

**S.348**, the Senate bill that would **increase the mandatory school attendance age from 16 to 18**, and would require schools to develop “Personal Education Plans” for students who appear to be at risk of leaving school before graduating from high school, was introduced on the floor of the Senate this afternoon. The bill requires students who want to leave school before graduating or attaining the age of 18 to go through processes at school, and in some cases before school boards, to obtain waivers of its mandatory attendance requirements. By increasing the mandatory attendance age, and by subjecting schools to new process requirements, S.348 clearly adds costs to already over-burdened school budgets.

The presentation of the bill by its sponsors, and an accompanying report of the Appropriations Committee, did not give specific attention to its cost implications for school districts. Senator Racine did begin to raise questions about the potential costs associated with implementing the bill, and noted its contradiction with the ever-increasing pressure on school districts to reduce costs rather than add new ones. The Senate adjourned before this discussion was concluded, and will take up debate tomorrow morning where it left off this afternoon. There will almost certainly be a vote on S.348 tomorrow morning.

**S.348 is a well-intentioned bill, aimed at reducing the number of students who drop out of school without the necessary skills to assure their future success. Unfortunately, S.348 comes at a time when school districts are being criticized for spending too much money by some of the same legislators who now support its passage.**

To read S.348 on today’s Senate Calendar, go to this link:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/legdoc.cfm?URL=/docs/2008/calendar/sc080326.htm>.

Because the Senate has delayed action on S.348 for another day, you have an opportunity to email your Senators this evening with a message encouraging them not to impose more financial burdens on school districts through the passage of S.348. According to the Educational Testing Service, Vermont improved its high school completion record during the 1990’s at a far greater rate than any other state, and our drop out rate has declined steadily since the mid-1990’s. Of course, we want to further reduce the number of students who leave school before graduating, but S.348 does little to help schools achieve that objective.

**Please encourage your Senators to oppose S.348.** Senators’ email addresses can be found at this link:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/e-mail2.cfm?Body=S>.

Thank you.

John A. Nelson, Executive Director  
Vermont School Boards Association  
2 Prospect Street  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
802-223-3580