

Adopted by the BCA, January 31, 2022

TO: House Committee on Government Operations
FR: Corinth Board of Civil Authority
DT: January 31, 2022
RE: Feedback on H. 589 and the alternative map

The Corinth Board of Civil Authority met on January 31, 2022 to consider the alternative map as passed by the Vermont House in H. 589 on January 18th. We are writing today to voice our strong and unanimous objection to the alternative map, particularly with being placed in a two-member district with Williamstown.

The map proposes a five-town district comprised of Chelsea, Corinth, Vershire, Washington, and Williamstown. Of those five towns, four have a very similar rural character and share similar populations within a few hundred of each other. Yet Williamstown's population is much larger- more than double that of the next largest town. Williamstown would have a 44% share of population in the new district. This sort of dominance, in a two member district, leaves the other four towns under-represented in a district that has the right numbers, yet confers dominance on one town out of five. This dynamic strikes us as both un-representative and undemocratic.

This is not an unfamiliar situation. We are currently in a six-town, two-member district with Williamstown, which has 40 plus percent of the district population. Over the past 20 years, there have been representatives from Chelsea, Corinth, Washington, and Orange. Yet in these past 20 years, Williamstown has always had a representative in one of the two seats. This indicates to us a problem with the system. When one town with less than a majority of the population can always claim one seat, what prevents them from claiming both seats?

This is a particularly unappealing situation for Corinth because our town has virtually zero community ties with Williamstown. We have no economic, social, or political ties to Williamstown. We do not shop there, work there, or even drive through there on the way to other places. We do not share a school district with Williamstown, and none of the students in our high school choice school district choose to go to high school in Williamstown.

For these reasons, the Corinth Board of Civil Authority respectfully requests that Corinth be placed in a one member district with towns of similar population and rural character. Other than feeling it unfair to be yoked to Williamstown, we understand the challenge you have in making the numbers work, so we will not make recommendations about which town should go with which. We will be satisfied to be placed in a single member district with any of the towns around us.