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May 28, 2025

To the White River Valley community:

At its May 27th meeting, the White River Valley Supervisory Union Board of directors voted unanimously to withdraw from the Vermont School Board Association (VSBA). According to WRVSU board chair Kathy Galuzzo, "We don't take these decisions lightly. Our board spent months urging VSBA to listen to us and other rural districts. At the end of the day, it seems they prioritize their relationship with other lobbying professional organizations more than they do the member districts they serve."

The vote to terminate our relationship with the VSBA is a direct result of their continued advocacy against the interests of the ten communities we serve and the school children we educate. Remarkably, the VSBA's positions will likely have the perverse effect of raising taxes on communities that, like us, have been conscious stewards of our taxpayers' money.

The VSBA has lobbied for versions of bill H.454 that would allow the state to close many of our schools and result in:

- No promise of sustained tax relief, as no relevant empirical data has been produced showing otherwise. Act 46 has resulted in continued tax increases instead of the promised savings
- Long bus rides for our students who are currently attending their local schools
- Even longer bus rides for students who live in towns without schools, where we pay tuition to neighboring schools
- No community involvement in the difficult decisions around the future of our schools
- The dissolution of supervisory unions, where members of local districts come together, working with community members and each other for democratic decision making

WRVSU has taken many steps to ensure that the VSBA understands the impact of proposed legislation on small rural communities. Our concerns were summarily dismissed as mere differences of opinion. The VSBA is either unwilling or unable to comprehend the fundamental harm they are doing to the many rural districts comprising its membership.

A new organization, the Rural School Community Alliance (RSCA), has established itself as a strong ally, helping rural schools vocally oppose legislation that forces school closure without providing any evidence of tax savings. Our board is encouraged by the RSCA's agility and willingness to listen.

The WRVSU board is not accountable to politicians in Montpelier but to our member towns, our taxpayers, and our schoolchildren. We've successfully overcome forced mergers of Act 46, school closings, and difficult budget cycles. We have on-the-ground experience facing difficult decisions. We also take our civic duties seriously. We cannot continue to responsibly support VSBA, an organization that collects \$9,681 in annual dues and then uses those funds to lobby against our continued existence.

We hope you will join us in continuing to contact your lawmakers to voice your concern for the threats posed to the future of our schools by the current version of H.454.

Sincerely,

The WRVSU Board of Directors

Kathy Galuzzo, Chair, kgalluzzo@wrvsu.org

Stacey Peters, Vice-Chair, speters@wrvsu.org