

New Hampshire Municipal Association

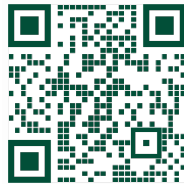
THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 1

2026 Session

January 2, 2026



[Live Bill Tracker](#)
[Bill Hearings Schedule](#)

A busy start to 2026

The **House and Senate meet** on **Wednesday, January 7**, to act on 225 pieces of legislation that were retained in committee last year, about one-third of which NHMA is following.

Nearly 150 bills are on the House or Senate consent calendars; unless any of these bills are removed from consent, the committee recommendations will be adopted with no floor debate. The Senate has 15 bills to debate on its regular calendar, while the House has 64.

Here are some of the key bills—all of which NHMA opposes—on the regular calendar with ought to pass (OTP) recommendations:

HB 314 (House): This bill, as amended, makes it harder, if not impossible, for municipalities to fund lobbying efforts at the State House. (See below for MUCH more on this one!

HB 340 (House): This bill, as amended, updates the statute regarding electioneering by public employees. While this bill is an improvement on another electioneering bill vetoed by the governor last year, NHMA believes the existing statute is effective and supports leaving it as-is.

[HB 707](#) (Senate): This bill, dealing with landfill siting and expansions, was amended to bring back Senate language included in the state budget and rejected by the House, that would change the law on landfill expansions so that no municipal “ordinance, bylaw, rule, regulation, agreement, or other restriction” can prevent the siting of a landfill expansion approved by the Department of Environmental Services. NHMA opposes the amendment because it would adversely impact municipalities with private landfills by allowing state-approved landfill expansions to override local zoning ordinances and also override agreements or contracts that municipalities negotiated with landfill operators. In addition, the same language is in a 2026 bill, which at the very least would allow the public to comment.

Some bills NHMA supports that have OTP recommendations include setting up a state website to store municipal records ([HB 164](#)) and creating a paint recycling program ([HB 451](#)). Two House bills supported by NHMA that provide state funding for local retirement costs ([HB 197](#)) and more funding for state aid grants (SAG) for eligible local wastewater projects ([HB 97](#)), are recommended inexpedient to legislate (ITL). Several problematic land use bills retained last year are recommended either as ITL or refer to interim study (which is the polite way to make a bill go away).

Click [here](#) and [here](#) for a list of bills scheduled for a vote next week.

The House kept **Thursday, January 8**, open in case it cannot get through these bills in one day, while the Senate is already holding public hearing that day. Check out our **weekly legislative calendar** for the full list of hearings.

Time to Stand Up for Your Voice (NOW!)

Time is running out to contact your local House members and ask them to vote **NO** on **HB 314** before it comes up for a vote on **Wednesday, January 7**.

As amended ([am-3026h](#)), **HB 314** restricts the free speech of statewide organizations representing local and county officials and imposes broader restrictions on associations using public funds, potentially leading to an all-out ban on local government lobbying.

Here are some of the reasons to oppose **HB 314**:

- **Hijacks local decision-making:** Allows the state legislature to dictate what locally formed and governed organizations can provide for services and how municipal and county governments interact with them.
- **Transparency already exists:** Membership dues are debated and voted on annually. **HB 314** replaces this with a confusing ballot mechanism.
- **Misleading ballot language:** A “no” vote would bar municipalities from joining NHMA or any group that lobbies, also cutting off education, training, and legal services.

- **Fewer voices = higher risk:** Without NHMA’s advocacy, towns lose representation on laws that impact budgets and operations. This diverts public officials’ focus away from their duties, forcing them to spend considerable time in Concord interpreting and dealing with legislation without organizational support.

Call or [email your House members](#) now and urge them to **vote NO on HB 314**, as amended. Municipalities deserve the same ability as the state to join associations that provide essential services.

Topics to Watch This Year

Including retained 2025 bills, NHMA is currently following almost 400 bills that could impact municipal government. While no two legislative sessions are alike, here are some topics we believe you will be hearing a lot about over the coming months:

Zoning and land use: There are close to 100 bills dealing with local zoning and land use in 2026. While several bills seek to expand the erosion of local choice that began in earnest last year, others attempt to revise some of the most onerous changes and restore balance. Other bills would expand or create new voluntary affordable housing programs and incentives; however, in a non-budget year, these efforts will be an extremely tough sell. NHMA continues to support balanced, community-driven growth that delivers needed housing and commercial development while managing local impacts through creative, shared solutions.

Property taxes/municipal budgets: We’re following 50-plus bills dealing with budget caps, overriding tax caps, property tax exemptions, and new disclosure requirements for warrant articles and/or tax bills. There are also multiple proposals to impose additional assessments on high-value, non-primary residences.

Elections: More bills dealing with election procedures, ballot counting, and absentee ballots.

Right-to-know: There are several attempts to define “citizen,” one of which ([SB 626](#)) would be beneficial for municipalities struggling to respond to “fishing expedition” requests from out-of-state vendors or AI bots.

Bills targeting NHMA: While **HB 314**—which affects multiple organizations—will hopefully be dispatched next week (see above), there are a pair of bills this year **specifically taking aim at NHMA’s ability to lobby and member municipalities’ ability to govern the organization:**

- [HB 1359](#) requires a two-thirds majority vote of the legislative body, by roll call or ballot, to authorize funding the lobbying portion of municipal association dues. Worse, the bill attempts to change the business model under which NHMA has operated for more than 80 years.

- **[HB 1360](#)** creates a legislative oversight committee to review NHMA's finances, activities, and use of public funds.

We will continue to raise the alarm over these bills, which unlike most unsuccessful anti-lobbying legislation over the past decade, are specifically targeted at NHMA.

In addition to our weekly *Legislative Bulletin*, NHMA provides members access to **FastDemocracy**, an online bill tracking platform, for efficient, real-time updates to legislative activity of interest to members. This tool can help ensure that you know when the bills that you care about most are scheduled for public hearing or votes. Visit our online **[Bill Tracker](#)** page to learn more and feel free to subscribe to weekly or daily updates on subjects and bills of interest.

What else is on your mind? If there are particular bills that your municipality is concerned about or bills you have been communicating with your legislators on, please let us know by contacting governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org.

Upcoming Zoning and ZBA Bills

While the Bulletin typically focuses on what's happening in the next week, we wanted to flag several zoning bills will have public hearings on **Tuesday, January 13**.

The **House Housing Committee** is hearing 11 bills between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. in **GP Room 231**, ten of which NHMA **supports** (not a typo— and we're neutral on the other bill). **[Click here](#)** to see the schedule.

More concerning is **[SB 435](#)**, which the **Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee** hearing at **9:15 a.m.** in **SH Room 122-123**. This bill would completely remove "unnecessary hardship" from the items a zoning board of adjustment may consider when reviewing a variance request, **significantly lowering the standard under which variances are considered**. You'll hear more about this one next week, but it's a significant enough change that you may want to mark it in your calendar to testify against or begin contacting committee members in advance to oppose this bill.

New Home for House Hearings

Whether you are a veteran of the public hearing process or are coming to Concord for the first time next year, you need to know that **House committees are meeting in a new location**. The Legislative Office Building (LOB), where House committees typically meet, is closed for renovation through late 2026. **Meetings are now being held at 1 Granite Place (GP)**, which is about 1.6 miles north of the State House.

Granite Place consists of two buildings sharing a common main entrance/lobby. The complex also houses the state departments of justice and agriculture, as well as the

Judicial Council; access to those areas is limited. House committee meeting rooms are on the first two floors of the South building and are clearly marked. There are 10 committee rooms, compared to 14 in the LOB.

NHMA has created a [one-page handout](#) with more information, photos, and a link to the layout of the meeting rooms.

The House committee meeting area has the same safety and security protocols as the State House and security guards are posted at two entrances; if you leave the House meeting area through an unstaffed exit, you will not be able to re-enter and will have to go around to one of the two secure entrances.

There are 800 free parking spots available, which is a plus for anyone who has struggled to find a parking space downtown—although you’ll still need to do that sometimes, as the Senate will continue to hold its hearings in committee rooms in the State House, including Senate committees that previously met in the LOB.

[More information](#) on Granite Place also can be found on the NH General Court Website.

How to Make your Voice Heard

The adage goes that “life is all about showing up.” The same can be said for legislative advocacy. If a bill is of importance to your municipality, it’s always best to make your case – for or against – in person. Every Friday, NHMA posts a [Bill Hearings Schedule](#) for the upcoming week. However, if you can’t make it to Concord, you can use the Legislature’s online portal to put your position on the hearing record.

The House has an [online testimony submission system](#) that allows you to indicate your position on the bill with an option to attach testimony. If you want to email all the members of a House committee, you will have to copy their email addresses individually from the [committee page](#).

The Senate has [a remote sign-in sheet](#) where you can indicate whether you are supportive of a bill, opposed, or neutral. Written testimony can be submitted via the “Email Entire Committee” link found on the [Senate committee page](#).

If you have time to follow along, livestreams of [House](#) and [Senate](#) sessions and committee meetings are available on YouTube. Prior sessions and committee meetings are also archived.

Finally, if you just want to contact your local legislators, there are [Contact a Senator](#) and [Contact a Representative](#) links on the [General Court](#) website.

Note: For any readers who print the *Bulletin* out, all of the above links can be found on the General Court website at: <https://gc.nh.gov/>

Because the House and Senate have moved to digital calendars, committees can now reschedule when there is bad weather, absences, or other issues. If you are planning to attend a hearing or work session in person, we strongly recommend checking the [House Digital Calendar](#) and [Senate Digital Calendar](#) before heading to Concord. For those of you with an interest in a particular bill or set of bills, please use the ‘subscribe’ feature on [FastDemocracy](#) to get email updates when those bills are scheduled or rescheduled.

2026 Legislative Calendar

House Schedule

Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026—Convening Day.

Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026—Last day to introduce House Bills.

Thursday, February 12, 2026—Last day to report House Bills going to a second committee.

Thursday, February 19, 2026—Last day to act on House Bills going to a second committee.

Thursday, March 5, 2026—Last day to report House Bills not in a second committee.

Thursday, March 12, 2026—Last day to act on House Bills not in a second committee.

Thursday, March 19, 2026—Last day to report all House Bills.

Thursday, March 26, 2026—CROSSOVER: Last day to act on all House Bills.

Thursday, April 16, 2026—Last day to report Senate Bills going to a second committee.

Thursday, April 23, 2026—Last day to act on Senate Bills going to a second committee.

Thursday, May 7, 2026—Last day to report all Senate Bills.

Thursday, May 14, 2026—Last day to act on all Senate Bills.

Thursday, May 21, 2026—Last day to form committee of conference.

Thursday, May 28, 2026—Last day to sign committee of conference reports (4:00 p.m.).

Thursday, June 4, 2026—Last day to act on committee of conference reports.

Senate Schedule

Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026—Convening Day.

Monday, Feb. 23-Friday, Feb. 27, 2026—Senate break.

Thursday, March 5, 2026—Deadline for Policy Committees to ACT on all Senate bills with a fiscal impact, except bills exempted pursuant to Senate Rule 4-5.

Thursday, March 26, 2026—CROSSOVER: Deadline to ACT on all Senate bills.

Thursday, April 30, 2026—Deadline for Policy Committees to ACT on all House bills with a fiscal impact, except bills exempted pursuant to Senate Rule 4-5.

Thursday, May 14, 2026—Deadline to ACT on all House bills.

Thursday, May 21, 2026—Deadline to FORM Committees of Conference.

Thursday, May 28, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.—Deadline to SIGN Committee of Conference Reports.

Thursday, June 4, 2026—Deadline to ACT on Committee of Conference Reports.

Reminder: Bulletin Content is for Sharing!

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If you know anyone who may benefit from the NHMA *Legislative Bulletin*, 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](#).)

[Bill Hearings Schedule](#)
[NHMA Events Calendar](#)
[2024 Final Legislative Bulletin](#)

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