination and election of the  
21      initial members shall proceed pursuant to subdivision 730(a)(1) of this chapter

1       (election of board members under the proportional to town model by  
2       Australian ballot). The term of office for each initial member shall be arranged  
3       so that one term expires on the day of the second annual meeting of the  
4       proposed new school district, one term expires on the day of the third annual  
5       meeting, and one term expires on the day of the fourth annual meeting.

6            (i) State Board's duties if withdrawal is approved. If the union district  
7       voters approve withdrawal pursuant to subsection (g) of this section, then upon  
8       receiving notice from the Secretary pursuant to subdivision (g)(4) of this  
9       section, the State Board shall:

10              (1) Declare the withdrawal approved as of the date of the Board's  
11       meeting; provided, however, that withdrawal shall not be final until the date  
12       identified in the voter-approved proposal of withdrawal.

13              (2) Declare the creation and existence of the new school district,  
14       effective on the date of the Board's declaration; provided, however, that:

15                  (A) the new school district shall assume full and sole responsibility  
16       for the education of its resident students on the date identified in the voter-  
17       approved proposal of withdrawal; and

18                  (B) until the identified operational date, the new school district shall  
19       exist for the sole purposes of:

20                    (i) convening an organizational meeting of the voters of the new  
21       school district to prepare the district to assume its responsibilities;

1               (ii) organizing the school board of the new school district, which  
2       shall be responsible for preparing a proposed budget for the fiscal year  
3       beginning on the identified operational date;  
4               (iii) approving the budget of the new school district for the fiscal  
5       year beginning on the identified operational date; and  
6               (iv) taking any other actions necessary, as district voters or as a  
7       school board, for the new school district to assume full responsibility for  
8       providing for the education of the district's resident students in all grades,  
9       prekindergarten through grade 12, on the identified operational date.

10              (3) Determine or set a schedule for determining the manner in which  
11       supervisory union services will be provided to the new school district, to be  
12       effective on the district's identified operational date.

13              (A) In addition to the considerations set forth in section 261 of this  
14       title, when the State Board makes its determination, it shall consider the  
15       potential positive and negative consequences on all affected districts and  
16       supervisory unions if supervisory union services were provided to the new  
17       school district in a manner that required:

18              (i) a union district serving as its own supervisory district to  
19       become a member of a multidistrict supervisory union; or

1                   (ii) a neighboring supervisory union to accept one or more  
2                   additional districts that the supervisory union testifies it is not able to  
3                   accommodate.

4                   (B) If assigned to a multidistrict supervisory union, then the board of  
5                   the new school district may appoint its members to the supervisory union  
6                   board pursuant to section 266 of this title, where they may participate as  
7                   nonvoting members of that board until the new school district's operational  
8                   date.

9                   (j) Certification; Secretary of State. If the State Board declares the creation  
10                  and existence of a new school district pursuant to subdivision (i)(2) of this  
11                  section, then within 30 days following such action the Secretary of Education  
12                  shall certify the adjustment of the towns within the union district to the  
13                  Secretary of State. When the Secretary of State records the certification of the  
14                  Secretary of Education, the towns within the union district shall be adjusted  
15                  accordingly; provided, however, that the voter-approved proposal of  
16                  withdrawal shall establish the date on which withdrawal shall be final, the new  
17                  school district shall assume full and sole responsibility for the education of its  
18                  resident students, and the union school district shall no longer have  
19                  responsibility for the education of those students. Not more than 14 days after  
20                  the date the Secretary of Education certifies the adjustment, the Secretary of  
21                  State shall file a certified copy of the recorded certification with the clerk of

**Commented [ESJ11]:** Timeframe added

1       the union district and the clerk for the town in which the new school district is  
2       located. Filing a certified copy with the clerks shall be prima facie evidence of  
3       full compliance with the requirements for adjusting the union school district by  
4       withdrawal as set forth in this section.

5       (k) Timing of action.

6           (1) The voters residing in any town within a union district shall not  
7       initiate the withdrawal process set forth in this section within the first year after  
8       the latter of the operational date of a newly formed union district or, if  
9       applicable, the operational date of a union district adjusted pursuant to  
10      subsection (i) of this section.

11          (2) If a petitioning town's action to withdraw from a union school  
12       district is unsuccessful, then the voters residing in that town shall not initiate a  
13       new withdrawal action under this section until two years after either a  
14       withdrawal study committee votes not to approve advancement of the  
15       withdrawal process or the vote by the voters that concluded the initial  
16       withdrawal action.

17      § 725. WITHDRAWAL FROM OR DISSOLUTION OF A

**Commented [ESJ12]:** Same changes as § 724

18           UNION ELEMENTARY OR UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

19          (a) Definition. As used in this section:

20           (1) "Petitioning district" means:

1                   (A) a member district of a union elementary or union high school  
2                   district that seeks to withdraw from the union district pursuant to the  
3                   provisions of this section; or  
4                   (B) a town that is a member of both a union elementary school  
5                   district and a union high school district, is not independently organized as a  
6                   district that is responsible for the education of students in any grade, does not  
7                   have a town school district board, and that seeks to withdraw from a union  
8                   elementary or union high school district pursuant to the provisions of this  
9                   section.

10                  (2) “New school district” means the petitioning district once the State  
11                  Board has declared it to be withdrawn from the union elementary or union high  
12                  school district.

13                  (b) Withdrawal study committee.  
14                  (1) To initiate the process set forth in this section, the board of the  
15                  petitioning district shall submit a petition to the clerk of the union elementary  
16                  or union high school district indicating its desire to withdraw the petitioning  
17                  district from the union district and identifying at least three board members of  
18                  the petitioning district who will serve on a withdrawal study committee. The  
19                  board of the petitioning district shall submit the petition to the clerk of the  
20                  union school district after either a vote by the board of the petitioning district  
21                  or receipt of individual petitions signed by at least five percent of the voters

1       residing in the petitioning district and five percent of the voters residing in  
2       each of the other member districts within the union school district, with each  
3       member district having its own petition. The clerk of the petitioning district  
4       shall submit each petition to the subject member district's clerk for verification  
5       of the voting registration of the signors. Once each petition has been verified  
6       by the subject district clerk, the board of the petitioning district shall append  
7       the individual petitions to the withdrawal petition it sends to the clerk of the  
8       union district.

9           (2) To initiate the process set forth in this section if the petitioning  
10       district does not have a town school district board, the voters residing in the  
11       petitioning district shall submit petitions to the clerk of the unified union  
12       school district indicating the petitioners' desire to withdraw the petitioning  
13       district from the union district. Individual petitions shall be signed by at least  
14       five percent of the voters residing in the petitioning district and five percent of  
15       the voters residing in each of the member districts within the union school  
16       district, with each district having its own petition. The petitioning district shall  
17       submit each petition to that district's clerk for verification of the voting  
18       registration status of the signors. On a form created by the Secretary of State's  
19       office, and appended to each petition, shall be the names of three voters  
20       residing in the petitioning district to serve on a withdrawal study committee  
21       and a signed statement by each of the three named voters consenting to serve.

1       Once each petition has been verified by the subject district clerk, the  
2       petitioning district shall submit the petitions to the clerk of the union school  
3       district.

4           (3) Within 30 days after receiving the petition, the board of the union  
5       district shall recognize the creation of the withdrawal study committee and  
6       shall appoint a board subcommittee to serve as a liaison between the board and  
7       the withdrawal study committee and to represent the interests of the union  
8       district.

9           (4) Within 30 days after the board's appointment of the liaison  
10      subcommittee, the superintendent of the union district shall convene the first  
11      formal meeting of the withdrawal study committee. The study committee shall  
12      elect one committee member to serve as Chair.

13           (5) Before beginning any analysis under subsection (c) of this section or  
14      seeking technical or analytical services from the union district staff or  
15      supervisory union staff, or both, the withdrawal study committee shall obtain a  
16      letter of commitment from a supervisory union board to explore the provision  
17      of supervisory union services if withdrawal is ultimately approved.

18           (6) The withdrawal study committee is a public body pursuant to  
19      1 V.S.A. § 310(4) and is subject to the requirements of chapter 5, subchapter 2  
20      of that title.

1           (c) Analysis. The withdrawal study committee shall evaluate the strengths  
2       and challenges of the current union district structure and consider the ways in  
3       which the union district promotes or fails to promote the State policy set forth  
4       in section 701 of this chapter. At a minimum, the withdrawal study committee  
5       shall evaluate:

6           (1) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result from  
7       the proposed withdrawal of the petitioning district from the union elementary  
8       or union high school district:

9           (A) on the students residing in the proposed new school district; and  
10           (B) on the students remaining in the union district if withdrawal is  
11       approved;

12           (2) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result from  
13       the continued inclusion of the petitioning district as a member district of the  
14       union elementary or union high school district:

15           (A) on the students residing in the petitioning district; and  
16           (B) on the students residing in the other member districts of the union  
17       district;

18           (3) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result from the  
19       proposed withdrawal of the petitioning district from the union elementary or  
20       union high school district:

21           (A) on the taxpayers residing in the proposed new school district; and

1                   (B) on the taxpayers remaining in the union district if withdrawal is  
2 approved;

3                   (4) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result from the  
4 continued inclusion of the petitioning district within the union elementary or  
5 union high school district:

6                   (A) on the taxpayers residing in the petitioning district; and  
7                   (B) on the taxpayers residing in the other member districts within the  
8 union district;

9                   (5) the likely operational and financial viability and sustainability of:  
10                  (A) the proposed new school district; and  
11                  (B) the union elementary or union high school district if withdrawal  
12 is approved;

13                  (6) any other advantages and disadvantages of withdrawal, including  
14 any advantages and disadvantages to the students and taxpayers of the region  
15 and the State; and

16                  (7) the potential source of supervisory union services for the proposed  
17 new district, including discussions with the board of any supervisory union to  
18 which the report of the withdrawal study committee might propose assignment  
19 or the continuation of assignment.

20                  (d) Report, including a plan for withdrawal; decision not to prepare report.  
21                  (1) Report supporting withdrawal.

1           (A) If, after conducting the analysis required by subsection (c) of this  
2           section, the withdrawal study committee votes to advance the withdrawal  
3           process as further outlined in this section, then the committee shall prepare a  
4           report, which it shall deliver electronically to the union district board and  
5           which the superintendent shall publish on the district's website.

6           (B) At a minimum, the report shall include:  
7            (i) the analysis conducted pursuant to subsection (c) of this  
8           section, describing the ways in which the data and analysis:  
9              (I) support withdrawal; and  
10             (II) do not support the continuation of the union elementary or  
11           union high school district in its current configuration;  
12             (ii) the proposed financial terms of withdrawal, including the  
13           proposed ownership of buildings and other assets and the proposed  
14           responsibility for financial and other contractual obligations, including debts;  
15             (iii) a plan, including a detailed timeline, for the actions the  
16           proposed new school district would take to ensure that, on the proposed  
17           operational date, it could provide for the education of its students in the grades  
18           for which the union elementary or union high school district is organized, in a  
19           manner that will meet educational quality standards as required by section 165  
20           of this title, and including, if applicable, the process by which the proposed  
21           new school district would explore formation of a new union district with one or

1       more other school districts in the region and would integrate or condition any  
2       votes to withdraw with votes on formation of a new union district; and  
3               (iv) a proposal, including analysis, for the source of supervisory  
4       union services for the proposed new school district.

5               (C) Within 45 days following receipt of the study committee report,  
6       the union elementary or union high school district board shall invite the  
7       members of the withdrawal study committee to attend a regularly scheduled  
8       meeting of the board to present the contents of its report and to answer any  
9       questions posed by the board. The board shall also invite the members of the  
10      liaison subcommittee to share any analysis and conclusions at the meeting.  
11      The withdrawal study committee has sole authority to determine the contents  
12      of its report.

13               (2) Decision not to propose withdrawal. If, after conducting the analysis  
14       required by subsection (c) of this section, the withdrawal study committee  
15       votes not to approve advancement of the withdrawal process, then:

16               (A) the withdrawal study committee shall prepare a brief written  
17       statement explaining the reasons underlying the votes supporting and not  
18       supporting advancement, which it shall deliver electronically to the union  
19       district board and which the superintendent shall publish on the district's  
20      website;

1           (B) within 45 days following receipt of the study committee report,  
2           the union elementary or union high school district board shall invite the  
3           members of the withdrawal study committee to attend a regularly scheduled  
4           meeting of the board to present the contents of the written statement and to  
5           answer any questions posed by the board; and

6           (C) the withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist upon  
7           adjournment of the union elementary or union high school district board's  
8           meeting.

9           (e) Secretary of Education review and opinion.

10          (1) Review by the Secretary. Within 30 days after attending the union  
11          district board meeting pursuant to subdivision (d)(1)(C) of this section, the  
12          withdrawal study committee shall deliver the report or reports electronically to  
13          the Secretary for review. The Secretary:

14          (A) shall consider the report or reports;  
15          (B) shall provide representatives of the withdrawal study committee,  
16          the liaison subcommittee, and any supervisory union that has been identified as  
17          a potential source of supervisory union services for the proposed new school  
18          district an opportunity to be heard at a meeting held at a location within the  
19          petitioning district;

20          (C) may, in the Secretary's discretion, take testimony from other  
21          individuals and entities;

1                   (D) may ask the withdrawal study committee, or the liaison  
2                   subcommittee, to make further investigation and may consider any other  
3                   information the Secretary deems to be pertinent; and  
4                   (E) may request that the members of the withdrawal study committee  
5                   amend the report.  
6                   (2) Advisory opinion of the Secretary with positive recommendation.  
7                   (A) If the Secretary finds that the withdrawal proposal contained in  
8                   the report, including the most feasible options for the provision of supervisory  
9                   union services to the proposed new school district, is in the best interests of the  
10                  State, the region, the students, and the school districts, and aligns with the  
11                  policy set forth in section 701 of this title, then, within 90 days of receipt of the  
12                  report or reports, unless the study committee agrees to an extension of the  
13                  deadline, the Secretary shall:  
14                   (i) issue an opinion recommending approval of the withdrawal  
15                  proposal;  
16                   (ii) provide a preliminary assessment of most feasible options for  
17                  the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district  
18                  if withdrawal is approved by the voters; and  
19                   (iii) make any other finding related and necessary to the  
20                  withdrawal proposal.

1                   (B) After the Secretary issues an opinion recommending approval of  
2                   the withdrawal proposal, the proposal shall proceed to a vote of the electorate  
3                   under subsection (g) of this section.

4                   (3) Advisory opinion of the Secretary with negative recommendation.  
5                   Advisory opinion. If the Secretary finds that the withdrawal proposal  
6                   contained in the report, including the most feasible options for the provision of  
7                   supervisory union services to the proposed new school district, is not in the  
8                   best interests of the State, the region, the students, and the school districts or  
9                   does not align with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, or both, then,  
10                  within 90 days of receipt of the report or reports, unless the study committee  
11                  agrees to an extension of the deadline, the Secretary shall:

12                  (A) issue a written opinion recommending disapproval of the  
13                  withdrawal proposal, including a written statement detailing the reasons  
14                  supporting this conclusion;

15                  (B) provide a preliminary assessment of most feasible options for the  
16                  provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district if  
17                  withdrawal is approved by the voters;

18                  (C) make any other finding related and necessary to the withdrawal  
19                  proposal; and

20                  (D) post the written opinion on the Agency of Education's website  
21                  and transmit it electronically to the clerk of the union district.

- 1        (f) State Board of Education final review.
- 2              (1) Study committee vote. Within 30 days following receipt of a
- 3              negative advisory opinion from the Secretary, the clerk of the union school
- 4              district shall post the document on its website and schedule the contents as a
- 5              topic for public discussion at a special or regular board meeting. Within
- 6              30 days following the public meeting, the study committee shall convene a
- 7              meeting and vote whether to cease efforts to withdraw from the union district
- 8              or whether to request review of the Secretary's advisory opinion by the State
- 9              Board of Education for the withdrawal proposal to proceed to a vote of the
- 10              electorate.
- 11              (2) Cease efforts to withdraw. If the study committee votes to cease
- 12              efforts to withdraw from the union district, then the petitioning town shall
- 13              remain a town within the union district, the withdrawal action initiated
- 14              pursuant to this section is concluded, and the withdrawal study committee shall
- 15              cease to exist upon adjournment of the meeting.
- 16              (3) Proceed with withdrawal; State Board of Education final review and
- 17              vote. If the study committee votes to proceed with withdrawal, it shall petition
- 18              the State Board of Education for final review of the Secretary's advisory
- 19              opinion. The State Board shall review the report and plan of the study
- 20              committee required under subsection (d) of this section, review the Secretary's
- 21              written negative advisory opinion, and provide the study committee, the

1       Secretary, and any supervisory union that has been identified as a potential  
2       source of supervisory union services for the proposed new school district an  
3       opportunity to be heard at a meeting held at a location within the petitioning  
4       town. The State Board may, in its discretion, take testimony from other  
5       individuals and entities, including the union school district. Within 90 days  
6       after receiving the petition of the study committee, the State Board shall issue a  
7       final written decision and transmit the decision to the superintendent.

8           (A) Vote to approve. If the State Board finds that the withdrawal  
9       proposal contained in the report, including the most feasible options for the  
10      provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district, is  
11      in the best interests of the State, the region, the students, and the school  
12      districts or aligns with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, or both,  
13      then the State Board shall:

14              (i) approve the study committee report supporting withdrawal,  
15       together with any amendments, as the final report and proposal of withdrawal;

16              (ii) provide a preliminary assessment of most feasible options for  
17       the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district;

18              (iii) declare that the withdrawal process will proceed to a vote of  
19       the union district voters pursuant to subsection (g) of this section; and

20              (iv) make any other finding or declaration, and approve any other  
21       motion, related and necessary to the withdrawal proposal.

1                   (B) Vote not to approve. If the State Board finds that the plan for  
2                   withdrawal, including the most feasible options for the provision of  
3                   supervisory union services to the proposed new school district, is not in the  
4                   best interests of the State, the region, the students, and the school districts or  
5                   does not align with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, or both, then:

6                    (i) the State Board shall not approve the report supporting  
7                   withdrawal;  
8                    (ii) the process will not proceed to a vote of the electorate;  
9                    (iii) the petitioning district shall remain a member district within  
10                  the union district; and  
11                  (iv) the State Board's determination and the resulting  
12                  consequences imposed by such a determination shall be final and shall  
13                  conclude the withdrawal action.

14                  (C) The withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist after the  
15                  vote of the State Board.

16                  (g) Vote of the electorate.  
17                  (1) Within 30 days following receipt of the Secretary's positive advisory  
18                  opinion pursuant to subdivision (e)(2)(A) of this section or within 30 days  
19                  following the State Board's vote to approve the withdrawal proposal pursuant  
20                  to subdivision (f)(3)(A) of this section, the superintendent shall file the  
21                  withdrawal study committee's report, the State Board's written

1       recommendation, and any report of the liaison subcommittee with the clerk of  
2       the union elementary or union high school district and the district clerk of each  
3       of the member districts within the union elementary or union high school  
4       district.

5        (2) Within 90 days after the clerk of the union district receiving the  
6       reports and recommendations described in subdivision (1) of this subsection,  
7       the voters of the union elementary or union high school district, including  
8       those residing in the petitioning district, shall vote whether to approve  
9       withdrawal as set forth in the report. The question shall be determined by  
10      Australian ballot and shall proceed pursuant to sections 755 (warnings of union  
11      elementary and union high school district meetings) and 757–759 (vote by  
12      Australian ballot) of this chapter.

13       (3) Withdrawal from the union elementary or union high school district  
14      shall occur if the question is approved by a majority vote of the union district  
15      voters living in each of the member districts within the union elementary or  
16      union high school district, including in the petitioning district. If a majority of  
17      the voters in one or more member districts within the union elementary or  
18      union high school district do not vote in favor of withdrawal, then the proposed  
19      withdrawal shall not occur.

20       (4) Within 45 days after the vote or 15 days after a vote to reconsider the  
21      original vote under 17 V.S.A. § 2661, whichever is later, the clerk of each

1       member district within the union elementary or union high school district shall  
2       certify the results of the vote to the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary  
3       shall advise the State Board of the certified results. Each clerk shall submit the  
4       certification regardless of whether the voters in that district approved  
5       withdrawal. The withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist when each  
6       clerk has submitted a certification to the Secretary.

7           (5) If the petitioning district or one of the other member districts does  
8       not have a town school district board, the legislative body or appropriate  
9       officer of the town shall perform electoral functions, including warning  
10      meetings and conducting the voting process, ordinarily performed by and in  
11      member districts on behalf of a union school district.

12           (h) Election of potential board members. If the petitioning district does not  
13      have a town school district board, on the day on which they vote whether to  
14      approve withdrawal, the union district voters residing in the petitioning school  
15      district shall also vote for three individual registered voters from the  
16      petitioning district to serve as the initial members of the proposed new school  
17      district's board if withdrawal is approved. The nomination and election of the  
18      initial members shall proceed pursuant to subdivision 748(a)(1) of this chapter  
19      (election of board members under the proportional to town model by  
20      Australian ballot). The term of office for each initial member shall be arranged  
21      so that one term expires on the day of the second annual meeting of the

1       proposed new school district, one term expires on the day of the third annual  
2       meeting, and one term expires on the day of the fourth annual meeting.

3       (i) State Board's duties if withdrawal is approved. If the union elementary  
4       or union high school district voters approve withdrawal pursuant to subsection  
5       (g) of this section, then upon receiving notice from the Secretary pursuant to  
6       subdivision (g)(4) of this section, the State Board shall:

7           (1) declare the withdrawal approved as of the date of the Board's  
8       meeting; provided, however, that withdrawal shall not be final until the date  
9       identified in the voter-approved proposal of withdrawal;

10          (2) declare it to be the obligation of the new school district to assume  
11       responsibility for the education of its residents in the grades for which the  
12       union elementary or union high school district was previously responsible,  
13       effective on the date of the Board's declaration; provided, however, that:

14           (A) the new school district shall assume full and sole responsibility  
15       for the education of its resident students in the grades for which the union  
16       elementary or union high school district was previously responsible on the date  
17       identified in the voter-approved proposal of withdrawal; and

18           (B) until the identified operational date, the new school district shall  
19       exist for the sole purposes of:

20           (i) providing for the education of its residents in the grades for  
21       which it was organized prior to withdrawal;

1                   (ii) convening an organizational meeting of the voters of the new  
2                   school district to prepare the district to assume its new responsibilities if the  
3                   petitioning district did not have a town school district board;  
4                   (iii) organizing the school board of the new school district if the  
5                   petitioning district did not have a town school district board;  
6                   (iv) preparing a proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning on  
7                   the identified operational date;  
8                   (v) approving the budget of the new school district for the fiscal  
9                   year beginning on the identified operational date; and  
10                  (vi) taking any other actions necessary, as district voters or as a  
11                  school board, for the new school district to assume full responsibility for  
12                  providing for the education of the district's resident students in the grades it is  
13                  now organized to provide for, on the identified operational date; and  
14                  (3) ensure a smooth transition of supervisory services, to be effective on  
15                  the district's identified operational date.  
16                  (j) Certification; Secretary of State. If the State Board declares it to be the  
17                  obligation of the new school district pursuant to subdivision (i)(2) of this  
18                  section to provide for the education of resident students who were formerly the  
19                  responsibility of the union elementary or union high school district, then within  
20                  30 days following such action the Secretary of Education shall certify the  
21                  adjustment of the member districts within the union elementary or union high

1       school district to the Secretary of State. When the Secretary of State records  
2       the certification of the Secretary of Education, the member districts within the  
3       union elementary or union high school district shall be adjusted accordingly;  
4       provided, however, that the voter-approved proposal of withdrawal shall  
5       establish the date on which withdrawal shall be final, the new school district  
6       shall assume full and sole responsibility for the education of its residents in the  
7       grades for which it is now organized, and the union school district shall no  
8       longer have responsibility for the education of those students. Not more than  
9       14 days after the date the Secretary of Education certifies the adjustment, the  
10      Secretary of State shall file a certified copy of the recorded certification with  
11      the clerk of the union elementary or union school district and the clerk for new  
12      school district. Filing a certified copy with the clerks shall be prima facie  
13      evidence of full compliance with the requirements for adjusting the union  
14      school district by withdrawal as set forth in this section.

15      (k) Timing of action.

16       (1) The voters residing in any member district within a union elementary  
17      or union high school district shall not initiate the withdrawal process set forth  
18      in this section within the first year after the latter of the operational date of a  
19      newly formed union elementary or union high school district or, if applicable,  
20      the operational date of a union elementary or union high school district  
21      adjusted pursuant to subsection (i) of this section.

1           (2) If a petitioning district's action to withdraw from a union elementary  
2           or union high school district is unsuccessful, then the voters residing in that  
3           member district shall not initiate a new withdrawal action under this section  
4           until two years after either a withdrawal study committee votes not to approve  
5           advancement of the withdrawal process or the vote by the voters that  
6           concluded the initial withdrawal action.

7                          Subchapter 3. Unified Union School Districts

8                          Article 1. Unified Union School Districts – Boards and Board Members  
9                          § 729. BOARD MEMBERS; TERM; CONDUCT OF MEETINGS;

10                         QUORUM AND VOTING; POWERS AND DUTIES

11                         (a) Members. Except as set forth in subchapter 2 (exploration, formation,  
12                         and organization) of this chapter for initial members, each member of the  
13                         board of a unified union school district shall:

14                             (1) be elected by the voters at a warned meeting of the unified union  
15                         school district pursuant to sections 730 (nomination and election of unified  
16                         union school district board members) and 737 (warnings of unified union  
17                         school district meetings) of this title;

18                             (2) assume office upon election, except as provided in subdivision  
19                         737(f)(3) (warnings of unified union school district meetings) of this chapter;  
20                         and

21                             (3) be sworn in before entering upon the duties of the office.

1           (b) Term. A member elected at an annual meeting shall serve for a term of  
2           three years or until the member's successor is elected and has taken the oath of  
3           office. A member elected at a special meeting shall serve for the balance of  
4           the term of office remaining.

5           (c) Quorum. A majority of the members of the board shall constitute a  
6           quorum. Subject to the provisions of subsection (d) of this section but  
7           notwithstanding any other provision of law, the concurrence of a majority of  
8           members present at a unified union school district board meeting shall be  
9           necessary and sufficient for board action; provided, however, the concurrence  
10          of more than a majority shall be necessary if required for a particular action by  
11          the voter-approved articles of agreement.

12          (d) Weighted voting. If weighted voting is used to achieve constitutionally  
13          required proportionality for members elected under the "proportional to town  
14          population" model described in subdivisions 711(d)(1) (proposed unified union  
15          school district; proportional to town population) and 730(a)(1) (unified union  
16          school district; Australian ballot; proportional to town population) of this  
17          chapter, then a number of members of the board holding a majority of the total  
18          number of weighted votes shall constitute a quorum, and a majority of the  
19          weighted votes cast shall be necessary and sufficient for board action.

20          (e) Board chair and board clerk. At the board meeting next following each  
21          annual district meeting, the unified union school district board shall elect one

1       of its number to serve as the chair of the board and one other of its number to  
2       serve as the clerk of the board.

3       (f) Powers, duties, and liabilities. The powers, duties, and liabilities of a  
4       unified union school district board, board chair, and board clerk shall be the  
5       same as those of a board, board chair, and board clerk of a town school district.

6       (g) Minutes. The board clerk shall prepare minutes of the proceedings of  
7       the unified union school district board, unless the board votes to delegate those  
8       duties to another individual. The board clerk shall transmit the minutes and all  
9       other documents constituting the record of board proceedings to the clerk of  
10      the unified union school district, who shall be responsible for maintaining a  
11      permanent record of board proceedings. In the board clerk's absence, another  
12      member of the school board shall assume the duties of the clerk.

13      (h) Stipend. The board clerk may be paid upon order of the board.

14      § 730. UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS;

15      NOMINATION AND ELECTION; BOND

16      (a) If by Australian ballot. The provisions of this subsection (a) shall apply  
17      to a unified union school district that conducts elections for board membership  
18      by Australian ballot.

19      (1) Proportional to town population.

20      (A) When membership on the board of a unified union school district  
21      is apportioned to each town within the district in a number that is closely

1       proportional to the town's relative population, the voters residing in the town  
2       may file a petition nominating a candidate for board membership. A petition is  
3       valid only if:  
4                (i) the candidate is a current voter of the town;  
5                (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
6       candidate is nominated;  
7                (iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the town  
8       or one percent of the legal voters in the town, whichever is less;  
9                (iv) the voters file the petition with the town clerk not later than  
10      5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and  
11               (v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the  
12       printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.  
13               (B) After confirming that the names on the petition correspond to  
14       registered voters of the town, the town clerk shall transmit the name of each  
15       duly nominated candidate to the clerk of the unified union school district.  
16               (C) The district clerk shall prepare a unified union school district  
17       ballot for each town and shall transmit the ballot to the town clerk to make  
18       available to the voters residing in the town.  
19               (D) The voters of a town within the unified union school district shall  
20       elect as many board members as are apportioned for that term of office based  
21       on the population of the town.

1                   (2) Modified at-large model: allocation to town; at-large representation.

2                   (A) When membership on the board of a unified union school district  
3                   is allocated to each town within the district, but the allocation is not closely  
4                   proportional to the town's relative population and the board member is elected  
5                   at-large, the voters residing in any one or more of the towns within the district  
6                   may file a petition nominating a candidate for board membership under the  
7                   "modified at-large" model. A petition is valid only if:

8                   (i) the candidate is a current voter of the town to which the seat is  
9                   allocated;

10                  (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
11                  candidate is nominated;

12                  (iii) the petition is signed by at least 60 voters residing in the  
13                  unified union school district;

14                  (iv) the voters file the petition with the clerk of the unified union  
15                  school district not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day  
16                  of the election; and

17                  (v) the candidate files with the district clerk a written consent to  
18                  the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.

19                  (B) Not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day  
20                  of the election, the town clerk of each town within the unified union school  
21                  district shall furnish to the district clerk, at the expense of the district,

1       authenticated copies of the checklist of legal voters within the town as the  
2       checklist appears after revisions are made pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §§ 2141–  
3       2150.

4           (C) The district clerk shall prepare the unified union school district  
5       ballot to include the name of each duly nominated candidate and shall transmit  
6       the ballot to the town clerk of each town within the district to make available to  
7       the voters residing in the town.

8           (D) The voters of the unified union school district shall elect as many  
9       board members as are to be elected at-large for that term of office under the  
10      “modified at-large” model.

11       (3) At-large representation.

12           (A) When membership on a unified union school district board is not  
13       apportioned or allocated pursuant to subdivision (1) (proportional to town  
14       population) or (2) (modified at-large) of this subsection (a) and the board  
15       member is elected at large, the voters residing in any one or more of the towns  
16       within the district may file a petition nominating a candidate for at-large board  
17       membership. A petition is valid only if:

18               (i) the candidate is a current voter of a town within the unified  
19       union school district;  
20               (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
21       candidate is nominated;

- 1                 (iii) the petition is signed by at least 60 voters residing in the  
2                 unified union school district;  
3                 (iv) the voters file the petition with the clerk of the unified union  
4                 school district not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day  
5                 of the election; and  
6                 (v) the candidate files with the district clerk a written consent to  
7                 the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.  
8                 (B) Not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day  
9                 of the election, the town clerk of each town within the unified union school  
10                 district shall furnish to the district clerk, at the expense of the district,  
11                 authenticated copies of the checklist of legal voters within the town as the  
12                 checklist appears after revisions are made pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §§ 2141–  
13                 2150.  
14                 (C) The district clerk shall prepare the unified union school district  
15                 ballot to include the name of each duly nominated candidate and shall transmit  
16                 the ballot to the town clerk of each town within the district to make available to  
17                 the voters residing in the town.  
18                 (D) The voters of the unified union district shall elect as many board  
19                 members as are to be elected at-large for that term of office.

1       (b) If not by Australian ballot. The provisions of this subsection shall  
2       apply to a unified union school district that has not voted to conduct elections  
3       for board membership by Australian ballot.

4           (1) The nomination and election of candidates for the office of unified  
5       union school district board member shall occur at a warned meeting of the  
6       unified union school district; provided, however, if the district elects board  
7       members under the “proportional to town population” model, then the  
8       nomination and election of candidates shall occur at an annual or special  
9       meeting of the town in which the candidate resides, warned for the purpose  
10      pursuant to subsection 737(f) of this chapter.

11           (2) Voters shall only nominate a person who is present at the meeting  
12      and the person shall accept or reject the nomination.

13           (3) The clerk shall ensure that the candidate is a voter of a specific town  
14      if the district elects board members under either the “proportional to town  
15      population” model or the “modified at-large” model.

16           (c) Bond. Before a newly elected board member enters upon the duties of  
17      office, the district shall ensure that the district’s blanket bond covers the new  
18      member. In lieu of a blanket bond, the district may choose to provide suitable  
19      crime insurance coverage.

1        (d) Notification. Within 10 days after the election of a board member  
2        pursuant to this section, the district clerk shall transmit the name of newly  
3        elected board members to the Secretary of State.

4        § 731. VACANCY ON UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD

5        (a) Filling a vacancy. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the  
6        contrary, this section shall apply to a vacancy on a unified union school district  
7        board, unless otherwise provided in the articles of agreement of the district as  
8        initially approved by the voters on or before July 1, 2019.

9        (1) Proportional to town population. If the vacancy is for a seat where  
10      membership is apportioned to a town within the unified union school district in  
11      a number that is closely proportional to the town's relative population and only  
12      voters residing in the town elect the board member, then the clerk of the  
13      unified union school district shall notify the selectboard of the town not later  
14      than five days after learning of the vacancy. Within 30 days after providing  
15      notice and after consultation with the selectboard, the unified union school  
16      district board shall appoint an eligible person to fill the vacancy until the voters  
17      elect a successor at an annual or special meeting.

18        (2) Modified at-large model: allocation to town; at-large representation.  
19        If the vacancy is for a seat where membership is allocated to a town within the  
20      unified union school district in a number that is not closely proportional to  
21      each town's relative population and the board member is elected at large, then

1       the district clerk shall notify the selectboard of the town not later than five days  
2       after learning of the vacancy. Within 30 days after providing notice and after  
3       consultation with the selectboard, the unified union school district board shall  
4       appoint an eligible person to fill the vacancy until the voters elect a successor  
5       at an annual or special meeting.

6           (3) At-large representation. If the vacancy is for a seat that is neither  
7       apportioned nor allocated to a town within the unified union school district as  
8       provided in subdivision (1) or (2) of this subsection and the board member is  
9       elected at-large, then within 30 days after creation of the vacancy the unified  
10      union school district board shall appoint an eligible person to fill the vacancy  
11      until the voters elect a successor at an annual or special meeting.

12          (4) Vacancy in all seats. If all seats on a school board are vacant, then  
13      the Secretary of State shall call a special election to fill the vacancies.

14           (b) Notification. Within 10 days after the appointment of a board member  
15      pursuant to this section, the district clerk of the unified union school district  
16      shall transmit the name of the appointed board member to the Secretary of  
17      State.

18           (c) Obligations and expenses.

19           (1) Vacancy in majority. If there are vacancies in a majority of the  
20      members of a unified union school district board at the same time, then the  
21      remaining member or members are authorized to draw orders for payment of

1       continuing obligations and necessary expenses until a majority of the vacancies  
2       are filled pursuant to the provisions of this section.

3           (2) Vacancy in all seats. If there are no members of the unified union  
4       school district board in office, then the Secretary of State shall authorize the  
5       district clerk or other qualified person to draw orders for payment of  
6       continuing obligations and necessary expenses until a majority of the vacancies  
7       are filled.

8       § 732. UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET; PREPARATION  
9           AND AUTHORIZATION

10       (a) The board of a unified union school district shall prepare and distribute  
11       a proposed budget annually for the next school year pursuant to the provisions  
12       of subdivision 563(11) (powers of school boards; budget) of this title.

13       (b) If the voters do not approve the board's proposed budget, then the board  
14       shall prepare and present a revised proposed budget pursuant to 17 V.S.A.  
15       § 2680(c)(2) (local elections; Australian ballot system; rejected budget).

16       (c) If the voters do not approve a budget on or before June 30 of any year,  
17       then the board of the unified union school district may borrow funds pursuant  
18       to the authority granted under section 566 (school district; authority to borrow)  
19       of this title. As used in section 566, the "most recently approved school  
20       budget" of a union school district in its first fiscal year of full operations means

1       the cumulative budget amount of the most recently approved school budgets of  
2       all districts that merged to form the union district plus one percent.

3       § 733. ANNUAL REPORT; DATA

4           (a) The board of a unified union school district shall prepare an annual  
5       report concerning the affairs of the district and have it printed and distributed  
6       to the voters of the district pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 563(10)  
7       (school districts; powers of school boards; report) of this title. The board shall  
8       file the report with the unified union school district clerk and with the town  
9       clerk of each town within the district.

10          (b) Annually, on or before August 15, the unified union school district  
11       board shall provide to the Secretary answers to statistical inquiries that may be  
12       addressed to the district by the Secretary.

13       Article 2. Unified Union School Districts – Officers, Annual Meetings,

14           and Special Meetings

15       § 735. OFFICERS; ELECTION; TERM; VACANCY; BOND

16           (a) Officers. At an annual meeting of the unified union school district, the  
17       voters shall elect a moderator from among the registered voters of the district.  
18       The voters shall also vote to elect a clerk and a treasurer of the district;  
19       provided, however, at any annual or special meeting, the voters may vote to  
20       authorize the school board to appoint the clerk or the treasurer, or both. The  
21       clerk of the district shall be elected or appointed from among the voters. The

1       treasurer may also be the supervisory union treasurer and need not be a  
2       resident of the union school district.

3       (b) Election.

4       (1) If an officer is elected by Australian ballot in a unified union school  
5       district, then the provisions of subdivision 730(a)(3) for election by Australian  
6       ballot of at-large candidates for the unified union school district board shall  
7       apply.

8       (2) Votes cast to elect an officer shall be commingled and reported to  
9       the voters pursuant to section 742 (commingling of votes cast by Australian  
10      ballot and from the floor) of this chapter.

11      (c) Terms.

12      (1) Moderator. A moderator elected at an annual meeting pursuant to  
13      this section shall assume office on July 1 following the election, unless the  
14      voters vote at an annual meeting for the moderator to assume office upon  
15      election. A moderator shall serve a term of one year or until a successor is  
16      elected and has taken the oath of office unless the voters extend the term length  
17      up to three years.

18      (2) Clerk. A clerk elected at an annual meeting pursuant to this section  
19      shall assume office on July 1 following the election. A clerk shall serve a term  
20      of one year or until a successor is elected and has taken the oath of office  
21      unless the voters extend the term length up to three years.

1           (3) Treasurer. A treasurer elected at an annual meeting pursuant to this  
2           section shall assume office on July 1 following the election. A treasurer shall  
3           serve a term of one year or until a successor is elected and has taken the oath of  
4           office unless the voters extend the term length up to three years.

5           (d) Vacancy. The board of the unified union school district shall fill a  
6           vacancy in any office elected pursuant to this section as soon as practicable  
7           after the vacancy occurs. The appointee shall serve upon appointment for the  
8           remainder of the unexpired term of office or until the voters elect a successor.

9           (e) Oath of office. An officer elected or appointed pursuant to this section  
10          shall be sworn in before entering upon the duties of the office.

11          (f) Bond. The district shall ensure that its blanket bond covers a newly  
12          elected or appointed treasurer before the treasurer enters upon the duties of the  
13          office. In lieu of a blanket bond, the district may choose to provide suitable  
14          crime insurance coverage.

15          (g) Notification. Within 10 days after the election or appointment of any  
16          officer pursuant to this section, the clerk of the unified union school district  
17          shall transmit the name of the officer to the Secretary of State.

18          § 736. OFFICERS; POWERS, DUTIES, AND LIABILITIES

19          (a) Moderator. The powers, duties, and liabilities of the moderator of a  
20          unified union school district shall be the same as those of a moderator of a  
21          town school district. The moderator shall preside at each annual and special

1        meeting of the unified union school district. In the moderator's absence, the  
2        voters shall elect a moderator pro tempore to preside.

3        (b) Clerk. The powers, duties, and liabilities of the clerk of a unified union  
4        school district shall be the same as those of a clerk of a town school district.  
5        The district clerk shall keep a record of the votes and the proceedings of the  
6        union school district meetings and shall provide certified copies of them when  
7        requested.

8        (c) Treasurer. The powers, duties, and liabilities of the treasurer of a  
9        unified union school district shall be the same as those of a treasurer of a town  
10      school district.

11      (d) Documents. The person having custody shall provide to each newly  
12      elected or appointed officer of a unified union district all books, papers, and  
13      electronic documents of the office.

14      § 737. WARNINGS OF UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

15      MEETINGS

16      (a) The board of a unified union school district shall have the same  
17      authority and obligation to warn or call meetings of the district as a town  
18      school board has to warn or call town school district meetings.

19      (b) Except as provided in subsection (f) of this section, the district clerk  
20      shall warn a unified union school district meeting pursuant to the provisions of  
21      17 V.S.A. § 2641 (town meetings and local elections; warning and notice

1        publication) by posting a warning and notice to voters, signed by the chair of  
2        the board or the chair's designee, specifying the date, time, location, and  
3        business of the meeting, in at least one public place in each town within the  
4        unified union school district, and causing the same to be published once in a  
5        newspaper circulating in the unified union school district. In the district  
6        clerk's absence, the chair of the board or the chair's designee shall warn the  
7        meeting pursuant to the provisions of this section.

8            (c) The warning shall, by separate articles, specifically indicate the  
9        business to be transacted, to include the offices and the questions upon which  
10      the electorate shall vote. The warning shall also contain any article or articles  
11      requested by a petition signed by at least five percent of the voters of the  
12      district and filed with the district clerk pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2642 (town  
13      meetings and local elections; warning and notice contents).

14            (d) The posted notice that accompanies the warning shall include  
15      information on voter registration, early and absentee voting, the time and  
16      location at which the ballots will be counted, and any other applicable  
17      information.

18            (e) The warning shall be recorded in the office of the district clerk before  
19      posting.

1        (f) This subsection applies if a unified union school district elects school  
2        board members under the “proportional to town population” model and if it  
3        elects those members by a floor vote rather than by Australian ballot.

4            (1) The election shall be warned as follows:

5              (A) The district clerk shall transmit the signed warning to each town  
6        clerk.

7              (B) The district clerk shall assist each town clerk to incorporate the  
8        warning into the warning for the annual or special meeting of each town.

9              (C) Each town clerk, rather than the district clerk, shall post and  
10      publish the warning pursuant to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section.

11            (2) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, if any town  
12      within the unified union school district elects its selectboard members by  
13      Australian ballot, then the warning, nomination, ballot preparation, and  
14      election of unified union school district board members shall proceed pursuant  
15      to the same laws that govern the town.

16            (3) If an annual town meeting at which the board members are elected  
17      under this subsection is more than 30 days prior to the annual meeting of the  
18      unified union school district, then notwithstanding subsection 729(a) (members  
19      of unified union school district boards) of this section, the newly elected board  
20      members shall assume office at the conclusion of the district’s annual meeting.

1       (g) Notwithstanding any provisions of this section to the contrary, a unified  
2       union school district:

3           (1) shall warn a meeting called for the purpose of considering a bond  
4       issue pursuant to the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 1755; and  
5           (2) shall warn a meeting to consider a revised proposed budget pursuant  
6       to the provisions of subsection 732(b) of this chapter.

7       § 738. CHECKLIST FOR UNION DISTRICT MEETINGS WHERE

8           VOTING IS CONDUCTED FROM THE FLOOR

9       (a) Not later than the close of business on the day before an annual or  
10      special meeting of a unified union school district, the town clerk of each town  
11      within the district shall furnish to the district clerk, at the expense of the  
12      district, authenticated copies of the checklist of legal voters within the town as  
13      the checklist appears after revisions are made pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §§ 2141–  
14      2150 (elections; registration of voters). The checklist shall control for  
15      purposes of determining voter eligibility in the unified union school district.

16       (b) During the annual or special meeting, one or more members of each  
17      town's board of civil authority shall assist the district clerk to determine voter  
18      eligibility and to supervise voting during the meeting.

19       (c) This section shall not apply to a meeting warned pursuant to subsection  
20      737(f) (unified union school district meetings; proportional to town population;  
21      floor vote) of this chapter.

1       § 739. CONDUCT OF VOTE IF BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT

2       For any vote that proceeds by Australian ballot in a unified union school  
3       district:

4       (1) A district voter shall vote by Australian ballot in the town in which  
5       the voter currently resides at the polling location identified in the warning.

6       (2) Voting shall occur in each town on the same day.  
7       (3) The board of civil authority of each town shall be responsible for  
8       determining the eligibility of persons to vote and for supervising voting at that  
9       polling location.

10      (4) The opportunity for early and absentee voting pursuant to 17 V.S.A.  
11      §§ 2531–2550 (conduct of elections; early and absentee voters) shall be  
12      provided.

13      § 740. PREPARATION AND FORM OF AUSTRALIAN BALLOT

14      (a) The clerk of a unified union school district shall prepare the ballot for  
15      any vote that proceeds by Australian ballot in the district.

16      (b) Only questions warned by the unified union school district and  
17      presented to the voters of that district shall appear on a ballot prepared  
18      pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

19      (c) Warned questions of the unified union school district shall not appear  
20      on the same ballot as questions warned by the legislative body of a town within  
21      the unified union school district.

1       § 741. COUNTING OF AUSTRALIAN BALLOTS

2       (a) Process.

3       (1) At least two members of the board of civil authority of each town  
4       within a unified union school district, or two election officials appointed by the  
5       board of civil authority of that town, shall transport ballots cast in the town in a  
6       sealed container to a central location designated by the district clerk. The  
7       district clerk shall place the ballots from all locations into a single container.

8       (2) The boards of civil authority shall not count the ballots for purposes  
9       of determining the outcome of the votes cast in that town prior to transporting  
10      them but may open the containers and count the total number of ballots cast at  
11      that polling location.

12      (3) The district clerk or designee shall supervise representatives of the  
13      boards of civil authority, identified in subdivision (1) of this subsection, to  
14      count ballots at the central location pursuant to section 742 (commingling and  
15      reporting of votes cast by Australian ballot and from the floor) of this title.  
16      The district clerk shall also have the authority to appoint current unified union  
17      school district board members who are not on the ballot to aid in the counting  
18      of ballots.

19      (4) The ballots shall be counted as soon as possible, but not later than  
20      24 hours after the time at which the polls closed.

1           (5) If ballots are to be counted on the day following the election, then  
2           the clerk of each town within the unified union school district shall store the  
3           ballots in a secure location in the town until they are transported on the  
4           following day to the central location designated by the district clerk for  
5           counting.

6           (6) After the ballots have been counted, the district clerk shall seal them  
7           in a secure container and store them for at least 90 days in a secure location.

8           (b) Applicability. The counting of Australian ballots cast by voters in a  
9           unified union school district for the election of members of the district board,  
10          for the election of district officers, for proposed budgets, and for any other  
11          public questions shall proceed pursuant to the provisions of this section, except  
12          when:

13          (1) Vermont statute explicitly permits or requires a different method for  
14          a specific type of question presented to the voters;

15          (2) the ballots have been cast to elect a unified union school district  
16          board member where membership on the board is apportioned based on town  
17          population pursuant to subdivision 730(a)(1) (unified union school district;  
18          Australian ballot; proportional to town population) of this title; or

19          (3) the articles of agreement as initially approved by the voters on or  
20          before July 1, 2019 explicitly provide that the board of civil authority of each  
21          town within the unified union school district shall count Australian ballots cast

1       in that town and report that town's results to the district clerk, who shall  
2       calculate total votes cast within the unified union school district and report the  
3       result of the vote to the public.

4       § 742. COMMINGLING AND REPORTING OF ALL VOTES CAST BY  
5               AUSTRALIAN BALLOT AND FROM THE FLOOR

6       (u) Commingling. Votes cast by the voters of a unified union school  
7       district shall be commingled, whether cast by Australian ballot or from the  
8       floor, and shall not be counted according to the town in which a voter resides.  
9       (b) Report to public. The district clerk shall report the commingled results  
10      of votes cast by voters of a unified union school district.

11       (c) Applicability. The commingling and reporting of votes cast by voters  
12      in a unified union school district for the election of members of the district  
13      board, for the election of district officers, for proposed budgets, and for any  
14      other public question shall proceed pursuant to the provisions of this section  
15      regardless of whether the votes proceeds by Australian ballot or by a floor  
16      vote, except when:

- 17               (1) Vermont statute explicitly permits or requires a different method for  
18      a specific type of question presented to the voters;  
19               (2) the ballots have been cast to elect a unified union school district  
20      board member where membership on the board is apportioned based on town

1       population pursuant to subdivision 730(a)(1) (unified union school district;  
2       Australian ballot; proportional to town population) of this chapter; or  
3       (3) the articles of agreement as initially approved by the voters on or  
4       before July 1, 2019 explicitly provide that the board of civil authority of each  
5       town within the unified union school district shall count Australian ballots cast  
6       in that town and report that town's results to the district clerk, who shall  
7       calculate total votes cast within the unified union school district and report the  
8       result of the vote to the public.

9       § 743. BOND ISSUES; DEBT LIMIT

10      (a) A unified union school district may make improvements, as defined by  
11      24 V.S.A. § 1751 (municipal and county government; indebtedness  
12      definitions), and may incur indebtedness for improvements as provided in  
13      24 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 1 (municipal and county government;  
14      indebtedness generally).

15      (b) The debt limit of the unified union school district shall be 10 times the  
16      total of the education grand lists of the towns within the unified union school  
17      district. The existing indebtedness of a unified union school district incurred to  
18      finance any project approved under sections 3447 to 3456 (State aid for capital  
19      construction costs) of this title shall not be considered a part of the  
20      indebtedness of the unified union school district for purposes of determining its  
21      debt limit for a new proposed bond issue.

1           (c) Bond issues under this section shall be determined by Australian ballot  
2           and shall proceed pursuant to sections 737 (warnings of unified union school  
3           district meetings) and 739–742 (vote by Australian ballot) of this subchapter.  
4           The ballots shall be commingled before counting.

5           Subchapter 4. Union Elementary School Districts and  
6           Union High School Districts

7           § 745. DEFINITIONS

8           As used in this subchapter, words have the meaning as defined in section  
9           702 (definitions) of this title and any words not defined in that section have  
10          their plain meaning, except:

11          (1) Member district. “Member district” means either a town school  
12          district that is a member district as defined in section 702 (definitions) of this  
13          title or a town in a member district if the member district is itself a union  
14          elementary or union high school district, as applicable.

15          (2) Town clerk.

16          (A) If, pursuant to section 425 (other town school district officers) of  
17          this title, the voters of a member district have elected a district clerk who is not  
18          also the clerk of the town, then “town clerk” means the elected clerk of that  
19          member district.

20          (B) Notwithstanding subdivision (A) of this subdivision (2), if a  
21          union elementary or union high school district is a member district of the union

1       school district, then “town clerk” has its plain meaning and means the clerk of  
2       each town in the member district.

3       Article 1. Union Elementary and Union High School Districts – Boards and  
4                   Board Members

5       § 747. BOARD MEMBERS; TERM; CONDUCT OF MEETINGS;

6                   QUORUM AND VOTING; POWERS AND DUTIES

7       (a) Members. Except as set forth in subchapter 2 (exploration, formation,  
8       and organization) of this chapter for initial members, each member of the  
9       board of a union elementary school or union high school district shall:

10      (1) be elected by the voters at warned meeting pursuant to section 748  
11      (union elementary and union high school district board members) of this  
12      chapter;

13      (2) assume office upon election, except as provided in subdivision  
14      755(f)(3) (warnings of union elementary and union high school district  
15      meetings) of this chapter; and

16      (3) be sworn in before entering upon the duties of the office.

17      (b) Term. A member elected at an annual meeting shall serve for a term of  
18      three years or until the member’s successor is elected and has taken the oath of  
19      office. A member elected at a special meeting shall serve for the balance of  
20      the term remaining.

1       (c) Quorum. A majority of the members of the board shall constitute a  
2       quorum. Subject to the provisions of subsection (d) of this section but  
3       notwithstanding any other provision of law, the concurrence of a majority of  
4       members present at a union elementary or union high school district board  
5       meeting shall be necessary and sufficient for board action; provided, however,  
6       the concurrence of more than a majority shall be necessary if required for a  
7       particular action by the voter-approved articles of agreement.

8       (d) Weighted voting. If weighted voting is used to achieve constitutionally  
9       required proportionality for members elected under the “proportional to town  
10      population” model set out in subdivisions 711(e)(1) (proposed union  
11      elementary or union high school district; proportional to town population) and  
12      748(a)(1) (union elementary and union high school district board members;  
13      Australian ballot; proportional to town population) of this chapter, then a  
14      number of members of the board holding a majority of the total number of  
15      weighted votes shall constitute a quorum, and a majority of the weighted votes  
16      cast shall be necessary and sufficient for board action.

17      (e) Board chair and board clerk. At the meeting next following each annual  
18      meeting, the union elementary or union high school district board shall elect  
19      one of its number to serve as the chair of the board and one other of its number  
20      to serve as the clerk of the board.

1       (f) Powers, duties, and liabilities. The powers, duties, and liabilities of a  
2       union elementary or union high school district board, board chair, and board  
3       clerk shall be the same as those of a board, board chair, and board clerk of a  
4       town school district.

5       (g) Minutes. The board clerk shall prepare minutes of the proceedings of  
6       the union elementary or union high school district board, unless the board  
7       votes to delegate those duties to another individual. The board clerk shall  
8       transmit the minutes and all other documents constituting the record of board  
9       proceedings to the clerk of the union elementary or union high school district,  
10      who shall be responsible for maintaining a permanent record of board  
11      proceedings. In the board clerk's absence, another member of the school board  
12      shall assume the duties of the clerk.

13      (h) Stipend. The board clerk may be paid upon order of the board.

14      § 748. UNION ELEMENTARY AND UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

15      BOARD MEMBERS; NOMINATION AND ELECTION; BOND

16      (a) If by Australian ballot. The provisions of this subsection (a) shall apply  
17      to a union elementary or union high school district that conducts elections for  
18      board membership by Australian ballot.

19           (1) Proportional to town population.

20           (A) When membership on the board of a union elementary or union  
21      high school district is apportioned to each member district in a number that is

1       closely proportional to the member district's relative population, the voters of  
2       the member district may file a petition nominating a candidate for board  
3       membership. A petition is valid only if:  
4                (i) the candidate is a current voter of the member district;  
5                (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
6       candidate is nominated;  
7                (iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the  
8       member district or one percent of the legal voters in that district, whichever is  
9       less;  
10              (iv) the voters file the petition with the town clerk not later than  
11       5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and  
12              (v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the  
13       printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.  
14              (B) After confirming that the names on the petition correspond to  
15       registered voters of the member district, the town clerk shall transmit the name  
16       of each duly nominated candidate to the clerk of the union elementary or union  
17       high school district.  
18              (C) The union district clerk shall prepare a union elementary or union  
19       high school district ballot for each member district and shall transmit the ballot  
20       to the town clerk to make available to the voters residing in the member  
21       district.

1                   (D) The voters of the member district shall elect as many board  
2                   members as are apportioned for that term of office on the union elementary or  
3                   union high school district board based on the population of the member  
4                   district.

5                   (2) Modified at-large model: allocation to town; at-large representation.  
6                   (A) When membership on the board of a union elementary or union  
7                   high school district is allocated to each member district, but the allocation is  
8                   not closely proportional to the member district's population and the board  
9                   member is elected at-large, the voters residing in any one or more of the  
10                  member districts may file a petition nominating a candidate for board  
11                  membership under the "modified at-large" model. A petition is valid only if:  
12                  (i) the candidate is a current voter of the member district to which  
13                  the seat is allocated;  
14                  (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
15                  candidate is nominated;  
16                  (iii) the petition is signed by at least 60 voters residing in the  
17                  union elementary or union high school district;  
18                  (iv) the voters file the petition with the clerk of the union  
19                  elementary or union high school district not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth  
20                  Monday preceding the day of the election; and

1                 (v) the candidate files with the union district clerk a written  
2                 consent to the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.  
3                 (B) Not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day  
4                 of the election, the town clerk of each member district shall furnish to the  
5                 union district clerk, at the expense of the union district, authenticated copies of  
6                 the checklist of legal voters within the member district as the checklist appears  
7                 after revisions are made pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §§ 2141–2150.

8                 (C) The union district clerk shall prepare the union elementary or  
9                 union high school district ballot to include the name of each duly nominated  
10                 candidate and shall transmit the ballot to the town clerk of each member  
11                 district to make available to the voters residing in the member district.

12                 (D) The voters of the union elementary or union high school district  
13                 shall elect as many board members as are to be elected at-large for that term of  
14                 office under the “modified at-large” model.

15                 (3) At-large representation.  
16                 (A) When membership on the board of a union elementary or union  
17                 high school district is not apportioned or allocated pursuant to subdivision (1)  
18                 (proportional to town population) or (2) (modified at-large) of this subsection  
19                 (a) (Australian ballot) and the board member is elected at large, the voters  
20                 residing in any one or more of the member districts may file a petition

1        nominating a candidate for at-large board membership. A petition is valid only  
2        if:  
3                (i) the candidate is a current voter of the union elementary or  
4        union high school district;  
5                (ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the  
6        candidate is nominated;  
7                (iii) the petition is signed by at least 60 voters residing in the  
8        union elementary or union high school district;  
9                (iv) the voters file the petition with the clerk of the union  
10      elementary or union high school district not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth  
11      Monday preceding the day of the election; and  
12                (v) the candidate files with the union district clerk a written  
13      consent to the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.  
14                (B) Not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day  
15      of the election, the town clerk of each member district shall furnish to the  
16      union district clerk, at the expense of the union district, authenticated copies of  
17      the checklist of legal voters within the member district as the checklist appears  
18      after revisions are made pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §§ 2141–2150.  
19                (C) The union district clerk shall prepare the union elementary or  
20      union high school district ballot to include the name of each duly nominated

1       candidate and shall transmit the ballot to the town clerk of each member  
2       district to make available to the voters residing in the member district.  
3               (D) The voters of the union elementary or union high school district  
4       shall elect as many board members as are to be elected at-large for that term of  
5       office.  
6               (b) If not by Australian ballot. The provisions of this subsection (b) shall  
7       apply to a union elementary or union high school district that does not conduct  
8       elections for board membership by Australian ballot.  
9               (1) The nomination and election of candidates for the office of union  
10       elementary or union high school district board member shall occur at a warned  
11       meeting of the union school district; provided, however, if the union district  
12       elects board members under the “proportional to town population” model, then  
13       the nomination and election of candidates shall occur at an annual or special  
14       meeting of the member district for the town in which the candidate resides,  
15       warned for the purpose pursuant to subsection 755(f) (warnings of union  
16       elementary and union high school district meetings; members elected under  
17       proportional to town population model and by floor vote) of this chapter.  
18               (2) Voters shall only nominate a person who is present at the meeting,  
19       and the person shall accept or reject the nomination.  
20               (3) The meeting shall proceed in a manner to ensure that the candidate is  
21       a voter of a specific member district if the union district elects board members

1       under either the “proportional to town population” model or the “modified at-  
2       large” model.

3       (c) Bond. Before a newly elected board member enters upon the duties of  
4       office, the union district shall ensure that the district’s blanket bond covers the  
5       new member. In lieu of a blanket bond, the district may choose to provide  
6       suitable crime insurance coverage.

7       (d) Notification. Within 10 days after the election of a board member  
8       pursuant to this section, the union elementary or union high school district  
9       clerk shall transmit the name of the newly elected board member to the  
10      Secretary of State.

11      § 749. VACANCY ON UNION ELEMENTARY OR UNION HIGH  
12      SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD

13      (a) Filling a vacancy. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law to the  
14      contrary, this section shall apply to a vacancy on a union elementary or union  
15      high school district board, unless otherwise provided in the articles of  
16      agreement of the union elementary or union high school district as initially  
17      approved by the voters on or before July 1, 2019.

18      (1) Proportional to town population. If the vacancy is for a seat where  
19      membership is apportioned to a member district in a number that is closely  
20      proportional to its relative population and only voters residing in the member  
21      district elect the board member, then the union elementary or union high

1       school district clerk shall notify the board of the member district not later than  
2       five days after learning of the vacancy. Within 30 days after receiving notice,  
3       the board of the member district shall appoint a person who is otherwise  
4       eligible to serve as a member of the union elementary or union high school  
5       district board to fill the vacancy until the voters elect a successor at an annual  
6       or special meeting pursuant to the provisions of section 748 (union elementary  
7       and union high school district board members) of this chapter.

8               (2) Modified at-large model: allocation to town; at-large representation.  
9       If the vacancy is for a seat where membership is allocated to a member district  
10      in a number that is not closely proportional to each district's relative  
11      population and the board member is elected at-large, then the union elementary  
12      or union high school district clerk shall notify the board of the member district  
13      not later than five days after learning of the vacancy. Within 30 days after  
14      providing notice and after consultation with the member district's board, the  
15      union elementary or union high school district board shall appoint a person  
16      who is otherwise eligible to serve as a member of the union elementary or  
17      union high school district board to fill the vacancy until the voters elect a  
18      successor at an annual or special meeting pursuant to the provisions of section  
19      748 (union elementary and union high school district board members) of this  
20      chapter.

1           (3) At-large representation. If the vacancy is for a seat that is neither  
2           apportioned nor allocated to a member district pursuant to subdivision (1)  
3           (proportional to town population) or (2) (modified at-large) of this subsection  
4           and the board member is elected at-large, then within 30 days after creation of  
5           the vacancy the union elementary or union high school district board shall  
6           appoint a person who is otherwise eligible to serve as a member of the board to  
7           fill the vacancy until the voters elect a successor at an annual or special  
8           meeting pursuant to the provisions of section 748 (union elementary and union  
9           high school district board members) of this chapter.

10           (4) No board of member district. For purposes of subdivisions (1)  
11           (proportional to town population) and (2) (modified at-large) of this subsection  
12           (a), if the member district is also a union school district and any related town  
13           school district has discontinued operations pursuant to subdivision 717(b)(2)  
14           (discontinuation of forming districts in union elementary and union high  
15           school districts) of this chapter and has no board, then the clerk of the union  
16           elementary or union high school district shall notify the selectboard of the  
17           pertinent town not later than five days after learning of the vacancy. Within  
18           30 days after providing notice and after consultation with the selectboard, the  
19           union elementary or union high school district board shall appoint a person  
20           who is otherwise eligible to serve as a member of the union elementary or  
21           union high school district board to fill the vacancy until the voters elect a

1       successor at an annual or special meeting pursuant to the provisions of section  
2       748 (union elementary and union high school district board members) of this  
3       chapter.

4           (5) Vacancy in all seats. If all seats on a school board are vacant, then  
5       the Secretary of State shall call a special election to fill the vacancies.

6           (b) Notification. Within 10 days after the appointment of a board member  
7       pursuant to this section, the clerk of the union elementary or union high school  
8       district shall transmit the name of the appointed board member to the Secretary  
9       of State.

10       (c) Obligations and expenses.

11           (1) Vacancy in majority. If there are vacancies in a majority of the  
12       members of a union elementary or union high school district board at the same  
13       time, then the remaining member or members are authorized to draw orders for  
14       payment of continuing obligations and necessary expenses until a majority of  
15       the vacancies are filled pursuant to the provisions of this section.

16           (2) Vacancy in all seats. If there are no members of the union  
17       elementary or union high school district board in office, then the Secretary of  
18       State shall appoint and authorize the district clerk or other qualified person to  
19       draw orders for payment of continuing obligations and necessary expenses  
20       until a majority of the vacancies are filled.

1       § 750. UNION ELEMENTARY OR UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

2       BUDGET; PREPARATION AND AUTHORIZATION

3       (a) The board of a union elementary or union high school district shall  
4       prepare and distribute a proposed budget annually for the next school year  
5       pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 563(11) (powers of school boards;  
6       budget) of this title.

7       (b) If the voters do not approve the board's proposed budget, then the board  
8       shall prepare a revised proposed budget pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2680(c)(2)  
9       (local elections using the Australian ballot system; rejected budget).

10       (c) If the voters do not approve a budget on or before June 30 of any year,  
11       the board of the unified union school district may borrow funds pursuant to the  
12       authority granted under section 566 (school districts; authority to borrow) of  
13       this title. As used in section 566, the “most recently approved school budget”  
14       of a union school district in its first fiscal year of full operations means the  
15       cumulative budget amount of the most recently approved school budgets of all  
16       districts that merged to form the union district plus 1 percent.

17       § 751. ANNUAL REPORT; DATA

18       (a) The board of a union elementary or union high school district shall  
19       prepare an annual report concerning the affairs of the district and have it  
20       printed and distributed to the voters of the district pursuant to the provisions of  
21       subdivision 563(10) (powers of school boards; report) of this title. The board

1       shall file the report with the union district clerk and the clerk of each member  
2       district.

3       (b) Annually, on or before August 15, the union elementary or union high  
4       school district board shall provide to the Secretary answers to statistical  
5       inquiries that may be addressed to the district by the Secretary.

6       Article 2. Union Elementary and Union High School Districts – Officers,

7               Annual Meetings, and Special Meetings

8       § 753. OFFICERS; ELECTION; TERM; VACANCY; BOND

9       (a) Officers. At an annual meeting of the union elementary or union high  
10      school district, the voters shall elect a moderator from among the registered  
11      voters. The voters shall also vote to elect a clerk and a treasurer of the district;  
12      provided, however, at any annual or special meeting, the voters may vote to  
13      authorize the school board to appoint the clerk or the treasurer, or both. The  
14      clerk of the district shall be elected or appointed from among the voters. The  
15      treasurer may also be the supervisory union treasurer and need not be a  
16      resident of the union elementary or union high school district.

17       (b) Election if by Australian ballot. If a union elementary or union high  
18      school district elects its officers by Australian ballot, then the provisions of  
19      subdivision 748(a)(3) of this chapter for election by Australian ballot of at-  
20      large candidates for the union elementary or union high school district board  
21      shall apply.

1       (c) Terms.

2           (1) Moderator. A moderator elected at an annual meeting pursuant to  
3        this section shall assume office on July 1 following the election, unless the  
4        voters vote at an annual meeting for the moderator to assume office upon  
5        election. A moderator shall serve a term of one year or until a successor is  
6        elected and has taken the oath of office unless the voters extend the term length  
7        up to three years.

8           (2) Clerk. A clerk elected at an annual meeting pursuant to this section  
9        shall assume office on July 1 following the election. A clerk shall serve a term  
10      of one year or until a successor is elected and has taken the oath of office  
11      unless the voters extend the term length up to three years.

12          (3) Treasurer. A treasurer elected at an annual meeting pursuant to this  
13        section shall assume office on July 1 following the election. A clerk shall  
14        serve a term of one year or until a successor is elected and has taken the oath of  
15        office unless the voters extend the term length up to three years.

16          (d) Vacancy. The board of the union elementary or union high school  
17        district shall fill a vacancy in any office elected or appointed pursuant to this  
18        section as soon as practicable after the vacancy occurs. The appointee shall  
19        serve upon appointment for the remainder of the unexpired term of office or  
20        until the voters elect a successor.

1       (e) Oath of office. An officer elected or appointed pursuant to this section  
2       shall be sworn in before entering upon the duties of the office.

3       (f) Bond. The district shall ensure that its blanket bond covers a newly  
4       elected or appointed treasurer before the treasurer enters upon the duties of the  
5       office. In lieu of a blanket bond, the district may choose to provide suitable  
6       crime insurance coverage.

7       (g) Notification. Within 10 days after the election or appointment of any  
8       officer pursuant to this section, the clerk of the union elementary or union high  
9       school district shall transmit the name of the officer to the Secretary of State.

10      § 754. OFFICERS; POWERS, DUTIES, AND LIABILITIES

11      (a) Moderator. The powers, duties, and liabilities of the moderator of a  
12      union elementary or union high school district shall be the same as those of a  
13      moderator of a town school district. The moderator shall preside at each  
14      annual and special meeting of the union elementary or union high school  
15      district. In the moderator's absence, the voters shall elect a moderator pro  
16      tempore to preside.

17      (b) Clerk. The powers, duties, and liabilities of the clerk of a union  
18      elementary or union high school district shall be the same as those of a clerk of  
19      a town school district. The district clerk shall keep a record of the votes and  
20      the proceedings of the union school district meetings and shall provide  
21      certified copies of them when requested.

1       (c) Treasurer. The powers, duties, and liabilities of the treasurer of a union  
2       elementary or union high school district shall be the same as those of a  
3       treasurer of a town school district.

4       (d) Documents. The person having custody shall provide to each elected or  
5       appointed officer of a union district all books, papers, and electronic  
6       documents of the office.

7       § 755. WARNINGS OF UNION ELEMENTARY AND UNION HIGH  
8       SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETINGS

9       (a) The board of a union elementary or union high school district shall have  
10      the same authority and obligation to warn or call meetings of the district as a  
11      town school board has to warn or call town school district meetings.

12      (b) Except as provided in subsection (f) of this section, not less than 30 nor  
13      more than 40 days before the meeting, the union district clerk shall warn a  
14      union elementary or union high school district meeting by posting a warning  
15      and notice to voters, signed by the chair of the union district board or the  
16      chair's designee, specifying the date, time, location, and business of the  
17      meeting, in the district clerk's office and at least one public place in each town  
18      within the union elementary or union high school district, and causing the same  
19      to be published once in a newspaper circulating in the union district at least  
20      five days before the meeting. In the district clerk's absence, the chair of the

1       board or the chair's designee shall warn the meeting pursuant to the provisions  
2       of this section.

3       (c) The warning shall, by separate articles, specifically indicate the  
4       business to be transacted, including the offices and the questions upon which  
5       the electorate shall vote. The warning shall also contain any article or articles  
6       requested by a petition signed by at least five percent of the voters of the  
7       district and filed with the district clerk pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2642 (town  
8       meetings and local elections; warning and notice contents).

9       (d) The posted notice that accompanies the warning shall include  
10      information on voter registration, early and absentee voting, the time and  
11      location at which the ballots will be counted, and other applicable information.

12      (e) The warning shall be recorded in the office of the district clerk and shall  
13      be provided to the town clerk of each town in the unified elementary or union  
14      high school district before being posted.

15      (f) This subsection shall apply if a union elementary or union high school  
16      district elects school board members under the “proportional to town  
17      population” model and if it elects those members by a floor vote rather than by  
18      Australian ballot.

19       (1) The election shall be warned as follows:  
20           (A) The district clerk shall transmit the signed warning to each town  
21           clerk.

1           (B) The district clerk shall assist each town clerk to incorporate the  
2           warning into the warning for the annual or special meeting of each member  
3           district.

4           (C) Each town clerk, rather than the union district clerk, shall post  
5           and publish the warning pursuant to the provisions of subsection (b) of this  
6           section.

7           (2) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, if any member  
8           district elects its own board members by Australian ballot, then the warning,  
9           nomination, ballot preparation, and election of union school district board  
10          members shall proceed pursuant to the same laws that govern the member  
11          district.

12          (3) If an annual meeting of a member district at which the union district  
13          board members are elected under this subsection is more than 30 days prior to  
14          the annual meeting of the union school district, then notwithstanding  
15          subsection 747(a) (board members of union elementary and union high school  
16          districts) of this chapter, the newly elected board members shall assume office  
17          at the conclusion of the union school district's annual meeting.

18          (g) Notwithstanding any provision of this section to the contrary, a union  
19          elementary or union high school district:

20           (1) shall warn a meeting called for the purpose of considering a bond  
21          issue in accordance with the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 1755; and

1           (2) shall warn a meeting to consider a revised proposed budget pursuant  
2           to the provisions of subsection 750(b) (union elementary or union high school  
3           district revised proposed budget) of this chapter.

4           § 756. UNION DISTRICT MEETINGS CONDUCTED FROM THE FLOOR

5           (a) Not later than the close of business on the day before the meeting, the  
6           town clerk of each member district of a union elementary or union high school  
7           district shall furnish to the union district clerk, at the expense of the union  
8           district, authenticated copies of the checklist of legal voters within the member  
9           district as the checklist appears after revisions are made pursuant to 17 V.S.A.  
10          §§ 2141–2150 (registration of voters). The checklist shall control for purposes  
11          of determining voter eligibility in the union elementary or union high school  
12          district.

13          (b) During the annual or special meeting, one or more members of each  
14          town's board of civil authority shall assist the union district clerk to determine  
15          voter eligibility and to supervise voting during the meeting.

16          (c) Votes cast at an annual or special meeting shall be commingled and  
17          shall not be counted according to the town in which a voter resides.

18          (d) The provisions of this section shall apply to all votes of the electorate in  
19          a union elementary or union high school district that do not proceed by  
20          Australian ballot; provided, however:

1           (1) They shall not apply if Vermont statute explicitly permits or requires  
2           a different method for a specific type of question presented to the voters.

3           (2) They shall not apply to a vote warned pursuant to subsection 755(f)  
4           (warnings of union elementary and union high school district meetings;  
5           members elected under proportional to town population model and by floor  
6           vote) of this chapter.

7           (e) If a person who resides in a member district and is otherwise eligible to  
8           vote at a union elementary or union high school district meeting has not  
9           maintained residence in the member district for the requisite number of days  
10           but resided in another member district of the union elementary or union high  
11           school district for the requisite number of days, then the town clerk of the  
12           member district in which the person currently resides shall enter such person's  
13           name on the checklist of legal voters if the person presents to that town clerk a  
14           certificate signed by the town clerk of the member district in which the person  
15           formally resided confirming that the person lived within the union elementary  
16           or union high school district for the requisite number of days.

17           **§ 757. CONDUCT OF VOTE IF BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT**

18           In any vote that proceeds by Australian ballot in a union elementary or  
19           union high school district:

20           (1) A district voter shall vote by Australian ballot in the town in which  
21           the voter currently resides at the polling location identified in the warning.

1           (2) Voting shall occur in each town on the same day.

2           (3) The board of civil authority of each town shall be responsible for

3           determining the eligibility of persons to vote and for supervising voting at that

4           polling location.

5           (4) The opportunity for early and absentee voting pursuant to 17 V.S.A.

6           §§ 2531–2550 (conduct of elections; early or absentee voters) shall be

7           provided.

8           **§ 758. PREPARATION AND FORM OF AUSTRALIAN BALLOT**

9           (a) The clerk of a union elementary or union high school district shall

10           prepare the ballot for any vote that proceeds by Australian ballot in the union

11           school district.

12           (b) Only questions warned by the union elementary or union high school

13           district and presented to the voters of that district shall appear on a ballot

14           prepared pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

15           (c) Warned questions of the union elementary or union high school district

16           shall not appear on the same ballot as questions warned by a member district of

17           the union elementary or union high school district or by the legislative body of

18           a town within the union elementary or union high school district.

19           **§ 759. COUNTING AND REPORTING RESULTS OF VOTE BY**

20           **AUSTRALIAN BALLOT**

1       (a) Process if commingled. If the voters have approved the commingling  
2       of votes cast by Australian ballot for any or all categories of public questions,  
3       including elections and budget votes, or if Vermont law requires commingling,  
4       then the following process applies to those votes except to the extent that  
5       Vermont law explicitly requires a different process for a specific type of public  
6       question.

7           (1) At least two members of the board of civil authority of each town  
8       within a union elementary or union high school district, or two election  
9       officials appointed by the board of civil authority of that town, shall transport  
10      ballots cast in the member district in a sealed container to a central location  
11      designated by the clerk of the union elementary or union high school district.

12           (2) The boards of civil authority shall not count the ballots for purposes  
13       of determining the outcome of the votes cast in the member district prior to  
14       transporting them but may open the containers and count the total number of  
15       ballots cast at that polling location.

16           (3) The union elementary or union high school district clerk or designee  
17       shall supervise representatives of the boards of civil authority to count ballots  
18       at the central location. The union elementary or union high school district  
19       clerk shall also have the authority to appoint current union elementary or union  
20       high school district board members who are not on the ballot to aid in the  
21       counting of ballots

1           (4) The ballots shall be counted as soon as possible, but not later than  
2          24 hours after the time at which the polls closed.

3           (5) If ballots are to be counted on the day following the election, then  
4          the clerk of each member district shall store the ballots in a secure location  
5          until they are transported on the following day to the central location  
6          designated by the union district clerk for counting.

7           (6) Ballots from all member districts shall be combined into a single  
8          group before counting and shall not be counted according to the member  
9          district or town in which a voter resides.

10          (7) After the ballots have been counted, the union district clerk shall seal  
11         them in a secure container and store them for at least 90 days at a secure  
12         location.

13          (8) The union district clerk shall report the commingled results of votes  
14         cast within the union elementary or union high school district to the public.

15          (b) Process if not commingled. If the voters have not approved the  
16         commingling of votes cast by Australian ballot for budgets, elections, or any  
17         other category of public question, and if Vermont law does not require  
18         commingling, then the following process applies to those votes except to the  
19         extent that Vermont law explicitly requires a different process for a specific  
20         type of public question.

1           (1) The board of civil authority of each town within the union  
2         elementary or union high school district shall count Australian ballots cast in  
3         the member district and report the results to the clerk of the union district.

4           (2) The clerk of the union district shall calculate total votes cast within  
5         the union district for any vote that requires approval by the electorate of the  
6         entire union elementary or union high school district, rather than approval by  
7         the voters in one member district or by the voters in each member district  
8         separately.

9           (3) The union district shall report to the public the results of total votes  
10         cast; provided, however, that both the union district clerk and the clerk of each  
11         member school district shall report the results of ballots cast to elect a union  
12         school district board member where membership on the board is apportioned  
13         based on town population pursuant to subdivision 748(a)(1) of this chapter.

14         § 760. BOND ISSUES; DEBT LIMIT

15           (a) A union elementary or union high school district may make  
16         improvements, as defined by 24 V.S.A. § 1751, and may incur indebtedness  
17         for the improvements as provided in 24 V.S.A. chapter 53, subchapter 1.

18           (b) The debt limit of the union elementary or union high school district  
19         shall be 10 times the total of the education grand lists of the member districts  
20         of the union school district. The existing indebtedness of a union elementary  
21         or union high school district incurred to finance any project approved under

1       sections 3447 to 3456 of this title shall not be considered a part of the  
2       indebtedness of the union elementary or union high school district for purposes  
3       of determining its debt limit for a new proposed bond issue. An obligation  
4       incurred by a union elementary or union high school district pursuant to this  
5       chapter shall be the joint and several obligation of the union school district and  
6       each of its member districts. Any joint or several obligation incurred by a  
7       member district pursuant to this subsection shall not be considered in  
8       determining the debt limit for the separate purposes of the member district.

9           (c) Bond issues under this section shall be determined by Australian ballot  
10       and shall proceed pursuant to sections 755 (warnings of union elementary  
11       school district and union high school district meetings) and 757–759 (vote by  
12       Australian ballot) of this subchapter. Ballots shall be commingled before  
13       counting.

14           Subchapter 5. Districts Formed Pursuant to Prior Laws

15           § 763. RATIFICATION; ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT; APPLICATION  
16           OF CHAPTER

17           (a) Each union school district in existence on July 1, 2022, is ratified and  
18       subject to the provisions of this chapter 11, regardless of whether the district  
19       was formed by an affirmative vote of the electorate or by the State Board as  
20       part of its “Final Report of Decisions and Order on Statewide School District

1       Merger Decisions Pursuant to [2015 Acts and Resolves No.] 46, Sections 8(b)  
2       and 10” dated November 28, 2018 (the Order).

3       (b) References in this chapter 11 to articles of agreement initially adopted  
4       by the voters shall also mean articles of agreement as issued by the State Board  
5       as part of the Order.

6       (c) Articles of agreement in effect on June 30, 2022, as initially adopted by  
7       the voters or subsequently amended, shall govern the district unless and until  
8       amended; provided, however, and notwithstanding the provisions of 1 V.S.A.  
9       § 214 or other laws to the contrary, the provisions of this chapter 11 shall  
10      govern in all matters not addressed in the articles of agreement and shall take  
11      precedence in the event of conflict with any article.

12      § 764. SECRETARY OF STATE; RECORDING CERTIFICATES

13      (a) To ensure that documentary evidence relating to the creation of union  
14      school districts can be found in one location, the Secretary of Education shall  
15      forward to the Secretary of State copies of the certifications designating the  
16      existence of each new union school district created pursuant to the State  
17      Board’s “Final Report of Decisions and Order on Statewide School District  
18      Merger Decisions Pursuant to 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46, Sections 8(b)  
19      and 10” dated November 28, 2018 (the Order).

20      (b) The Secretary of State shall record the certifications and all subsequent  
21      amendments and addenda to the certifications.

1           (c) The Secretary of State shall file a certified copy of the recorded  
2 certification and any amendments or addenda with the elected clerk of each  
3 union school district created by the Order.

4 **Sec. 4. WITHDRAWAL ACTIONS APPROVED BY STATE BOARD;**

5           **NEW DISTRICTS WITH AN OPERATIONAL DATE ON OR**

6           **AFTER JULY 1, 2023**

7           (a) Application of this section. This section shall apply solely to a  
8 withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the provisions of 16 V.S.A. § 724 that  
9 were in effect prior to the effective date of Sec. 3 of this act (former 16 V.S.A.  
10 § 724), if each of the following actions occurred prior to that effective date:

- 11           (1) the State Board of Education gave final approval to the voter-  
12 approved and voter-ratified proposal to withdraw from the union school  
13 district;
- 14           (2) the State Board declared a new school district to be reconstituted;
- 15           (3) the State Board established the new school district's operational date  
16 as July 1, 2023 or after;
- 17           (4) the voters of the new school district elected school board members;
- 18           (5) the voters of the towns within the union district voted to approve the  
19 financial terms of withdrawal negotiated by the boards of the new school  
20 district and the union district; and

**Commented [ESJ13]:** The House version required the new school district to give the SBE a status report on preparedness. If preparedness is deemed unlikely, the new school district is required to post the SBE opinion for community discussion and then decide whether to proceed with withdrawal anyway or take the “off-ramp.”

In the Senate version, the board of the new school district decides if they would like the SBE to review their status report in 2022 or 2023. If SBE deems preparedness unlikely, the withdrawal determination is vacated and the petitioning town remains a town within the USD. The SBE decision is final.

1                   (6) the State Board charged the new school district and its board with  
2                   performing the transitional activities necessary to assume sole responsibility  
3                   for the education of resident students on the identified operational date.  
4                   (b) Vote of the board of the new school district; operational date. Before  
5                   July 1, 2022, the board of the new school district shall vote whether to move  
6                   forward with preparing for the operational date in effect on July 1, 2022  
7                   (current operational date) or whether to extend the operational date by one  
8                   year. If the school board votes to extend the operational date, the operational  
9                   date shall be extended to one year from the current operational date (new  
10                  operational date). The board of the new school district shall notify the State  
11                  Board and clerk of the union district of its decision and operational date on or  
12                  before July 1, 2022. The State Board shall then review the preparedness of the  
13                  new school district pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section depending  
14                  on the operational date. The decision of the State Board shall be final  
15                  regardless of whether it occurs in 2022 or 2023.

16                  (c) Operational date in effect as of July 1, 2022; State Board review and  
17                  action.

18                  (1) Report. If the board of the new school district votes to move  
19                  forward with preparing for the current operational date, it shall submit a  
20                  written status report to the Board detailing the actions the district has taken and  
21                  will take to ensure that, as of its operational date, the district will be prepared

1       to assume sole responsibility for the education of its students in  
2       prekindergarten through grade 12 in a manner that will meet educational  
3       quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165 and to ensure the provision of  
4       supervisory union services. The status report shall include a timeline  
5       indicating the date by which each action shall be complete and the report shall  
6       be submitted to the State Board on or before the State Board's regular July  
7       2022 meeting.

8               (2) State Board review and action. The State Board shall consider the  
9       status report and provide the board of the new school district an opportunity to  
10      be heard at a meeting located in the new school district. The State Board may  
11      also take testimony from other entities including the union school district and  
12      the Secretary of Education. The State Board shall issue a determination of  
13      preparedness based on the review and report on or before September 1, 2022.

14               (A) Preparedness deemed likely. If the State Board determines that it  
15      is likely the new school district will be prepared on the current operational date  
16      to assume full responsibility for the education of its resident students in a  
17      manner that substantially complies with educational quality standards as  
18      required by 16 V.S.A. § 165 and to ensure the provision of supervisory union  
19      services, then the new school district, the union district, and, if applicable, the  
20      supervisory union or unions shall continue to take all actions necessary to  
21      prepare for the realignment of duties on the operational date.

1                   (B) Preparedness deemed unlikely. If the State Board determines  
2                   there is a reasonable risk that the new school district will not be able to be  
3                   prepared on the current operational date to assume full responsibility for the  
4                   education of its resident students in a manner that substantially complies with  
5                   educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165, and to ensure the  
6                   provision of supervisory union services, then:

7                   (i) the State Board shall reverse and void earlier declarations  
8                   approving withdrawal and reconstituting the new school district and the  
9                   withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the former 16 V.S.A. § 724 is  
10                  concluded; provided, however, upon order of the State Board, the new school  
11                  district and its board may continue to exist for up to six months after the date  
12                  of the State Board's determination for the sole purpose of completing any  
13                  outstanding business that cannot legally be performed by another entity;  
14                  (ii) the petitioning town shall be a town within the union district;  
15                  (iii) the State Board's determination of reasonable risk and the  
16                  resulting consequences imposed by such a determination shall be final and  
17                  shall conclude the withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the provisions of the  
18                  former 16 V.S.A. § 724;  
19                  (iv) if voters residing in any town within the union district wish to  
20                  initiate new withdrawal procedures, then they shall do so pursuant to the  
21                  process set forth in Sec. 3, 16 V.S.A. § 724, of this act; and

1                   (v) the State Board may make any declarations and take any  
2                   actions, including recording certifications with the Secretary of State, that are  
3                   necessary to support the consequences outlined in this subdivision (2)(B).

4                   (d) Extension of operational date; State Board review and action.

5                   (1) Notification to State Board. If the board of the new school district  
6                   voted to extend the operational date to one year from the operational date in  
7                   effect on July 1, 2022, then the board shall notify the State Board of Education  
8                   of the new operational date pursuant to subsection (b) of this section and shall  
9                   continue to take all actions necessary to prepare for the realignment of duties  
10                  on the new operational date. The State Board may ask for updates from the  
11                  board of the new school district on preparedness efforts at any point before its  
12                  regular July 2023 meeting.

13                  (2) Report. On or before the regular July 2023 State Board meeting, the  
14                  new school district shall submit a written status report to the Board detailing  
15                  the actions the district has taken and will take to ensure that as of its new  
16                  operational date the district will be prepared to assume sole responsibility for  
17                  the education of its students in prekindergarten through grade 12 in a manner  
18                  that will meet educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165 and  
19                  to ensure the provision of supervisory union services. The status report shall  
20                  include a timeline indicating the date by which each action shall be complete.

1                   (3) State Board review and action. The State Board shall consider the  
2                   status report and provide the board of the new school district an opportunity to  
3                   be heard at a meeting located in the new school district. The State Board may  
4                   also take testimony from other entities including the union school district and  
5                   the Secretary of Education. The State Board shall issue a determination of  
6                   preparedness based on the review and the report on or before September 1,  
7                   2023.

8                   (A) Preparedness deemed likely. If the State Board determines that it  
9                   is likely the new school district will be prepared on the new operational date to  
10                  assume full responsibility for the education of its resident students in a manner  
11                  that substantially complies with educational quality standards as required by  
12                  16 V.S.A. § 165 and to ensure the provision of supervisory union services,  
13                  then the new school district, the union district, and, if applicable, the  
14                  supervisory union or unions shall continue to take all actions necessary to  
15                  prepare for the realignment of duties on the operational date.

16                  (B) Preparedness deemed unlikely. If the State Board determines  
17                  there is a reasonable risk that the new school district will not be able to be  
18                  prepared on the new operational date to assume full responsibility for the  
19                  education of its resident students in a manner that substantially complies with  
20                  educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165 and to ensure the  
21                  provision of supervisory union services, then:

1                   (i) the State Board shall reverse and void earlier declarations  
2                   approving withdrawal and reconstituting the new school district and the  
3                   withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the former 16 V.S.A. § 724 is  
4                   concluded; provided, however, upon order of the State Board, the new school  
5                   district and its board may continue to exist for up to six months after the date  
6                   of the State Board's determination for the sole purpose of completing any  
7                   outstanding business that cannot legally be performed by another entity;

8                   (ii) the petitioning town shall be a town within the union district;  
9                   (iii) the State Board's determination of reasonable risk and the  
10                  resulting consequences imposed by such a determination shall be final and  
11                  shall conclude the withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the provisions of the  
12                  former 16 V.S.A. § 724;

13                  (iv) if voters residing in any town within the union district wish to  
14                  initiate new withdrawal procedures, then they shall do so pursuant to the  
15                  process set forth in Sec. 3, 16 V.S.A. § 724, of this act; and

16                  (v) the State Board may make any declarations and take any  
17                  actions, including recording certifications with the Secretary of State, that are  
18                  necessary to support the consequences outlined in this subdivision (3)(B).

19                  (e) Repeal. This section is repealed on July 1, 2024.

20                  Sec. 5. WITHDRAWAL PROPOSALS ON WHICH THE STATE BOARD  
21                  HAS NOT TAKEN ACTION; ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE

1                   PROPOSAL PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED

2                   (a) Application of this section.

3                   (1) For purposes of this section and notwithstanding any provision of  
4 law to the contrary, the provisions of 16 V.S.A. § 724 that were in effect prior  
5 to the effective date of Sec. 3 of this act (former 16 V.S.A. § 724) are deemed  
6 to authorize withdrawal from a unified union school district created by the  
7 State Board of Education in its “Final Report of Decisions and Order on  
8 Statewide School District Merger Decisions Pursuant to Act 46, Secs. 8(b) and  
9 10” dated November 28, 2018 (Order).

10                  (2) This section shall apply solely to a withdrawal action initiated by a  
11 town within a union district (petitioning town) pursuant to the former  
12 16 V.S.A. § 724 if each of the following actions occurred prior to the effective  
13 date of Sec. 3 of this act:

14                  (A) the State Board created the union district in its Order;  
15                  (B) prior to issuance of the Order, the districts that merged to form  
16 the union district submitted a proposal to the Secretary of Education and the  
17 State Board setting forth the details of their self-evaluation and a proposal for  
18 an alternative governance structure pursuant to 2015 Acts and Resolves  
19 No. 46, Sec. 9 (Section 9 proposal);

20                  (C) the voters of the petitioning town approved a proposal to  
21 withdraw from the union district;

1                   (D) the voters of each of the other towns within the union district  
2                   ratified the petitioning town's proposal to withdraw; and  
3                   (E) the State Board of Education has not approved or taken action to  
4                   approve the withdrawal proposal or to declare that a new school district is  
5                   reconstituted.

6                   (b) Report and plan. At any time after the effective date of this section, but  
7                   on or before the regular September 2022 State Board meeting, the self-selected  
8                   representatives of the petitioning town and the board of the union district shall  
9                   submit to the State Board in writing:

10                  (1) A report explaining the ways in which the current plan of the  
11                  petitioning town and the union district for operation after withdrawal conforms  
12                  to or differs from the Section 9 proposal.

13                  (2) A plan, including a timeline, identifying the actions the petitioning  
14                  town and the union district have taken and will take to transition to the  
15                  proposed structure and to ensure that, as of an identified operational date, the  
16                  proposed new school district will be prepared to assume sole responsibility for  
17                  the education of its students in prekindergarten through grade 12 in a manner  
18                  that will meet educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165,  
19                  including the actions necessary to transition to the proposed method by which  
20                  supervisory union services would be provided. At a minimum, the plan and  
21                  timeline should include the actions identified in subsection (d) of this section.

1           (c) State Board review and action.

2           (1) Review. The State Board shall consider the report and plan and shall  
3           provide the self-selected representatives of the petitioning town and the board  
4           of the union district an opportunity to be heard. The Board may, in its  
5           discretion, take testimony from other individuals and entities.

6           (2) Preparedness determination and vote to approve withdrawal. The  
7           State Board shall determine if it is likely or unlikely the proposed new school  
8           district, on the proposed operational date, will be prepared to assume full  
9           responsibility for the education of its resident students in a manner that  
10           substantially complies with educational quality standards as required by  
11           16 V.S.A. § 165 and also whether it is likely or unlikely that supervisory union  
12           services will be available to both the proposed new school district and the  
13           union district on the operational date. If the State Board determines  
14           preparedness is unlikely, it shall issue a written advisory statement detailing  
15           the factors underlying its conclusion, which shall be posted on its website.

16           Upon making its preparedness determination, the State Board shall vote to:

17           (A) approve the withdrawal proposal;  
18           (B) approve any motion necessary for the withdrawal process to  
19           proceed pursuant to subsection (d) of this section, including a motion to create  
20           a new school district as of the date of the motion in order to enable the election  
21           of members to the board of the proposed new school district, negotiation and

1       voter approval of a withdrawal agreement pursuant to the former 16 V.S.A.  
2       § 724(c), and preparation to assume full responsibility for the education of  
3       resident students on the operational date;

4           (C) determine or set a schedule for determining the manner in which  
5       supervisory union services will be provided to the proposed new school district  
6       and, if appropriate, the union district to be effective on the proposed new  
7       school district's operational date; and

8           (D) make any other findings or declarations and approve any other  
9       motions that are related and necessary to the withdrawal proposal.

10          (d) Actions necessary to be fully operational. After the State Board makes  
11       its determination of preparedness and approves the withdrawal process  
12       pursuant to subdivision (c)(2) of this section, then the new school district, the  
13       union district, and, if applicable, the supervisory union or unions shall take all  
14       actions necessary to be fully operational on the operational date. At a  
15       minimum, the required necessary actions shall include:

16           (1) election of initial school board members by the voters of the new  
17       school district, whose terms of office shall be arranged so that one each expires  
18       on the day of the second, third, and fourth annual meeting of the new school  
19       district, and whose sole responsibility until the new school district's  
20       operational date shall be to prepare for the district to assume sole responsibility  
21       for the education of resident students on that date;

1                 (2) negotiation of the proposed financial terms of withdrawal by the  
2                 board of the new school district and the board of the union district in order to  
3                 comply with the requirements of the former 16 V.S.A. § 724(c);  
4                 (3) approval by the voters of each town within the union district of the  
5                 negotiated proposed financial terms of withdrawal in order to comply with the  
6                 requirements of the former 16 V.S.A. § 724(c);  
7                 (4) preparation of a proposed budget by the board of the new school  
8                 district for the fiscal year beginning on the district's operational date, together  
9                 with presentation to and approval by the district's voters prior to that date;  
10                 (5) preparation for the provision of supervisory union services to the  
11                 new school district and, if applicable, for the transition of the union school  
12                 district from a supervisory district structure to a supervisory union structure;  
13                 and  
14                 (6) all other actions necessary to transition from one school district to  
15                 two districts and, if applicable, to transition from a supervisory district  
16                 structure to a supervisory union structure, including all actions necessary to  
17                 address the collectively bargained rights of employees of the current  
18                 employing entity.

19                 (e) Preparedness deemed unlikely.

20                 (1) If the State Board determines preparedness is unlikely and issues a  
21                 written advisory statement detailing the factors underlying its conclusion

1       pursuant to subdivision (c)(2) of this section, it shall electronically transmit the  
2       advisory statement to the board of the new school district upon its election.

3       (2) Upon receipt of the advisory statement, the board of the new school  
4       district shall post the document on its website and schedule the contents as a  
5       topic for public discussion at a special or regular board meeting.

6       (3) Prior to the operational date and after public discussion and any  
7       board deliberations:

8           (A) The board of the new school district may continue to take all  
9       actions necessary to prepare for the realignment of duties on the operational  
10      date.

11       (B) On its own motion, or if petitioned to do so by at least five  
12      percent of the voters in the new school district, the board of the new school  
13      district shall warn a vote to request the State Board to reverse its declaration  
14      approving withdrawal and reconstituting the new school district. The vote  
15      shall be held before the October 1 prior to the operational date.

16           (i) The question shall be decided by Australian ballot.  
17           (ii) Within 45 days after the vote or 15 days after a vote to  
18      reconsider under 17 V.S.A. § 2661, whichever is later, the clerk of the new  
19      school district shall certify the results of the vote to the Secretary of State who  
20      shall record the certificate and give notice of the vote to the clerk of the union  
21      district, the clerks of each of the other towns within the union district, and the

1       Secretary of Education. The clerk of the new school district shall submit the  
2       certification regardless of whether the voters in the district voted to petition the  
3       State Board to reverse its declarations.

4           (4) If the new school district requests the State Board to take action  
5       under subdivision (3) of this subsection, then:

6              (A) the State Board shall reverse and void earlier declarations  
7       approving withdrawal and reconstituting the new school district and the  
8       withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the former 16 V.S.A. § 724 is  
9       concluded; and

10             (B) the union school district shall continue to be solely responsible  
11       for the education of the students residing in the town that petitioned for  
12       withdrawal; provided, however:

13               (i) the new school district and its board shall continue to exist for  
14       up to six months after the day on which the State Board reverses and voids its  
15       earlier declarations for the sole purpose of completing any outstanding  
16       business that cannot legally be performed by another entity; and

17               (ii) the State Board may make any declarations and take any  
18       actions, including recording certifications with the Secretary of State, that are  
19       necessary to support the consequences outlined in this subdivision (e)(4).

20             (f) Application of this section to withdrawal from a union elementary or  
21       union high school district.

1       (1) The processes outlined in this section shall apply to an action of a  
2 member school district to withdraw from a union elementary or union high  
3 school district if the five elements set forth in subdivisions (A)–(E) of  
4 subdivision (a)(2) are met.

5       (2) For purposes of applying the process in this section to withdrawal  
6 from a union elementary or union high school district under this subsection, the  
7 terms used in subsections (a) through (e) have the following meanings:

8           (A) “Petitioning town” means the member district of the union  
9 elementary or union high school district that initiated the withdrawal process  
10 pursuant to the provisions of 16 V.S.A. § 721a that were in effect prior to the  
11 effective date of Sec. 3 of this act.

12           (B) “Selectboard” means the board of the member district that  
13 initiated the withdrawal process pursuant to the provisions of 16 V.S.A. § 721a  
14 that were in effect prior to the effective date of Sec. 3 of this act.

15           (C) “Town within the union school district” means a member district  
16 of the union elementary or union high school district.

17           (g) Repeal. This section is repealed on July 1, 2024.

18       **Sec. 6. WITHDRAWAL PROPOSALS ON WHICH THE STATE BOARD**  
19           **HAS NOT TAKEN ACTION; UNION DISTRICT CREATED BY**  
20           **THE ELECTORATE |**

**Commented [ESJ14]:** The House version required SBE to approve the withdrawal proposal and issue an advisory opinion about preparedness after reviewing a report from the self-selected representatives of the petitioning town. If preparedness is deemed unlikely, the new school district is required to post the SBE opinion for community discussion and then decide whether to proceed with withdrawal anyway or take the “off-ramp.”

The Senate version the self-selected representatives to decide if they would like the SBE to review their withdrawal proposal in 2022 or 2023. If SBE deems preparedness unlikely, the withdrawal process stops and the petitioning town remains a town within the USD. The SBE decision is final.

1       (a) Application of this section. This section shall apply solely to a  
2       withdrawal action initiated by a town within a union district (petitioning town)  
3       pursuant to the provisions of 16 V.S.A. § 724 that were in effect prior to the  
4       effective date of Sec. 3 of this act (former 16 V.S.A. § 724) if each of the  
5       following actions occurred prior to that date:  
6              (1) the union district formed pursuant to the provisions of 16 V.S.A.  
7              §§ 706–706j that were in effect prior to the effective date of Sec. 3 of this act;  
8              (2) the voters of the petitioning town approved a proposal to withdraw  
9       from the union district;  
10             (3) the voters of each of the other towns within the union district ratified  
11       the petitioning town's proposal to withdraw; and  
12             (4) the State Board of Education has not approved or taken action to  
13       approve the withdrawal proposal or to declare that a new school district is  
14       reconstituted.  
15       (b) Decision regarding timing of State Board review. At any time before  
16       July 1, 2022, the self-selected representatives of the petitioning town shall  
17       decide whether to begin a State Board of Education review of their withdrawal  
18       proposal in July of 2022 or July of 2023 and shall transmit their decision and  
19       proposed operational date to the State Board of Education and the clerk of the  
20       union district. The State Board shall review the withdrawal proposal only  
21       once. If the review of the withdrawal proposal occurs in 2023, the State Board

1       may ask for updates from the self-selected members of the petitioning town on  
2       preparedness efforts prior to the final withdrawal proposal review. The  
3       decision of the State Board shall be final regardless of whether it occurs in  
4       2022 or 2023.

5        (c) Report and plan. On or before the second Wednesday of July in the  
6       year in which the review will occur, the self-selected representatives of the  
7       petitioning town shall submit a written report and plan to the State Board and  
8       shall indicate to the State Board that the documents are submitted pursuant to  
9       this section.

10      (1) Report. The report shall describe the analysis that has been  
11      performed by the petitioning town to evaluate the likely strengths and  
12      challenges for the proposed new school district and for the reconfigured union  
13      district if withdrawal is approved and the ways in which withdrawal would  
14      enable both districts to provide for the education of their respective resident  
15      students in a manner that will meet educational quality standards as required  
16      by 16 V.S.A. § 165. The report shall address:

17        (A) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result  
18       from withdrawal for the students in the proposed new school district and the  
19       students in the remaining towns within the union district and the ways in which  
20       they are preferable to those of continuing in the current governance structure;

1                   (B) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result from  
2 withdrawal for the taxpayers in the proposed new school district and the  
3 taxpayers in the remaining towns within the union district and the ways in  
4 which they are preferable to those of continuing in the current governance  
5 structure;

6                   (C) the likely operational and financial viability and sustainability of  
7 the proposed new school district and the union district after withdrawal of the  
8 petitioning town;

9                   (D) any other advantages and disadvantages of withdrawal, including  
10 any advantages and disadvantages to the students and taxpayers of the region  
11 and the State; and

12                   (E) the potential source of supervisory union services for the new  
13 school district and, if appropriate, for the union district, including discussions  
14 with the board of any supervisory union to which the petitioning town  
15 proposes assignment.

16                   (2) Plan. The plan shall describe the actions that the petitioning town  
17 has taken and will take to ensure that, as of its proposed operational date, the  
18 proposed new district will be prepared to assume sole responsibility for the  
19 education of its students in prekindergarten through grade 12 in a manner that  
20 will meet educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165,  
21 including the actions necessary to transition to the proposed method by which

1       supervisory union services would be provided. The plan shall include a  
2       timeline indicating the date by which each action will be complete. At a  
3       minimum, the plan and timeline should include the actions identified in  
4       subsection (e) of this section.

5           (d) Review and preparedness determination by the State Board.

6           (1) Review. The State Board shall consider the report and plan and  
7       provide the self-selected representatives of the petitioning town and the board  
8       of the union district an opportunity to be heard at a meeting held at a location  
9       within the petitioning town. The State Board may also take testimony from  
10      other individuals and entities, including the Secretary of Education and any  
11      supervisory union that has been identified as a potential source of supervisory  
12      union services for the proposed new school district. The State Board shall  
13      issue a determination of preparedness as soon as possible after receipt of the  
14      report and plan but in no event later than September 1, 2022 or September 1,  
15      2023, as applicable, based on the decision of the self-selected representatives  
16      of the petitioning town made pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

17           (2) Preparedness deemed likely; State Board of Education action. If the  
18      State Board determines that it is likely the proposed new school district on the  
19      proposed operational date will be prepared to assume full responsibility for the  
20      education of its resident students in a manner that substantially complies with  
21      educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165 and that it is also

1       likely supervisory union services will be available to the proposed new school  
2       district, then it shall vote to:  
3            (A) approve the withdrawal proposal;  
4            (B) approve any motion necessary for the withdrawal process to  
5       proceed pursuant to subsection (e) of this section, including a motion to create  
6       a new school district as of the date of the motion in order to enable the election  
7       of members to the board of the proposed new school district, negotiation and  
8       voter approval of a withdrawal agreement pursuant to the former 16 V.S.A.  
9       § 724(c), and preparation to assume full responsibility for the education of  
10      resident students on the operational date;  
11        (C) determine or set a schedule for determining the manner in which  
12      supervisory union services will be provided to the proposed new school district  
13      and, if appropriate, the union district, to be effective on the proposed new  
14      school district's operational date; and  
15        (D) make any other findings or declarations and approve any other  
16      motions that are related and necessary to the withdrawal proposal.  
17        (3) Preparedness deemed unlikely. If the State Board determines there  
18      is a reasonable risk that the proposed new school district will not be able to be  
19      prepared on the proposed operational date to assume full responsibility for the  
20      education of its resident students in a manner that substantially complies with  
21      educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165 and to ensure the

1       provision of supervisory union services, and that the criteria will not be met by  
2       postponing the operational date, then:  
3            (A) the State Board shall declare that the petitioning town's proposal  
4       to withdraw initiated under the former 16 V.S.A. § 724 is denied;  
5            (B) the petitioning town shall remain a town within the union district;  
6            (C) the State Board's determination of reasonable risk and the  
7       resulting consequences imposed by such a determination shall be final and  
8       shall conclude the withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the provisions of the  
9       former 16 V.S.A. § 724; and  
10          (D) if voters residing in any town within the union district wish to  
11       initiate new withdrawal procedures, then they shall do so pursuant to the  
12       process set forth in Sec. 3, 16 V.S.A. § 724, of this act.  
13            (e) Preparedness deemed likely; next steps. If the State Board approves the  
14       withdrawal process pursuant to subdivision (d)(2) of this section, then the new  
15       school district, the union district, and, if applicable, the supervisory union or  
16       unions shall take all actions necessary to be fully operational on the identified  
17       operational date. At a minimum, the required necessary actions shall include:  
18              (1) election of initial school board members by the voters of the new  
19       school district, whose terms of office shall be arranged so that one each expires  
20       on the day of the second, third, and fourth annual meeting of the new school  
21       district and whose sole responsibility until the new school district's operational

1       date shall be to prepare for the district to assume sole responsibility for the  
2       education of resident students on that date;  
3            (2) negotiation by the board of the new school district and the board of  
4       the union district of the proposed financial terms of withdrawal in order to  
5       comply with the requirements of the former 16 V.S.A. § 724(c);  
6            (3) approval by the voters of each town within the union district of the  
7       negotiated proposed financial terms of withdrawal in order to comply with the  
8       requirements of the former 16 V.S.A. § 724(c);  
9            (4) preparation of a proposed budget by the board of the new school  
10      district for the fiscal year beginning on the district's operational date, together  
11      with presentation to and approval by the district's voters prior to that date;  
12           (5) preparation for the provision of supervisory union services to the  
13      new school district and, if applicable, for the transition of the union school  
14      district from a supervisory district structure to a supervisory union structure;  
15      and  
16           (6) all other actions necessary to transition from one school district to  
17      two districts and, if applicable, to transition from a supervisory district  
18      structure to a supervisory union structure, including any actions necessary to  
19      address the collectively bargained rights of employees of the former employing  
20      entity.  
21      (f) Repeal. This section is repealed on July 1, 2025.

1      **Sec. 7. WITHDRAWAL PROPOSALS; NO FINAL RATIFICATION**

2      **VOTES**

3      (a) Application of this section. This section shall apply solely to a

4      withdrawal action initiated by a town within a union district (petitioning town)

5      pursuant to the provisions of 16 V.S.A. § 724 that were in effect prior to the

6      effective date of Sec. 3 of this act (former 16 V.S.A. § 724) if each of the

7      following actions occurred prior to that date:

8      (1) the union district formed pursuant to the provisions of 16 V.S.A.

9      §§ 706–706j that were in effect prior to the effective date of Sec. 3 of this act;

10     (2) a vote in the petitioning town to approve a withdrawal proposal was

11     warned to occur on or before June 1, 2022; and

12     (3) the voters of each of the other towns within the union district have

13     not voted whether to ratify the withdrawal proposal prior to the effective date

14     of this section or they each voted but the votes are not final prior to the

15     effective date.

16     (b) Vote of the other towns within the union district. If the voters in the

17     petitioning town vote to approve withdrawal, then within 90 days after the

18     town clerks in the other towns within the union district receive notice from the

19     Secretary of State pursuant to the former 16 V.S.A. § 724(b) that the vote in

20     the petitioning town is final, the voters of the other towns within the union

21     district shall vote whether to ratify the withdrawal proposal. The question shall

**Commented [ESJ15]:** In the House version, towns that fit these application criteria were not allowed to proceed with withdrawal under the old law, they were required to start all over under the new law.

The Senate version allows them to hold the community votes and then allows the self-selected representatives to decide if they would like the SBE to review their withdrawal proposal in 2022 or 2023. If SBE deems preparedness unlikely, the withdrawal process stops and the petitioning town remains a town within the USD. The SBE decision is final.

1       be determined by Australian ballot and shall proceed pursuant to Sec. 3,  
2       16 V.S.A. § 737 (warnings of unified union school district meetings) and  
3       §§ 739–741 (vote by Australian ballot) of this act. The ballots shall not be  
4       commingled.

5               (1) Vote not to ratify withdrawal. If a majority of the voters in one or  
6       more towns within the union district do not vote in favor of withdrawal, then  
7       the proposed withdrawal shall not occur. The voters residing in any town  
8       within the union district may initiate new withdrawal procedures pursuant to  
9       the process set forth in Sec. 3, 16 V.S.A. § 724, of this act.

10              (2) Vote in favor of withdrawal. If a majority of the voters in all towns  
11       within the union district vote in favor of withdrawal, then the withdrawal  
12       process shall proceed pursuant to subsections (c)–(e) of this section.

13              (c) Decision regarding timing of State Board review. Within 30 days after  
14       the ratification votes of the other towns within the union district are final, the  
15       self-selected representatives of the petitioning town shall decide whether to  
16       undergo a State Board of Education review of the withdrawal proposal in 2022  
17       or 2023 and shall transmit their decision and proposed operational date to the  
18       State Board of Education and clerk of the union district. In accordance with  
19       the decision of the self-selected representatives of the petitioning town  
20       regarding the year in which the withdrawal proposal shall be reviewed, the  
21       State Board, in consultation with the self-selected representatives, shall

1       determine the date the final withdrawal proposal review will begin and  
2       transmit the date to the self-selected representatives of the petitioning town and  
3       the clerk of the union school district. The State Board shall review the  
4       withdrawal proposal only once. If the review of the withdrawal proposal  
5       occurs in 2023, the State Board may ask for updates from the self-selected  
6       members of the petitioning town on preparedness efforts prior to the final  
7       withdrawal proposal review. The decision of the State Board shall be final  
8       regardless of whether it occurs in 2022 or 2023.

9               (d) Report and plan. On or before the date set by the State Board to begin  
10       the final withdrawal proposal review, the self-selected representatives of the  
11       petitioning town shall submit a written report and plan to the State Board and  
12       shall indicate to the State Board that the documents are submitted pursuant to  
13       this section.

14               (1) Report. The report shall describe the analysis that has been  
15       performed by the petitioning town to evaluate the likely strengths and  
16       challenges for the proposed new school district and for the reconfigured union  
17       district if withdrawal is approved and the ways in which withdrawal would  
18       enable both districts to provide for the education of their respective resident  
19       students in a manner that will meet educational quality standards as required  
20       by 16 V.S.A. § 165. The report shall address:

1                   (A) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result  
2 from withdrawal for the students in the proposed new school district and the  
3 students in the remaining towns within the union district and the ways in which  
4 they are preferable to those of continuing in the current governance structure;

5                   (B) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result from  
6 withdrawal for the taxpayers in the proposed new school district and the  
7 taxpayers in the remaining towns within the union district and the ways in  
8 which they are preferable to those of continuing in the current governance  
9 structure;

10                  (C) the likely operational and financial viability and sustainability of  
11 the proposed new school district and the union district after withdrawal of the  
12 petitioning town;

13                  (D) any other advantages and disadvantages of withdrawal, including  
14 any advantages and disadvantages to the students and taxpayers of the region  
15 and the State; and

16                  (E) the potential source of supervisory union services for the new  
17 school district and, if appropriate, for the union district, including discussions  
18 with the board of any supervisory union to which the petitioning town  
19 proposes assignment.

20                  (2) Plan. The plan shall describe the actions that the petitioning town  
21 has taken and will take to ensure that, as of its proposed operational date, the

1     proposed new district will be prepared to assume sole responsibility for the  
2     education of its students in prekindergarten through grade 12 in a manner that  
3     will meet educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165,  
4     including the actions necessary to transition to the proposed method by which  
5     supervisory union services would be provided. The plan shall include a  
6     timeline indicating the date by which each action will be complete. At a  
7     minimum, the plan and timeline should include the actions identified in  
8     subsection (f) of this section.

9         (e) Review and preparedness determination by the State Board.

10             (1) Review. The State Board shall consider the report and plan and  
11     provide the self-selected representatives of the petitioning town and the board  
12     of the union district an opportunity to be heard at a meeting held at a location  
13     within the petitioning town. The State Board may also take testimony from  
14     other individuals and entities including the Secretary of Education and any  
15     supervisory union that has been identified as a potential source of supervisory  
16     union services for the proposed new school district. The State Board shall  
17     issue a determination of preparedness as soon as possible after receipt of the  
18     report and plan but in no event later than 90 days after the date set by the State  
19     Board to begin the final withdrawal proposal review.

20             (2) Preparedness deemed likely; State Board of Education action. If the  
21     State Board determines that it is likely the proposed new school district on the

1       proposed operational date will be prepared to assume full responsibility for the  
2       education of its resident students in a manner that substantially complies with  
3       educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165 and that it is also  
4       likely supervisory union services will be available to the proposed new school  
5       district, then it shall vote to:

6               (A) approve the withdrawal proposal;  
7               (B) approve any motion necessary for the withdrawal process to  
8       proceed pursuant to subsection (f) of this section, including a motion to create  
9       a new school district as of the date of the motion in order to enable the election  
10      of members to the board of the proposed new school district, negotiation and  
11      voter approval of a withdrawal agreement pursuant to the former 16 V.S.A.  
12      § 724(c), and preparation to assume full responsibility for the education of  
13      resident students on the operational date;

14               (C) determine or set a schedule for determining the manner in which  
15      supervisory union services will be provided to the proposed new school district  
16      and, if appropriate, the union district, to be effective on the proposed new  
17      school district's operational date; and

18               (D) make any other findings or declarations and approve any other  
19      motions that are related and necessary to the withdrawal proposal.

20               (3) Preparedness deemed unlikely. If the State Board determines there  
21      is a reasonable risk that the proposed new school district will not be able to be

1       prepared on the proposed operational date to assume full responsibility for the  
2       education of its resident students in a manner that substantially complies with  
3       educational quality standards as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165 and to ensure the  
4       provision of supervisory union services, and that the criteria will not be met by  
5       postponing the operational date, then:

6               (A) the State Board shall declare that the petitioning town's proposal  
7       to withdraw initiated under the former 16 V.S.A. § 724 is denied;  
8               (B) the petitioning town shall remain a town within the union district;  
9               (C) the State Board's determination of reasonable risk and the  
10       resulting consequences imposed by such a determination shall be final and  
11       shall conclude the withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the provisions of the  
12       former 16 V.S.A. § 724; and  
13               (D) if voters residing in any town within the union district wish to  
14       initiate new withdrawal procedures, then they shall do so pursuant to the  
15       process set forth in Sec. 3, 16 V.S.A. § 724, of this act.

16               (f) Preparedness deemed likely; next steps. If the State Board approves the  
17       withdrawal process pursuant to subdivision (e)(2) of this section, then the new  
18       school district, the union district, and, if applicable, the supervisory union or  
19       unions shall take all actions necessary to be fully operational on the identified  
20       operational date. At a minimum, the required necessary actions shall include:

1                   (1) election of initial school board members by the voters of the new  
2                   school district, whose terms of office shall be arranged so that one each expires  
3                   on the day of the second, third, and fourth annual meeting of the new school  
4                   district and whose sole responsibility until the new school district's operational  
5                   date shall be to prepare for the district to assume sole responsibility for the  
6                   education of resident students on that date;

7                   (2) negotiation by the board of the new school district and the board of  
8                   the union district of the proposed financial terms of withdrawal in order to  
9                   comply with the requirements of the former 16 V.S.A. § 724(c);

10                  (3) approval by the voters of each town within the union district of the  
11                  negotiated proposed financial terms of withdrawal in order to comply with the  
12                  requirements of the former 16 V.S.A. § 724(c);

13                  (4) preparation of a proposed budget by the board of the new school  
14                  district for the fiscal year beginning on the district's operational date, together  
15                  with presentation to and approval by the district's voters prior to that date;

16                  (5) preparation for the provision of supervisory union services to the  
17                  new school district and, if applicable, for the transition of the union school  
18                  district from a supervisory district structure to a supervisory union structure;  
19                  and

20                  (6) all other actions necessary to transition from one school district to  
21                  two districts and, if applicable, to transition from a supervisory district

1       structure to a supervisory union structure, including any actions necessary to  
2       address the collectively bargained rights of employees of the former employing  
3       entity.

4       (g) Repeal. This section is repealed on July 1, 2025.

5       Sec. 8. TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

6           SCHOOL CLOSURES

7       (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a union school  
8       district shall be prohibited from closing a school building within its district  
9       unless the school building closure has already been accounted for in the fiscal  
10      year 2023 school budget or the closure is approved by the district voters  
11      residing in the town in which the building is located. For the purposes of this  
12      section, “closing a school building” means the district ceases to use the  
13      building to provide direct education for a majority of the grades operated  
14      within the building on or before July 1, 2022.

15       (b) This section is repealed on July 1, 2024.

16       Sec. 9. UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT CLOSURES; REPORT

17       On or before September 1, 2023, the Agency of Education shall issue a  
18      written report to the Senate and House Committees on Education on union  
19      school district school building closures. In preparing the report, the Agency  
20      shall consult with the State Board of Education, the Vermont School Boards  
21      Association, the Vermont Principals’ Association, the Vermont

**Commented [ESJ16]:** This section prohibits union school districts from closing a school building, except under a limited number of circumstances, for the next two years.

**Commented [ESJ17]:** This section requires AOE to prepare a report on union school district school building closures.

1       Superintendents Association, the Vermont National Education Association,  
2       and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. The Agency shall also solicit  
3       and consider comments from the public. The report shall include:  
4            (1) an examination of examples of recent school closures, or attempted  
5           school closures, within union school districts and identification of common  
6           trends and issues;  
7            (2) an examination of the impact school closures have had or are  
8           anticipated to have on towns or member districts seeking to withdraw from a  
9           union school district;  
10          (3) an examination of the issues leading a school board to consider  
11          closing a school building, the options to address the issue that could be  
12          employed instead of school closure, and the impact the inability to close a  
13          school building has had or is expected to have on the union school district or  
14          any of the towns or member districts within it;  
15          (4) an examination of the factors that should be used to determine  
16          school viability and sustainability and how those factors relate to school  
17          closure decisions;  
18          (5) an examination of the advantages and disadvantages of creating a  
19          consistent statewide process for union school district school closures and a  
20          common definition of what actions constitute a closure;  
21          (6) recommendations on school closure standards and processes; and

1           (7) recommendations for legislative action, including recommended  
2           legislative language.

3           Sec. 10. UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT WITHDRAWAL; ANNUAL

4           REPORT

5           The Agency of Education shall make an annual report to the Senate and  
6           House Committees on Education on or before January 15. The report shall  
7           include a detailed analysis of each union school district withdrawal action the  
8           Agency reviewed during the preceding year. The report shall also include any  
9           recommendations for legislative action.

**Commented [ESJ18]:** This section requires an annual for the next 5 years report from AOE on withdrawal activity.

10          Sec. 11. 16 V.S.A. § 1804 is added to read:

11          § 1804. EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION; NEW SCHOOL DISTRICT

12          CREATED UPON WITHDRAWAL FROM A UNION SCHOOL

13          DISTRICT

14          (a) Definitions. The definitions in section 1801 of this subchapter shall not  
15          apply to this section. As used in this section:

16          (1) “Expanded district” means a school district:

17          (A) that was responsible for the education of students residing in a  
18          single town for some, but not all, grades, whether by operating all grades,  
19          tuitioning all grades, or operating some grades and paying tuition for others;  
20          and

**Commented [ESJ19]:** Brand new language proposed by NEA/VSBA that addresses how employment contracts are handled when there is a withdrawal from a union school district.

1                   (B) that, as the result of its withdrawal from a union elementary or  
2                   union high school district pursuant to section 725 of this title, is solely  
3                   responsible for the education of its resident students in all grades  
4                   prekindergarten through grade 12, whether by operating all grades, tuitioning  
5                   all grades, or operating some grades and paying tuition for others.

6                   (2) “New district” means:

7                   (A) a school district created by withdrawal from a unified union  
8                   school district pursuant to section 724 of this title that is responsible for the  
9                   prekindergarten through grade 12 education of students residing in a single  
10                  town, whether by operating all grades, tuitioning all grades, or operating some  
11                  grades and paying tuition for others;

12                  (B) a school district responsible for the prekindergarten through  
13                  grade 12 education of students residing in a single town, whether by operating  
14                  all grades, tuitioning all grades, or operating some grades and paying tuition  
15                  for others, that was formed when another town’s withdrawal from a unified  
16                  union school district resulted in dissolution of the union district;

17                  (C) an expanded district that did not operate any schools immediately  
18                  prior to withdrawal and, after withdrawal, operates a school in one or more of  
19                  the grades previously operated by the union district; or

20                  (D) a school district created by withdrawal from a union elementary  
21                  or union high school district pursuant to section 725 of this title if prior to

1       withdrawal the withdrawing member was a member of both a union  
2       elementary school district and a union high school district, was not  
3       independently organized as a district responsible for the education of students  
4       in any grade, and did not have a town school district board.

5           (3) “Operational date” means the date on which a new district or an  
6       expanded district assumes full and sole responsibility for the education of its  
7       resident students in the grades for which the union district was previously  
8       responsible. “Initial operational year” and “second operational year” mean the  
9       year commencing on the operational date and the year immediately following  
10      the initial operational year, respectively.

11          (4) “Transitional period” means the period of time beginning on the day  
12       on which the State Board declares the creation and existence of the new district  
13       or the expanded district pursuant to subdivision 724(h)(2) or 725(h)(2) of this  
14       title and continuing until the new district’s or newly expanded district’s  
15      operational date.

16           (b) Negotiations council and recognized representatives of a new district.  
17       At its first meeting during the transitional period, the board of a new district  
18      shall:  
19           (1) appoint a school board negotiations council for the new district for  
20       the purpose of negotiating with the representatives of future licensed and  
21       nonlicensed employees of the new district; and

1                   (2) recognize the representative of the employees of the union school  
2                   district as the recognized representative of the employees of the new district.  
3                   (c) Employment agreements for the initial and second operational years of  
4                   a new district.  
5                   (1) After the new district's organizational meeting, the new district's  
6                   school board negotiations council and the representative of the employees of  
7                   the new district shall commence negotiations relating to the employment of  
8                   licensed and nonlicensed employees in the initial operational year.  
9                   Negotiations shall be conducted pursuant to the provisions of chapter 57 of this  
10                  title for teachers and administrators and 21 V.S.A. chapter 22 for other  
11                  employees. The negotiations council or councils representing employees of  
12                  the union school district shall represent the employees of the new district  
13                  unless and until the exclusive representative for employees of the new district  
14                  designates new representatives to a negotiations council.  
15                  (2) If the parties do not ratify a new agreement at least 90 days prior to  
16                  the new district's operational date, then the new district and its employees shall  
17                  be governed by the terms of the collectively bargained agreement in place for  
18                  the union district for the year preceding the initial operational year unless and  
19                  until the parties agree otherwise.  
20                  (d) Non-probationary employees; changes to seniority and other provisions.  
21                  For each new district and its employees, whether governed by an agreement in

1       the initial operational year pursuant to subdivision (c)(1) or (c)(2) of this  
2       section:  
3        (1) an employee of the union district in the year preceding the initial  
4       operational year who was not a probationary employee of the union district at  
5       the conclusion of that year shall not be considered a probationary employee if  
6       employed by the new district in the initial operational year; and  
7        (2) prior to the operational date, the board of the union district, the board  
8       of the new district, and the representative of the employees of the union district  
9       may negotiate a temporary memorandum of understanding to adjust provisions  
10      in the union district contract regarding seniority, reductions in force, layoff,  
11      and recall in order to assist the workforce needs of both the union district and  
12      the new district and the best interests of the licensed and nonlicensed  
13      employees they employ.  
14       (e) Individual employment contracts not covered by a collective bargaining  
15      agreement. On its operational date, the new district shall assume the  
16      obligations of each existing individual employment contract, including accrued  
17      leave and associated benefits, of any union district employee not covered by a  
18      collective bargaining agreement who worked in the building located in the new  
19      district in the year preceding the initial operational year and who chooses to  
20      continue to work in the same capacity in that building in the initial operational  
21      year.

1       (f) Supervisory unions. If the State Board creates a new supervisory union  
2       to provide services to the new district and one or more other school districts,  
3       then the provisions of subsections (b) through (e) of this section shall apply to  
4       the transition of any employee who was employed by the union district in the  
5       year prior to the initial operational year to provide services typically provided  
6       by a supervisory union employee, if the employee is employed by the new  
7       supervisory union in the initial operational year to provide the same services,  
8       with the board of the new supervisory union assuming the responsibilities of  
9       the board of the new district as outlined in subsections (b) through (e) of this  
10      section.

11     Sec. 12. APPLICATION OF EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION PROVISIONS

12     The provisions of Sec. 11 of this act shall also apply to any school district  
13     with an operational date of July 1, 2023 or later if the State Board of Education  
14     created the district as the result of a withdrawal action initiated pursuant to the  
15     terms of 16 V.S.A. § 721a or § 724 that were in effect on January 1, 2022.

16     Sec. 13. EFFECTIVE DATE

17     This act shall take effect on passage.

**Commented [ESJ20]:** Changed from July 1, 2022 to on passage.