

PROTECT OUR SCHOOLS - STOP LOONEY/DUFF FORCED SCHOOL REGIONALIZATION BILLS

WHAT IS IT?

Senate Bills #457 & 738 “An Act Concerning the Creation of Regional School Districts” were proposed by State Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney (D-New Haven) and Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff (D- Darien & Norwalk). The Bills’ purpose is to “create a more efficient educational system.” The Bills as written would mandate that school districts consolidate.

- School districts in municipalities with populations of less than 40,000 would be required to consolidate with other districts to form regional districts. In contrast, Sen Duff’s bill states that any town with a student population of less than 2,000 would be required to consolidate.
- A statewide plan for the regional consolidations would be developed by a commission created by the Bills. If this plan is not to be approved by the legislature by July 1, 2020, the plan would go into effect anyway for the 2021-2022 school year.
- School employee unions from two or more consolidating districts would either form a regional coalition or a new regional collective bargaining unit, and upon expiration of current agreements, would negotiate any future agreements on a regional basis.
- Language in the Bills mentions implementing consolidation “in manner similar to the probate districts”, but it is unclear what this means.

WHAT ARE THE RAMIFICATIONS?

- The Bill would eliminate local control of New Canaan schools.
- The experience of the already existing 16 regional school districts in CT has not led to cost savings and efficiencies.
- Larger scale and differing priorities could lead to a decline in the quality of New Canaan’s schools, as well as those of districts to be consolidated with New Canaan.
- The existence of the Bills is already dissuading potential homebuyers from considering New Canaan.

LEGISLATIVE PROCESS – THE PATH OF SB 738 (LOONEY) & SB 457 (DUFF)

Note: All committees in the CT legislature are joint House/Senate. The Bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education last week. The Education Committee is made up of 23 Democrats and 14 Republicans, including Gail Lavielle of Wilton. Of the members, 8 are from the Senate (6D-2R), and 29 are from the House (17D-12R).

- Bills are introduced by Sen. Looney and Sen. Duff – DONE

Committee Process

- Bills are referred to the Education Committee – DONE
- The Education Committee votes to consider the bills.
- Bills are fully drafted before hearing with input from both Chairs (majority) and both Ranking Members (minority)
- Notice of public hearing is provided 5 days before the date. Your voices would be very influential at this hearing.
- Hearing is held and lasts until every member of the public has testified; may last all night
- If Committee decides to call the bills for a vote, bills are revised based on input from hearing
- On or before April 1, the Committee votes on the bills. If the chairs think the bills will fail, they will not call a vote.
- If a vote is not called by April 1, the bills die.
- If it passes, the bills go to the screening committees of Senate Republicans and Senate Democrats. They discuss whether or not the bill will be referred to other committees.
- Bills will likely be referred to Appropriations. If Appropriations does not call a vote within a few days, the bill dies. This happens frequently with bills referred to Appropriations.
- Appropriations may ask the proponent to remove all provisions that require spending. If that happens, the bill is usually called, and may pass or fail.
- Referrals to other committees may also occur.

Senate

- If it clears all involved committees, the bills are placed on the Senate calendar.
- While awaiting a vote, the **bills may be extensively revised. Amendments may also be attached to it.**
- If the bills are not called for a vote before the end of the session, it dies.
- If it is called, that means that majority Senate leadership thinks it is likely to pass. 19 votes are required for passage, and the Lt. Governor may cast the deciding vote in a tie.
- The bills may pass as filed, or amendments may pass as well. If it passes, it is placed on the House calendar.

House

- The bills as passed in the Senate (including amendments) rarely change at this point. If it is amended in the House and passed, it has to go back to the Senate for another vote.
- If the bills are not called for a vote before midnight on June 5, it dies.
- If they are called, that means that the Speaker thinks it is likely to pass. 76 votes are required for passage.
- If it passes, it goes to the governor for a signature or a veto.