

**New Hampshire Municipal Association**

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

**Legislative Bulletin 24**

**2025 Session**

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## **House, Senate Reach Budget Deal, But ...**

The committee of conference on the FY 26-27 state budget, [HB 1](#) and [HB 2](#), agreed Thursday to a nearly \$16 billion spending package. The budget coming out of the committee will have an up-or-down vote in both chambers next **Thursday, June 26**, and cannot be amended. If adopted by the House and Senate, it will go to the governor, who can sign it, veto it, or let it pass without signing it. The governor has indicated that she could veto the budget in it passes both chambers, which would force the legislature to pass a continuing resolution (CR) to fund state government beyond June 30 and start over on a revised budget agreement. If this occurs, everything is back on the table, including sections of the budget that are beneficial to municipalities.

**Because nothing can be added or removed from the spending agreement, NHMA isn't asking members to reach out to legislators about the budget; however, members concerned about the implications of a CR can reach out to the governor's office to express their support for portions of the budget that benefit municipalities. In addition, there are other committee of conference bills being acted on next week where your outreach is needed (see below).**

Here is a high-level summary of items on the budget impacting municipalities:

**Meals and rooms tax:** The committee left the 30% municipal share of the meals and rooms tax alone. This is great news for cities and towns!

**Retirement system:** New Hampshire Retirement System pension benefits for first responders in the system but not vested prior to January 1, 2012, were changed to reduce the minimum age and years of service to be eligible to retire to age 45 with 22 years of service; the benefit “multiplier” for this group was increased to 2.5% and the average final salary the pension is based on was reduced from five years to three years. The maximum annual benefit was capped at \$125,000 for anyone hired on or after January 1, 1999. Because these changes made by the committee are significantly different than previous proposals, it remains unclear what the actual cost will be. The budget allocates \$30 million toward these changes, with additional \$30 million appropriations in the next three budgets (\$120 million total) and also contains language insulating cities and towns if the pricetag is greater than what was appropriated. **NHMA’s only concern with the retirement proposals has always been preventing any costs from being downshifted to cities and towns.**

**SAG Grants:** The budget includes \$2.5 million per year in funding for State Aid Grants (SAG), which provide 20% to 30% of eligible principal and interest payments for completed municipal infrastructure projects. The funding is still well below the \$15 million per year included in the last budget, but we are grateful some funding was included for this program.

**Granite advantage:** The committee accepted the Senate proposal to assess premiums for these health programs on a flat, per-family member basis, which will result in about \$7 million less in savings for the state than the income-based premiums proposed by the House. Currently, there are no premiums. NHMA is concerned that new, out-of-pocket premiums for participants will have an adverse trickle-down impact on local welfare budgets.

**Expanded Keno:** The budget took out Senate-added language opposed by NHMA that would have changed the local option for Keno to an opt-out, rather than the current opt-in that has existed since 2017. However, this language is still alive in **HB 737**.

**Landfills:** The language that would have weakened local authority over landfill siting and expansion was removed.

**Vehicle inspections:** The final budget eliminates motor vehicle safety inspections in 2026 and authorizes the state to work with the federal government regarding emissions testing. Because 12 percent of the motor vehicle fee revenue is distributed to

municipalities, the Department of Transportation previously estimated this change would decrease municipal revenue by about \$350,000 per year.

**Revenue sharing:** Although it has no current fiscal impact, the budget includes a repeal of municipal revenue sharing under RSA 31-A. Although this provision has been suspended since 2010, keeping the statute alive would have made it easier for a future legislature to revisit it.

**Housing Appeals Board (HAB):** The budget includes funding for a modified version of the HAB, which the House wanted to eliminate. Under the new model, the HAB will share resources with the Board of Tax and Land Appeals (BTLA).

**Right to know ombudsman:** The ombudsman was converted to per-diem position attached to a newly created office of state and public sector labor relations. The position will continue to independently exercise the statutory jurisdiction conferred upon it.

**Other:** Despite multiple attempts, no funding was added to the budget for the Housing Champions program, and the House funding cuts for regional planning commissions were not restored.

## Committee of Conference Results

A busy week of committees of conference ended Thursday with agreements on multiple bills impacting municipalities, although no compromise could be reached on others.

The House and Senate will meet on **Thursday, June 26**, and must both agree to adopt the committee of conference reports. If approved, these bills go to the governor.

Here is a status update on several bills NHMA is following. Priority bills are denoted with an asterisk (\*). Municipal officials should contact their local [senator](#) and [representatives](#) regarding any bills that impact their communities. **NHMA opposes HB 154, HB 737, SB 213, and SB 221.**

### AMENDED BILLS TO BE VOTED ON

\* [HB 67](#), relative to agreements with the secretary of state for the use of accessible voting systems. The Senate version of the bill, which matches the effective date of the bill with the expiration of the current pilot agreement, was accepted. A related bill, HB 613, enables towns and cities to not offer accessible voting machines under certain circumstances.

[HB 71](#), prohibiting school facilities to be used to provide shelter for certain illegal immigrants, now includes a new public notice requirement that municipalities with a population of 10,000 or more must follow before issuing tax bills after the re-assessment.

[HB 132](#), Modifies the language regarding the liability of certain relatives to provide support to indigent family members in need of public assistance. The bill eliminates court action should a family member refuse to provide aid. It also amends the language relative to determining if a family member has the financial means to assist.

[HB 154](#), enabling voters to request to have their ballots hand counted. **Please contact your local legislators and ask them to vote against this bill.**

[HB 250](#), enabling local governing bodies to regulate the muzzling of dogs.

[HB 273](#), giving parents or legal guardians access to their minor child's library records.

[HB 428](#), relative to the state building code. The agreed-upon version of the bill states that no local amendment shall be enforced if it was not submitted to the building code review board by July 1, 2025.

[HB 464](#), prohibiting certain candidates for political office from participating in counting ballots, enabling the use of certain personal information for determining voter eligibility, and relative to the reporting of low value campaign donations.

[HB 737](#), changing the local option for Keno to an opt-out, rather than the current opt-in that has existed since 2017, with a new effective date of June 1, 2027. This Keno-by-default language would override previous votes in municipalities to not allow this lottery game, as well as communities where the governing and legislative bodies never wanted to take up the question on their warrant. The revised effective date gives municipalities two election cycles to put the question before voters. The bill also gives municipalities a local option to vote to prohibit the operation of games of chance within their boundaries and makes changes to charitable gaming licensing fees and reporting requirements. **Please contact your local legislators and ask them to vote against this bill because of the Keno language.**

[SB 213](#), creating a misdemeanor-level offense for public employees who "electioneer," as defined in the bill, and adds an unrelated requirement that any registered voter requesting an absentee ballot must provide proof of identity, citizenship, age, and domicile. **Please contact your local legislators and ask them to vote against this bill.**

[SB 218](#), requiring absentee voters to submit hard-copy proof of their citizenship — such as a birth certificate or passport — when registering to vote in New Hampshire.

[SB 221](#), mandating annual verification of the voter checklist and directs the secretary of state's office to develop any forms necessary for the reregistration of eligible voters

removed from the checklist. **Please contact your local representatives and ask them to vote against this bill.**

[SB 287](#), requiring a person seeking an absentee ballot to either bring a photo ID into a clerk's office, send in a photocopy of their ID, or send in a notarized signature in order to request their absentee ballot.

[SB 291](#), exempting church parsonages that are rented or vacant from property taxation.

### OTHER ACTIONS

The following bills are among those that will not advance this session, but may be introduced next year as new bills:

\* [HB 685](#), mandating manufactured housing by right in residentially zoned areas.

[HB 421](#), introducing a new requirement for municipalities to annually mail tax exemption forms to property owners whose real estate was exempt in the previous tax year.

The committee of conference on [HB 143](#) removed all references to issuing no trespass orders (NTOs). The Senate version of the bill would have required a unanimous vote of a governing body at a public meeting to issue an NTO.

### Reminder: Sharing is Caring ... About Good Public Policy!

There aren't many issues of the NHMA *Legislative Bulletin* left this year, but if you know of anyone who may benefit from the *Bulletin* going forward, feel free to pass this email along and encourage them to sign up!

Members can subscribe to the *Bulletin* through our member portal at:

<https://nhmunicipal.weblinkconnect.com/portal>

Once you are logged in, click "edit this profile" and "newsletter management." You can sign up for the *Legislative Bulletin*, *Newslink*, and *Town & City* magazine in one place! (If you are having trouble logging into your account, [follow these steps](#).)

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**NHMA Events Calendar**  
**2024 Final Legislative Bulletin**

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