

Good morning Chair Ann Cummings and Senate Finance Committee

Notes for my testimony today 5/9/2023:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify for Senate Finance today. I believe it is really important for this committee to continue to take input from stakeholders as to date there remains significantly faulty information in the bill and in the premises upon which it is based.

Please also refer to our VALA website at <https://valavt.org/> and to our statements attached to this e-mail, which are also posted on our website.

VALA is somewhat pleased and relieved that the bill has evolved away from creating a state reappraisal office program for the moment; however, we remain concerned that the "study" planned for the year ahead will bring us right back to that point. We sincerely hope that this will be a true study of the feasibility of this project and not be a process of confirming what the original Bill intended from the start.

VALA also remains concerned about the lack of understanding in the bill of the "lead time" required in implementing some of these changes, and unintended consequences that may be the result of this lack of understanding. The current delays and problems with the VT Pie new Grand List program are a case in point. To paraphrase one of the PVR District Advisors "We didn't understand all that was involved in implementing this new software." This was stated by a DA with only a few years of experience to a Lister with several decades of experience who was rather astounded. The Lister was thinking "We at VALA did attempt to give the input explaining all that would be involved, and this input was disregarded."

At this point, the delays in the VT Pie program will likely require extensions to filing the Grand List for all of my towns, and for many more throughout Vermont. I think you will understand the financial implications if all towns are delayed in this, which in turn will delay tax bills going out and then in turn will delay tax revenue being received.

I would also like to address the apparent bias I have heard through this process that "Listers" are inferior in qualifications and ability to that of "Assessors". This is an unfortunate bias which demeans so many hard working Assessors who happen to be elected Listers and also makes the erroneous assumption that the title of Assessor automatically makes one more qualified to do this work. The fact is we are all Assessors and the only difference in what we are do is that of acting under the authority of a Board of Listers rather than that of an individual Assessor. Further, consider that a Board of several elected Listers might have more ability to be impartial than a sole individual and might have more autonomy to operate in a fair and impartial manner than an Assessor who is hired and must report to a Select Board.

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