

Subject: The Newly Proposed Redistricting Map - Grand Isle

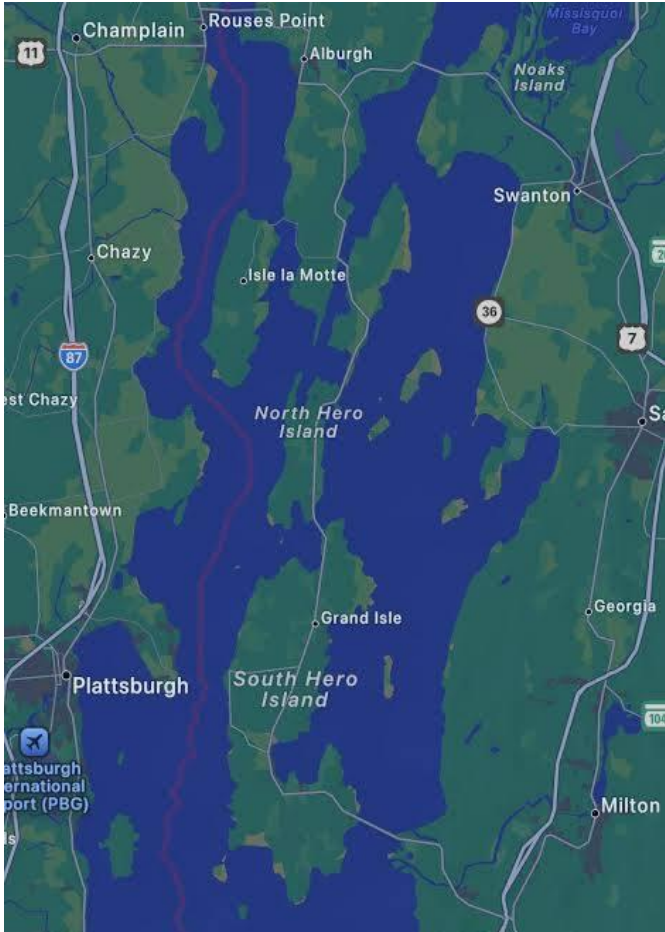
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To the Honorable Senate Committee on Education representatives of our Green Mountain State,

I find it a curious paradox of our modern age that while we possess the means to peer into the very heavens, we struggle to discern the geography of our own backyard. I would cheerfully invite our elected officials to cast an eye upon a map of not a mere abstraction of colored lines, but a true rendering of the earth. To a desk-bound observer looking at a country map it's easy to understand the impression that Grand Isle and Franklin County are spooning in a close embrace like it's cuffing season.



In truth, you will find that Franklin and Grand Isle are separated by a vast expanse of water known as the Inland Sea.





The Inland Sea is a formidable barrier, traversable only through the narrow passages of "The Gut", or the Alburgh Passage, or by boat. I warmly invite you to visit this part of the state.

Look, these proposed redistricting lines feel like someone looked at a map, spun it around three times, and said, "Yeah, that seems fine." They're ignoring what their adult constituents actually need, overlooking what kids genuinely require, and making an economic decision so shortsighted it's practically begging future generations to ask, "Why did our elected representatives decide to drag their own constituents down with them? Was it really that hard to simply not run for re-election?"

To cross that 25-mile stretch of the Islands takes nearly an hour on a good day, longer if a tractor driver decides today is the day he discovers his inner philosopher and moves at two miles per hour. That's before you even get to the other side of the lake. Add it all up, and suddenly every child is spending an extra 8-12 hours a week on a bus. While those kids are interning as junior long-haul truckers, their peers are at sports practice, music lessons, and robotics club doing all the things that help them grow into well-rounded humans.

As a citizen and parent, I implore you to look at more creative redistricting solutions. Consider these three truths:

- It's the Economy stupid: Chittenden County remains Vermont's economic engine. Much of Grand Isle, especially heavily taxed South Hero (which is relied upon for educational funding) has its economic life rooted squarely in Chittenden County. Families choose homes near their schools and employers. Schools in Colchester, Essex, and South Burlington align with the natural flow of work and life. Expecting a parent working in Burlington, Essex, or Williston to send their child north into Franklin County defies basic logic. You are, as a practical effect, asking people to move their homes.
- What about the children?: Long, unnecessary bus rides drain a child's energy and attention. Hours spent in transit aren't harmless downtime, they're lost opportunities for learning, social development, and rest. When students are stuck on a bus instead of in a structured environment disengagement is inevitable. It's not fair to them, and it's not good for their growth.
- The After-School Dividend: Learning doesn't stop at dismissal. Music lessons, sports, clubs, apprenticeships, and after-school programs overwhelmingly cluster in the Chittenden corridor right where many parents already work. Sending students in the opposite direction cuts them off from these opportunities. A child sitting on a bus can't join a robotics team, practice an instrument, or participate in a mentorship program. Those missed experiences shape futures.

Let us not sacrifice the health of our children or your political future on the altar of a bad idea pretending to be a map. I strongly urge you to revise this map to allow South Hero and Grand Isle families to retain their options in Chittenden County.

Cheers,
David Kirk
South Hero Resident