



November 20, 2023

The Honorable Emilie Kornheiser
State Representative
Vermont House of Representatives
58 Goodenough Road
Brattleboro, VT 05301

Dear Representative Kornheiser:

We appreciated hearing your insights into the state's property valuation system during the VLCT November Board meeting. Thank you for taking time to visit with municipal leadership on this topic. We are writing to request that you consider making a few legislative changes to Act 68 of 2023 during the upcoming session to codify the sentiments you and Deputy Commissioner Sameroff shared at the Board meeting. Specifically, we request language to better empower local officials with influence over the Department's legislatively-required recommendations, direct the Department of Tax to include alternative solutions in addition to state consolidation in their report, and ask the Department to conduct a full cost-benefit analysis of any solutions compared to the existing system.

The maintenance of Vermont's grand list is a shared responsibility between municipal officials, private reappraisal firms, and the Vermont Department of Taxes. It is therefore distressing that the Legislature charged only the Department with the consideration of recommendations to improve the efficiency, consistency, and fairness of our property valuation system. We welcomed your comments during the VLCT November Board meeting encouraging Tax to conduct robust outreach to stakeholders. However, we specifically request that the Legislature direct a committee of stakeholders -- to include listers, assessors, private reappraisal firms with experience in Vermont, municipal legislative body members, clerks and treasurers, state officials and others -- with forming the ultimate recommendation for improving our state's property valuation system, not just the Department.

Further, Act 68 directs the Department to provide only one solution to improving our state's property valuation system: the creation of "...a statewide system to conduct reappraisals...administered by the State...". We appreciated hearing that the Department intends to broaden their analysis to include alternate solutions that increase efficiency, consistency, and fairness of the system, including a recommendation that maintains the municipal involvement in the reappraisal system. It appeared you also supported the Department considering a wider array of solutions than only consolidation. We request language be included in Act 68 that specifically directs the Department to consider any and all solutions that address these issues, not only state consolidation.

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Finally, Act 68 calls for the Department to consider how much a centralized system would cost, and how to pay for it. However, it does not call for other solutions other than centralization, and therefore does not call for cost comparisons or a cost-benefit model comparing the current system to any proposed

November solution. Currently, municipalities and the state share the cost of maintaining the grand list. While the state provides a per-parcel fee that helps municipalities conduct reappraisals, regular maintenance of the grand list is increasingly absorbed by local budgets. Any recommendation to improve the current property valuation system should be accompanied by a cost-benefit analysis of the existing system, the new statewide proposal, and ideally, maintaining the municipally-led system with changes.

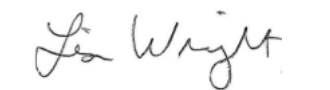
We also intend to work closely with the Department as they prepare their report and implementation plan. However, we hope you agree that making these changes in statute could improve the likelihood of finding implementable solutions to the challenges facing our property valuation system.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact us directly at tbrady@vlct.org, wrightapprco@aol.com, or holland1805@hotmail.com with any questions or to discuss this issue in detail.

Sincerely,



Ted Brady
Executive Director
VLCT


VALA President

Lisa Wright
President
VALA



Diane Judd
President
VMCTA

Cc: Sen. Ann Cummings, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Rep. Michael McCarthy, Chair, House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs
Sen. Ruth Hardy, Chair, Senate Committee on Government Operations