

Dear Members of the House Education Committee.

I am a resident of Starksboro, Addison County, and a member of the Starksboro Save Our Schools Committee, which is opposing efforts to close our equitable, effective, and treasured Robinson Elementary School. I fervently ask you not to include the State Board of Education's proposed revision of section 724 of Title 16 (the withdrawal provisions) in your rewrite of Chapter 11.

- This is not about Act 46. Rather it is about whether the residents of a town or city will be denied a vote on critical issues affecting the education of their students, such as closing their town elementary school.
- Town Meeting Day votes across the state show that voters are capable of rationally deciding whether or not to withdraw from a school district, depending upon local circumstances. Some towns decided to support withdrawal. Some voted to stay in their school district.
- In the case of Starksboro, the past 15 months have resulted in a broken relationship between the school district and the community.
  - The district planned for months to close our school without a town vote, despite provisions of our articles of agreement guaranteeing a town vote before closing a school.
  - Then a merger study committee was formed that will allow new articles of agreement to circumvent the town vote promise.
- It would be ironic in the extreme if the Vermont Legislature, with its reputation for supporting vibrant democracy, would sanction a proposal to silence democracy on such a fundamental issue as where young students should learn.

Our students and our town are depending on you to strike the State Board of Education's proposed section 724 from your committee bill.

Herb Olson  
401-829-1678