

Thank you, madam chair. Good afternoon, everybody.

With all due respect to legislators at the table and out there everywhere, I have long taken issue with their use of the word “notwithstanding” when they want to skirt around the law. The Jim Douglas administration persuaded legislators to not make the entire transfer from the General Fund to the Education Fund, holding back \$12.5 million, notwithstanding that the amount was clearly prescribed in statute; with Peter Shumlin it was \$25 million; and Phil Scott orchestrated clawing back \$50 million, notwithstanding that voters had approved those monies to support our schools.

That said, given the pressing need to alleviate tax burdens on Vermont property owners, please allow me to propose using “notwithstanding” as one means to that end by pointing to some low-hanging fruit: Tax Increment Finance Districts. As we speak, the Killington Access Road is being upgraded, including – in addition to excavation and paving – laying in water, sewer and power lines, all with tens of millions of dollars from the Ed Fund, so that a developer might be enticed to build a multi-million dollar ski village. So, notwithstanding the fact that current Vermont Statutes allow for this, I respectfully request that this Commission recommend that the Legislature enact an immediate moratorium on that practice. Further, I recommend that moratorium be for at least 16 years, which is how long our public school infrastructure has suffered without state support for capital projects while we pave roads and build parking decks with monies intended for educating our children.

A lot of rhetoric has been devoted to *cost* containment, but I submit another perspective for this Commission, and particularly the Finance Subcommittee, is *revenue* containment. That is, stop diverting revenues from the Ed Fund to projects and entities that do not align with the requirement in the Vermont Constitution to provide benefits common to all citizens. That, in turn, will help contain costs for all Vermont property taxpayers, while at the same time providing more resources for our public school system.

I also request to provide supplemental written testimony to this line of thought by having a commentary of mine that was published in December of last year attached to this meeting’s minutes. Please note that I wrote that prior to the formation of Friends of Vermont Public Education, so I was speaking for myself at that time.

Thank you,

Ken Fredette,
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