

VERMONT



SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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Great Governance, Excellent Education, Strong Communities

Officers

January 24, 2017

Statement Re: Governor Scott's Budget Address

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The VSBA has supported Governor Scott in his calls for greater affordability and protection for Vermont's most vulnerable. The education proposals unveiled today, referred to as "bold and transformative," miss the mark.

Vermont's public education system is already in the midst of a dynamic and historic time. Since the passage of Act 46, school board members around the state have devoted countless hours to developing plans for sustainable governance structures that have community support. In the past 19 months, Vermonters in 66 school districts voted to merge into 14 union school districts. Governance change is complex and time consuming and is intended to lead to a more affordable and sustainable public education system.

At the same time school districts are responding to Act 46, every school board in the state is bargaining changes to health insurance plans – changes that could result in savings of over \$26 million to taxpayers.

Governor Scott's proposal to delay town meeting day and have boards go back to the drawing board on their budgets is a slight to the hard work and dedicated hours already put into the budget process by hundreds of local school board members. If the Governor wanted boards to level-fund budgets, he should have made that a central piece of his election campaign. Bringing this proposal forward after most boards have completed the difficult task of budgeting shows disregard for the elected officials overseeing Vermont's public school system.

Starting his term with the premise that there are millions of dollars in excess spending in education that can be readily accessed to fund initiatives like expanded child care belies the complexity of our system, ignores the work underway to right-size our districts, and will distract boards and their negotiations teams from their efforts to achieve savings for taxpayers through changes to employee health care plans.

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