

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 11

2026 Session

March 13, 2026



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

Editor's Note: Many local officials completed their terms of office this week, and some will next week. Whatever the timing, we thank all of you for the time and energy you have devoted to public service, including your work on behalf of NHMA. For those who have never served in local government, it is difficult to appreciate how much work and time are involved, as well as how thankless the task can be. Meanwhile, we enthusiastically welcome all newly elected officials. We look forward to working with you all in the coming years.

In this issue:

- House Acts on Multiple Municipal Bills
- Senate Roundup
- Upcoming Senate Hearings on Municipal Bills
- Risk Pool Update
- Legislative Policy Proposals Welcome
- How to Make Your Voice Heard
- Follow Bills That Matter to You Online

House Acts on Multiple Municipal Bills

The House met for more than 18 hours over **Wednesday** and **Thursday** to act on hundreds of bills, including dozens impacting municipal government. With such a huge volume of legislation, it's not surprising there were some good, some bad, and some ugly outcomes. Here is what happened on the key bills by topic, with the "good" news (for municipalities) listed first. All of the bills below that passed will advance to Senate.

Municipal Government

HB 1704 was **tabled**. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, requires municipalities to negotiate with individual employees, dramatically increasing HR, legal, and administrative costs for taxpayers. The outcome was a big win for local governments, and **we thank everyone** who contacted their local House members to oppose this bill!

HB 1788 was **passed** as amended. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, prohibits the state and political subdivisions from entering into or renewing any contract that includes diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)-related provisions, and require contracts to be void if they contain such language. The bill opens municipalities up to potential lawsuits from citizens anywhere in the state over alleged DEI provisions, which will increase legal costs related to nuisance lawsuits.

HB 1064 was passed. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, expands municipal liability, increases damage caps, and mandates indemnification of employees.

Elections/Town Meeting

HB 1418 was **tabled**. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, would void votes on warrant articles in an official ballot referendum (SB 2) town's operating budget or any other appropriation unless at least 15 percent of the registered voters of the town cast a "Yes" vote on the question and a majority of those voting vote "Yes."

HB 686 was **passed** as amended. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, expands the definition of electioneering by preventing public bodies and public employees from seeking public input via surveys, polls, or questionnaires on ballot measures or any other issues that could end up on the ballot.

HB 1131 was **passed** as amended. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, changes the process for adopting the SB 2 form of town meetings by placing it on the official ballot as opposed to debating and voting at the traditional town meeting business session.

HB 1224 was **passed**. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, makes major changes to default budget calculations in SB 2 towns, making financial management more restrictive and

rigid, complicating hiring, salary adjustments, and financial flexibility needed for routine governance.

[HB 1355](#) was **passed** as amended. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, prohibits amendments to change to the purpose of a petitioned warrant article and eliminates the default budget in SB 2 towns. Under this bill, if the proposed operating budget fails, an operating budget equal to the previous year's approved operating budget would take effect unless the governing body holds a special meeting to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

[HB 1575](#) was **passed** as amended. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, mandates that the budget committee determine the default budget, rather than the governing body. Currently, the decision which body determines the default budget is a local option.

Zoning & Land Use

[HB 1103](#) was **passed** with amendment. The bill, **supported** by NHMA, enables municipalities to establish a housing opportunity zone through a vote of their legislative body. To qualify for tax relief, structures and properties must be located within this designated zone.

[HB 1251](#) was sent to **interim study**. This bill, **opposed** by NHMA, would restrict municipal downzoning inconsistent with existing neighborhood density.

[HB 1357](#) was sent to **interim study**. This bill, **opposed** by NHMA, would allow placement of manufactured housing in all residential zones.

[HB 1540](#) was **passed** with amendment. The bill, **supported** by NHMA, regulates ADUs in protected shoreland districts. The amendment improves the bill, but it still requires more work in the Senate.

[HB 1195](#) was **passed** as amended with the majority amendment. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA in its current form, overrides local zoning ordinances related to in-home and commercial childcare in favor of state rulemaking and allows in-home childcare by right in residential zones; allows commercial childcare by right in all commercial zones and some industrial facilities; and exempts most facilities from local site plan review. Although addressing affordability and access to childcare is a top issue for state policymakers this year, the House also voted to pass [HB 1515](#), which, as amended, **repeals** the requirement for the state to fully **fund the childcare workforce grant program**.

[HB 1681](#) was **passed** with amendment. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA based on technical issues, enables municipalities to allow tiny houses and yurts as innovative housing

structures. NHMA raised the technical issues in the House and will raise them again in the Senate so this can be a workable local option for our members.

Anti-NHMA Bills

A pair of bills specifically targeting NHMA died with a whimper, not a bang, when the House recessed Thursday before acting on them. [HB 1359](#) and [HB 1360](#) died through inaction, along with many other bills on the House calendar because they were not voted on by yesterday's deadline to act on all bills not going to a second committee.

Despite their quiet death, these bills were significant attempts to curtail NHMA's ability to represent the collective interests of our members and an assault on the organization's member-run governance structure. **We thank every member municipality, every elected official, every public employee, and every concerned citizen who stepped up to oppose these bills.** Sadly, we expect these types of bills to keep surfacing every year as legislators who see local governments representing the interests of their communities as a hindrance apparently can't take no for an answer, despite getting the same answer for more than a decade.

Other

[HB 1275](#) was **passed** as amended. The bill immunizes farmers from civil liability for any damages resulting from claims based on harms caused by per and poly fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) present in soil, water, or agricultural products as a result of standard agricultural practices, including the land application of sludge or biosolids. The version of the bill that passed **does not** include a moratorium on the spreading of biosolids, which would deprive municipal wastewater utilities of a major pathway of biosolid management and lead to higher costs and operational challenges. NHMA **opposed** the moratorium.

[HB 1184](#) was **passed** as amended. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, allows municipalities to issue 72-hour temporary no trespass orders (NTOs). If the governing body seeks to continue an NTO beyond the emergency period, it must approve the NTO by at least a 3/5 vote taken at a duly noticed public meeting, or at a non-public session if permitted under RSA 91-A and requested by the individual subject to the NTO.

The House must vote on all remaining House bills by **Thursday, March 26**.

Senate Roundup

The Senate met on Thursday. Here's what happened with some bills NHMA was watching:

[HB 244](#), updating and recodifying the municipal enforcement of the building and fire code, and [HB 1159](#), updating the state building code to align with new recommendations from the State Building Code Review Board, were **passed**. NHMA **supported** both bills, which will advance to the House.

[SB 626](#) was **tabled**. The [amended](#) bill, **supported** by NHMA, defined citizen for the purposes of right-to-know requests. Adding the definition of “citizen” to RSA 91-A aligns with the New Hampshire Constitution and eliminates ambiguity. Unfortunately, this common-sense bill is unlikely to come off the table this year, but we expect to find a sponsor to bring it back in 2027.

The Senate must vote on all remaining Senate bills by **Thursday, March 26**.

Upcoming Senate Hearings on Municipal Bills

The [Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee](#) will hold public hearings on multiple bills next **Tuesday, March 17**, and **Wednesday, March 18**, in **State House (SH) Room 122-123**:

[HB 1468](#) (Tuesday, 9:30 a.m.), enables municipalities to incorporate flood resilience planning into their master plans and broadens the eligibility criteria for state housing planning grants aimed at supporting flood hazard mitigation and related land use updates. NHMA **supports** this bill.

[HB 1494](#) (Tuesday, 9:30 a.m.), increases the maximum amount of the optional veterans’ tax credit, optional combat service tax credit, and optional surviving spouse tax credit. Because this bill is a local option, NHMA is **neutral** on this bill.

[HB 1134](#) (Wednesday, 1:00 p.m.), is a technically flawed bill that mandates appropriations for warrant articles shall accumulate in the order in which articles are approved at an annual meeting or in the order in which articles appear on an official ballot for purposes of determining when a warrant article will trigger an override vote of a local tax or budget cap. NHMA **opposes** this bill and encourages members to [contact the committee](#) or testify in opposition to **HB 1134**.

[HB 1118](#) (Wednesday, 1:40 p.m.), increasing the threshold for funds that must be remitted to municipal treasurers at least weekly or daily from \$500 to \$3,500. The change applies to remittances from various town departments, including the tax collector and town clerk. NHMA **supports** this bill.

For detailed instructions on ways to share your position on these and any other bills, see “*How to Make Your Voice Heard*” below.

Risk Pool Update

Two of the three 2026 bills related to risk pools were acted on this week.

[HB 1491](#), a bill **supported** by NHMA, **passed** the House on the consent calendar on Wednesday. The bill introduces assessable risk pools into the statutory scheme as an alternative to non-assessable risk pools. Allowing both models provides clarity to local governments, helping them decide which model, if any, best suits their needs. Assessable pools would remain under the authority of the Secretary of State, while non-assessable pools will shift oversight to the Department of Insurance (DOI).

[SB 605](#), a bill **supported** by NHMA, was **killed** in the Senate on Thursday. The bill would have clarified that unbudgeted, mid-year cost assessments on public employers are not required by statute but are permitted only if they are clearly stated in contracts and bylaws. The bill also created a 36-month payment window for any assessments.

The remaining bill, [SB 661](#), is still with the [Senate Finance Committee](#), which is considering possible amendments. The committee is expected to hold an executive session on the bill on **Tuesday, March 17**.

If your community has been impacted by assessments or is concerned that the current version of **SB 661** would mandate assessments in statute, **there's still time to reach out** to your [local Senator](#) and [committee members](#) and share your thoughts.

NHMA supports the ability of members to establish and govern the pools and understands that clear regulations that protect the members and allow the pools to operate are necessary. With health insurance being a huge driver of municipal costs, regularly outpacing inflation, providing legislative clarity is crucial. It is important to keep in mind that the stability of healthcare risk pools is tied to the future stability of healthcare for thousands of public employees in our state.

Legislative Policy Proposals Welcome

NHMA has a member-driven process by which it establishes the legislative policy positions to guide staff advocacy activities over the coming legislative biennium.

If there is a law affecting municipal government that you think needs to be fixed, or if you have an idea for how the functions of local government might be improved with legislation, this is **your opportunity to propose a change**. To share your proposal, complete this [Legislative Policy Proposal Form](#). Include a brief (one or two sentence) policy statement, a statement about the municipal interest served by the proposal and an explanation that describes the nature of the problem or concern from a

municipal perspective and discusses the proposed action that is being advocated to address the problem. Mail to NHMA, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord, NH 03301; or e-mail to governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org no later than the close of business on **April 17, 2026**.

Learn more about NHMA's 2027-2028 Legislative Policy Process in this [Questions and Answers fact sheet](#).

How to Make your Voice Heard

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 these emails out, all of the above links can be found on the General Court website at: <https://gc.nh.gov/>

Follow Bills That Matter to You Online

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. 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.

Information from the NHMA Legislative Bulletin may be republished online or in print with attribution to the New Hampshire Municipal Association. Light editing for style or to shorten is allowed. Include a link to this page:

<https://www.nhmunicipal.org/legislative-bulletins>.

If you share NHMA content on social media, please mention our Linked In page:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/new-hampshire-municipal-association/>

NHMA Events Calendar
2025 Final Legislative Bulletin

Editorial Staff:

Margaret M.L. Byrnes, Executive Director

Marty Karlon, Editor in Chief, Policy & Research Analyst

Sarah Burke Cohen, Legislative Advocate

Brodie Deshaies, Legislative Advocate

Layout & Communications:

Miranda Blaikie, Communications Coordinator

New Hampshire Municipal Association

25 Triangle Park Drive

Concord, NH 03301

Tel: 603.224.7447

Email: governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org

Website: www.nhmunicipal.org