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Lt. Governor Scott Issues Statement on Act 46

MONTPELIER, VT - Lt. Governor Phil Scott today issued the following statement on Act 46:

"While Act 46 is an imperfect law which, unfortunately, does not provide immediate tax relief, it does create an opportunity to address a significant part of unsustainable and unaffordable increases in property taxes and the inability of many schools to make adequate investments in educational opportunities for our children.

Rightsizing our education system is a difficult discussion to have, even with the guiding motivations of addressing the economic impacts of rising property taxes and our desire to give every child the best education possible. But we must have it and the Legislature deserves credit for jumpstarting this conversation.

There's no doubt, however, the law has created a lot of confusion. Most now realize Act 46 is far from perfect and the Legislature has an obligation to clarify its intentions for local boards, parents and property tax payers.

For example, the controversial split between the State Board of Education's interpretation of the law and the expectation of legislators must be resolved as soon as possible.

When Act 46 was debated in the Legislature last spring, the law's sponsors and advocates indicated that communities with school choice could continue to choose to tuition their students to other schools. Now that the State Board of Education has interpreted the law as not allowing school choice in some merging districts, legislators on both sides of the aisle have come forward saying they would not have voted for the bill had they known it could remove school choice for constituents.

I believe the best way to address the situation is for the Legislature to come back in January and make absolutely clear that the law allows districts with choice to preserve that option if they elect to merge with other districts. That is how Act 46 was presented, and it's their obligation to make sure Vermonters get what their legislators voted for.

The Legislature should also be prepared to offer clarity in other areas as this necessary conversation moves forward and find ways to provide property tax relief for overburdened taxpayers."

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