



# VLCT LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

SERVING AND STRENGTHENING VERMONT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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**Date** April 22, 2016  
**To** Legislative Alert Distribution List  
**From** Karen Horn, Director, Public Policy and Advocacy  
**Re** Education Funding Bill

In our [Weekly Legislative Report No. 14](#), we reported on [H.853](#) as it passed the House. The bill would establish the property tax dollar equivalent (\$9,701) and income dollar equivalent (\$10,870) yields as well as the non-residential property tax base rate (\$1.53).

The House-passed version of H.853 also would require the legislative Joint Fiscal Office to estimate an “unfunded education mandate amount,” which would be the total amount required from supervisory unions and school districts to perform *any action mandated in a session that was enacted without funding*. The governor’s next budget would be required to include a transfer of the unfunded education mandate amount from the General Fund to Education Fund for the fiscal year commencing July 1 of the following year. Additionally, fiscal notes would need to be prepared for any legislation requiring action by a supervisory union or school that is mandated without a specifically identified appropriation.

The Senate Education Committee voted out an amended bill early this week that would set the property dollar equivalent yield at \$9,654 and the income dollar equivalent yield at \$10,803. The non-residential education property tax would be set at \$1.539. The bill was then referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

The version of H.853 that was voted out of the Senate Education Committee eliminated sections of the bill that would require a calculation of an unfunded education mandate amount, accompanying fiscal notes and a transfer of funds from the General Fund to the Education Fund to cover those unfunded mandates.

Those deleted sections of the bill would provide much needed transparency and accountability in the legislative process when legislators seek to impose new mandates on schools and new obligations on the Education Fund. They would highlight the obligation – at least a moral one – to fund new education mandates from the General Fund instead of from increases in education property taxes that comprise the vast bulk of the Education Fund.

Contact your senators and urge them to restore the unfunded education mandate amounts language that was in Sections 4, 5, and 6 of H.853 as it passed the House. The members of the Senate Finance Committee are Timothy Ashe (chair), Mark MacDonald, Virginia Lyons, Kevin Mullin, Claire Ayer, Michael Sirotkin, and Dustin Degree. You can contact your senators and members of the committee through the Office of the Sergeant at Arms (802-828-2228), or via email though <http://legislature.vermont.gov/people/all/2016/Senate>. Contact information for the Gov Ops Committee members is at <http://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/detail/2016/26>.

Please copy VLCT on any correspondence you generate in this matter.

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