

February 12, 2024

To: School Boards, Superintendents, and School District Clerks
From: Vermont Secretary of State, Vermont School Boards Association, and Vermont Superintendents Association
Re: H.850 - An act relating to transitioning education financing to the new system for pupil weighting

Hello,

As you may already be aware, the Legislature is considering [H.850](#). This bill revises the calculation that school districts use to determine their budget. H.850 is not yet law. There is some chance that it will be amended or not become law.

Under the current version of the bill, school districts that have already warned, printed, and/or mailed ballots for a March 5 annual meeting may cancel the vote on the budget-related article(s) and reschedule voting. They may also postpone the entire annual meeting.

A pre-existing law, [Act 1 \(2023\)](#), already allows districts to postpone the date of their annual meeting. This statute sunsets on July 1, 2024. Therefore, you do not need to wait for H.850 to become law in order to postpone the vote or the entire meeting. Although Act 1 (2023) does not contain the deadline of April 15th, it appears that school districts will have a deadline of April 15, 2024, in H.850. We suggest that if you wish to act under Act 1 (2023) you use a date on or before April 15th.

One difference between Act 1 (2023) and H.850 is that H.850 appropriates funds to reimburse districts for any costs incurred because of rescheduling. The reimbursable expenses include the costs to reprint and mail ballots for the rescheduled votes, inclusive of costs for additional staff/election worker time spent on these activities. The Vermont Secretary of State's Office will be overseeing the administration of those reimbursements.

At this point, the process for reimbursement would be:

1. Clerks will submit additional costs to the school districts;
2. School districts will tally the total costs for the district, which could include multiple towns;
3. School districts will submit the total costs to the Vermont Secretary of State's Office;
4. Funds will be mailed to school districts; and,
5. School districts will reimburse town(s).

We will keep you updated on the progress of this bill. We understand that not all districts will take advantage of this option to amend their budget vote or cancel their meeting and we don't know if H.850 will become law. However, we are encouraging boards and superintendents to begin discussions now. To help you navigate this process and reduce confusion among your voters as much as possible we are enclosing:

1. Memo for School Boards and Superintendents related to changes proposed within H.850 (An act relating to transitioning education financing to the new system for pupil weighting)
2. Memo for School District Clerks/Town Clerks related to the changes proposed within H.850 (An act relating to transitioning education financing to the new system for pupil weighting)

Any board discussions and actions must take place in a properly warned public meeting. It is important to remember that individual board chairs and board members do not have authority to act for the board.

School districts please reach out to your clerk to let them know your intention if H.850 passes and is signed into law. Clerks need this time to prepare and properly address ballots that are being returned before the annual meeting.

We understand the extra work and time this will require for all of you. Thank you in advance for the work you will do to reduce confusion and concern for your voters. The legislature was aware of this stress and burden as well and considered the changes to the budget calculation formula to be important enough to outweigh these concerns. Our most important guidance for those of you who navigate this process is to communicate as much and as clearly as possible about it with your voters. Please communicate with your voters in as many ways as possible – your website, newspapers, email lists, front porch forum, etc., to get the message out. Costs incurred for these communications will also be eligible for reimbursement.

Again, we recognize this is additional complexity for you all. We are here to support you.