

Rural Caucus Notes

3/2/23

Vermont Law School

Discussing Carson v. Makin and why it poses a problem for Vermont

-The supreme court discussion ruled against Maine's tuition reimbursement system was nearly identical to Vermont's.

-Only one restriction on tuition reimbursement.

-A school was not eligible if the school's education and curriculum were strictly religious.

-Supreme Court determined that if a state chooses to subsidize the system, it cannot exclude schools based solely on religious belief.

-Article 3 of the Vermont Constitution does not allow the use of tax dollars for religious use.

-The Supreme Court says that you cannot exclude schools based on religious reasons and the Vermont Constitution says that you can't use tax dollars to fund for religious purposes.

-Puts Vermont in a tough position.

H.258

-What does the bill do?

-Will continue to employ a tuition reimbursement system.

-The only schools that are eligible for reimbursement are those that meet 3 out of 4 criteria.

-The effect is that only 4 private schools qualify and will be eligible for reimbursement.

-Does not violate the Supreme Court ruling as religious belief has nothing to do with the 4 criteria.

-Does not violate the Vermont constitution as tax dollars will not have to be used for religious purposes.

-Includes a transition period.

-Allows districts to convert private schools to public schools over a period of time.

Affordable Heat Act (S.5)

-This bill is an update to the Clean Heat Standard.

-There is a gap in services.

-Customers who want to transition away from fossil fuels are not able to financially do so.

-Created a performance standard to make the transition away from fossil fuels equitable.

-The Affordable Heat Act is bringing fuel dealers into this transition process.

-Bill is assessing and evaluating alternative energy sources.

-Bill added an equity advisory group that targeted low and moderate-income customers.

-Implementation would happen in two years.

-Expanding the ability to transition.

-This can be an opportunity for very small fuel dealers to have a bigger market that they can participate in.

- As fuel prices go up, consumers move to larger dealers.
- This transition would bring back the viability of small dealers and allow them to compete.