



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Peter Conlon, Chair of the House Committee on Education  
From: Beth St. James, Legislative Counsel  
Date: April 1, 2025  
Subject: School district voting ward considerations

Representative Conlon,

You have asked for information regarding what sort of staffing or other resources would be needed to create voting wards within new, larger school districts. My understanding from our conversations is that you are looking at beginning this work during the 2026 legislative session. The process to create proportional representation in larger school districts would be a new process to Vermont law, however the legislative reapportionment process contains some helpful parallels. While I am sure there are things I am not thinking of at the moment, based on the process of legislative reapportionment, here is what I believe you need to consider, at a minimum, to be appropriately staffed, resourced, and organized to create voting wards within new, larger school districts.

1. Practical Considerations

- a. Whether you create school district boundaries and determine voting wards at the same time is a policy decision. However, even small changes in district boundaries would likely require the reconsideration and rebalancing of voting wards within a district.
- b. For Legislative reapportionment, the General Assembly does not start this work from scratch, as is being suggested here. The Legislative Reapportionment Board (LAB) works during the summer and fall to make proposals to the General Assembly for reapportionment. LAB also takes a significant amount of public testimony and input.
- c. Based on the work of the LAB and the General Assembly to arrive at a final product in legislative reapportionment, the creation of school district voting wards could take between 6-8 months.
- d. In order for school board member initial elections to occur in November 2026, the Secretary of State [testified](#) on March 26<sup>th</sup> that “[w]ard boundaries would need to be passed and signed into law by May 15 of the election year to allow for elections in the November General Election.”
- e. In Legislative reapportionment, the House and Senate are each responsible for their own reapportionment processes. Legislation creating school

district voting wards would require *both* bodies to assent to the same plan for apportionment of the districts.

## 2. Staff and Resources

- a. Mapping specialist. For legislative reapportionment, the Legislature contracts with a mapping specialist, which seems necessary for the creation of school district voting wards as well. If this work will be done during the 2026 session, the appropriation for this position would need to be included in the budget this year. The contract for the position would need to be fully executed prior to the start of the 2026 session.
- b. Mapping software. IT would need to be consulted regarding how many licenses to purchase, which vendor/software to use, etc. If this work will be done during the 2026 session, this appropriation would need to be included in this year's budget, and the contract would need to be fully executed prior to the start of the 2026 session.
- c. Several public input sessions are likely during this process. You would want to ensure that there is appropriate staff available for such meetings, especially if meetings were to occur outside of normal business hours or in locations outside of the State House.
- d. Policy choices regarding organization (see below) may impact whether additional staff is needed.

## 3. Organization

- a. Will this work be done by one of the standing policy committees? If so, this is likely to be the Committee's only work.
- b. Will this work be done by a new standing committee?
  - i. If so, you may need to establish this body this session.
  - ii. Additional staff may be needed if the expectation is that the applicable policy committees would continue to operate and conduct business as usual.
- c. Will this work be done by a special committee? Joint or separate?
  - i. House, Senate, or Joint Rules or may need to be adopted.
  - ii. Additional staff may be needed if the expectation is that the applicable policy committees would continue to operate and conduct business as usual.