

To: Vermont General Assembly
2022 Legislative Reapportionment

From: Wheelock Board of Civil Authority

Date: January 26, 2022

Re: Wheelock Board of Civil Authority Response to the "Minority Alternative Map"

On Monday January 25, 2021 at 5:00pm, the Wheelock's Board of Civil Authority (BCA) held a publicly-warned, hybrid meeting (Zoom and in-person at Town Hall) to consider the Legislative Apportionment Board's "Minority Alternative Map".

Members present:

Kim Crady-Smith, BCA Chair

Carol Rossi

Ann Lawless, Selectboard Chair

Eileen Boland

Vanessa Seguin, Town Clerk

Not present: Steve Amos

Peter Miller, Town Moderator

Wheelock's BCA did not formally respond to the earlier request for comment on the majority map, but that map was part of this discussion when considering the minority alternative map.

Although BCA members appreciate the service of our two representatives to the Vermont House, it was noted that the current Orleans-Caledonia district has been less than ideal. Although the current district technically meets the second statutory criterion for a district...

"In establishing representative districts, which shall afford equality of representation, the General Assembly shall seek to maintain **geographical compactness and contiguity...**" – Chapter II, §13, Vt. Constitution. (Emphasis added)

... four of the seven towns are in Orleans County and the district is split along county lines by a mountain.

The residents of the two counties belong to different school districts and human services catchment areas and are oriented to different commercial zones and hospitals, which does not meet the fourth statutory district criterion:

"The representative and senatorial districts shall be formed consistent with the following policies insofar as practicable... (2) **recognition and maintenance of patterns of geography, social interaction, trade, political ties and common interests;**" – 17 V.S.A. § 1903. (Emphasis added)

Both the majority and minority maps address these shortcomings by placing Wheelock in a new district with other Caledonia towns; the majority map with a single member district and the minority map with a two-member district. It might appear that Wheelock would support either map, however, that is not the case.

BCA members are very aware of the interrelationships among all the rural communities in Caledonia County. The Caledonia towns outlined in both maps are oriented to the Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital, the same local Human Services and Natural Resources offices, plus the Caledonia Courthouse--all of which are in St. Johnsbury.

Wheelock does not operate a high school and is a "choice" town where the majority of residents enroll their high school age children in either Lyndon Institute or St. Johnsbury Academy and strongly support each school. The administrative offices for our school district are located in Lyndon. Wheelock residents rely on and support Lyndon and St. Johnsbury businesses.

Our BCA's view of the majority map is unfavorable because of the awkward carve-outs from the towns of Lyndon and St. Johnsbury to create a new single member district. The minority, alternative map avoids dividing any Caledonia town between two districts.

The BCA appreciates the public policy goal of single member districts, however it appears that the interests our region, the lowest population area of the state, are better served by the minority, alternative map. It maintains each town's integrity by placing them in both one and two-member districts.

The Wheelock BCA voted unanimously to support the minority, alternative map.

Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Boland, Justice of the Peace, BCA member