

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 14

2025 Session

April 11, 2025



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

Stand Up for Local Control on Tuesday!

“If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.” - George Orwell

On **Tuesday, April 15**, beginning at **10:00 a.m. in LOB 305**, the [House Housing Committee](#) will hold a series of public hearings on **six zoning mandates** that have already been passed by the Senate.

It’s noteworthy that three of these hearings were postponed from this week because of the **strong turnout of local officials and interested citizens who came to support local control** and whose thoughtful, detailed testimony made the public hearings on other zoning mandates run long. NHMA thanks everyone who came out to provide a local perspective on these troubling bills, with a special shout out to the large contingent of elected officials from the town of Raymond. **We hope as many officials and residents as possible can keep up the pace this week, as several particularly concerning bills, including statewide maximum lot-size mandates, are being heard.** In addition, the [Senate Commerce Committee](#) is **holding hearings on five additional zoning mandates the same day**, beginning at **9:30 a.m. in State House Room 100** (see schedule below).

Because these bills carry no cost to the state, they have thus far enjoyed bipartisan support and often end up on the House or Senate consent calendars, meaning there is no actual debate on the merits or drawbacks of these bills beyond the committee public hearings. It is also worth noting that none of these zoning mandates actually incentivize or encourage the building of *affordable* housing.

If possible, please come to Concord next Tuesday to stand up for local solutions to local issues and oppose central planning! Even if you can't make it, there are other ways to share your opinions. For detailed instructions on ways to give your position on these and any other bills, see "*How to Make Your Voice Heard*" below.

House Housing Committee hearings:

[SB 84](#) (10:00 a.m.), relative to zoning procedures concerning residential housing.

[SB 166](#) (11:00 a.m.), relative to notice required prior to sale of a manufactured housing unit located in a resident-owned community.

[SB 163](#) (11:30 a.m.), prohibiting local moratoria and limitations on building permits.

[SB 281](#) (1:00 p.m.), prohibiting municipalities from denying building or occupancy permits for property adjacent to class VI roads under certain circumstances.

[SB 282](#) (1:30 p.m.), relative to stairway requirements in certain residential buildings.

[SB 170](#) (2:00 p.m.), relative to development and related requirements in cities, towns, and municipalities.

Senate Commerce Committee hearings:

[HB 296](#) (9:30 a.m.), relative to issuing building permits along private roads.

[HB 685](#) (9:45 a.m.), permitting in all residentially zoned areas by right the construction of manufactured housing.

[HB 342](#) (9:45 a.m.), relative to the approval process for new construction.

[HB 382](#) (10:05 a.m.), relative to authority for municipalities to regulate mandatory on-site parking requirements.

[HB 413](#) (10:35 a.m.), relative to subdivision regulations on the completion of improvements and the regulation of building permits.

We are asking municipal officials concerned about these bills to attend the public hearings and sign up to testify. When NHMA is the only voice in the room raising concerns, it's easier for legislators to tune out. Hearing multiple officials explaining the ground-level impacts of these mandates is harder to ignore. Sadly, these aren't the only worrisome bills municipalities have to deal with this year. For a full list of

mandates that have been passed by the House or Senate and are now with the other chamber, see our [“special” legislative bulletin](#).

House Passes Budget with Municipal Impacts

The House passed its version of the state budget, [HB 1](#) and [HB 2](#), on Thursday with a few floor amendments impacting municipalities. The budget now heads to the Senate.

Amendment numbers for the changes that had [roll call votes](#) are listed below, so you can **see how your local representatives voted**. The links to individual roll calls are found on the bottom left of the main page, but you will have to match the vote total for each amendment shown on the main page to the corresponding roll call link with the same tally. For example, amendment 2025-1513h was adopted, 183-181, so you would then click on the link that says “*Adopt Floor Amendment (183-181)*” to see the roll call.

What was added this week:

- An annual requirement to verify voter checklists beginning in 2026, replacing the current 10-year standard. This is the same language included in [HB 274](#), which was already passed by the House and likely to be amended by the Senate. (2025-1559h)
- Removing the authority of local public health officers to make “other regulations relating to public health” beyond “prevention and removal of nuisances.” This is the same language included in [HB 230](#), which was already passed by the House. (2025-1526h)
- Enabling the court system to create a “commercial court docket” which would include appeals from decisions of local land use boards, including, but not limited to decisions of “municipal planning boards, zoning boards, historic district commissions, and conservation commissions.” This docket would presumably replace the Housing Advisory Board (HAB), which was repealed in [HB 2](#). (2025-1569h)

What was taken out this week:

- The section repealing the Board of Tax and Land Appeals (BTLA) of was removed. (2025-1569h)
- The section repealing the local option for KENO was removed, meaning municipalities will continue to have the power to decide whether to allow this lottery game. (2025-1513h)
- The section creating a “Group III” defined contribution retirement plan for state employees (exempting public safety) in lieu of the defined benefit plan provided by the NH Retirement System (NHRS) was removed. NHMA was concerned that, as

written, the proposal could increase employer contributions for municipal employers in the long-term by making them responsible for a portion of the state's share of the unfunded actuarial accrued liability (UAAL) associated with NHRS employee members. (2025-1566h)

What's still in the budget (for a more detailed description of these items, see [last week's Legislative Bulletin](#)):

- Suspending the 30% municipal share of the meals and rooms tax in FYs 26-27 and replacing it with a flat appropriation of \$137 million per year, which is about \$11 million less over the next two years than what was projected if the 30% share remained in effect.
- No new funding for the Housing Champions and InvestNH housing programs, as well as no new funding for the state share of wastewater projects under the State Aid Grant (SAG) program.
- Elimination of motor vehicle inspections, which will reduce state aid because 12% of state motor vehicle fee revenue is distributed to municipalities.
- Repealing revenue sharing, RSA Chapter 31-A, as opposed to simply suspending it, as had been done since 2010.
- Statewide ban on diversity, equity and inclusion programs, contracts, and activities, which could add municipal costs related to review, cancellation, or renegotiation of existing agreements.
- Changes to CHIP, Medicaid, and Medicaid Advantage programs adding new out-of-pocket costs for participants, which could impact local welfare budgets.
- Changes to NHRS benefits for about 1,500 "Group II" police and fire personnel hired before July 1, 2011, and still working. NHMA is concerned that if the additional retirement funding in the budget is removed by the Senate this year, or if it is repealed in the next biennium, municipal employer contribution rates to the retirement system would increase significantly.

The Senate is likely to make several changes to the budget over the next six weeks, so the process is far from over and NHMA and our members can and will continue to advocate for the interests of municipalities.

Other House Actions This Week ...

With Thursday being crossover day—the deadline to send bills to the other legislative chamber—the House also passed four other bills of municipal interest that will now be taken up by the Senate. Note: The Senate did not meet this week, finishing all its bills earlier this month.

[HB 66](#), a bill opposed by NHMA, replaces “citizen” in the Right-to-Know Law with “person,” allowing any individual, anywhere, to make an RTK request. Additionally, the bill allows for electronic requests with the requestor choosing the method of response, which can include electronic delivery. An amendment to the bill has made response delivery more complicated by adding language that only certain requestors deemed to have a New Hampshire connection can elect to receive the response in a manner other than appearing in person, with other requestors required to appear to pick up the response. Before it was passed, a motion to table the bill failed, 179-191. NHMA wants to thank all our members who helped us oppose this bill in the House and will continue to do so in the Senate. [Click here](#) to see the roll call votes on this bill.

[HB 67](#), a bill supported by NHMA that makes permanent last year’s pilot program regarding Accessible Voting Systems, ensuring that the state provide accessible voting systems through agreements with municipalities, allowing them to comply with federal law. Under this bill, the state would pay for the voting hardware and municipalities would continue to be responsible for programming costs.

[HB 511](#) (oppose), prohibiting state and local entities from adopting sanctuary policies that hinder federal immigration law enforcement.

[HB 639](#) (oppose), relative to the use of and disputes over blockchain and digital currencies. Despite the title, the bill is not primarily about disputes over crypto currency, rather it creates preemptive limits on state and local regulation of industrial or home-based “digital mining,” which uses substantial amounts of electricity and water and typically generates high noise levels and electronic waste.

Wait, There’s More About Zoning

This week, the [Senate Commerce Committee](#) held a public hearing on **[HB 410](#)**, a priority bill opposed by NHMA that prohibits municipalities from enforcing or adopting any “extraordinary restriction of residential property”—a vague term that sets a high legal standard—unless the ordinance is directly necessary for the health or safety of the community.

The bill goes on to say, “the legislative body [*typically the voters in most towns*] shall include detailed written findings of fact, based on empirical evidence published by a non-partisan source, to demonstrate direct necessity.” The impracticality of this provision is self-evident, but the bill goes on to state that this empirical evidence “may be relevant ... but are not necessarily dispositive”!

For the purposes of the bill, the definition of “extraordinary restriction of residential property” includes:

- Any minimum square footage requirement for a dwelling or unit in excess of 200 square feet or the square footage required to meet the state building code, whichever is greater.
- Regulations concerning in-home businesses use in residentially zoned lots.
- Local amendments to the state building code or state fire code regarding materials or methods of construction that impact residential buildings of not more than 4 units.

HB 410 is likely to increase municipal costs related to amending zoning ordinances by requiring municipalities to hire staff or consultants to identify and review “empirical evidence published by a non-partisan source” to justify an amendment, or in the case of an appeal. Additionally, **HB 410** would conflict with all the other zoning mandates relative to residential zones.

In a nutshell, this bill is a massive overreaction to the narrative that municipalities with reasonable zoning are somehow creating overly burdensome restrictions on development. **Municipal officials are encouraged to [contact the Senate Commerce Committee](#) and oppose this bill before the committee acts on it.**

In case you missed it: NHMA Executive Director Margaret Byrnes submitted an op-ed commentary on zoning mandates to several media outlets earlier this month. You can [read the op-ed here](#)—and feel free to use any of the points made in your own advocacy efforts.

Electioneering by Public Employees

On **Tuesday, April 15**, at **9:30 a.m.** in **LOB Room 103**, the [Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee](#) will hold a public hearing on **HB 340**, relative to electioneering by public employees. NHMA opposes this bill.

HB 340 repeals RSA 659:44-a and makes the definition of electioneering more confusing and vague. The bill expands the definition of public employee to include people “appointed to office by the chief executive or legislative body of the public employer.” The current definition of electioneering (“ ‘electioneer’ means to act in any way designed or having the effect of influencing the vote of a voter on any question or office”) remains in the bill, but additional vague language has been added to the definition, which seems to suppress the free speech of public employees. The bill adds language such as distributing or displaying campaign materials, making public statements, organizing or conducting surveys, and using official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the vote of a voter. But what does this language mean? Does this mean if a public employee uses their own vehicle to conduct official business and has a political sticker on the vehicle as an expression of free speech that the employee is violating the law? What about a DPW

worker picking up dinner during a break from plowing the roads who makes a comment about a candidate—could this be a violation? Anytime candidates are scheduled to come together would be “primarily political,” so does that mean there can be no town-sponsored forums? Who decides if a survey or forum is political? **We encourage you to [contact the committee](#)** to tell them that **HB 340** will suppress speech for public employees.

Ambulance Billing on Tap in Senate

On **Wednesday, April 16**, at **9:45 a.m.** in **LOB Room 101**, the **[Senate Health and Human Services Committee](#)** will hold a public hearing on **[HB 316](#)**, relative to billing for ground ambulance services. The bill eliminates balance billing —*i.e.* billing a patient for the difference between the full cost of the service and the amount their insurance plan pays—and sets a reimbursement rate for non-Medicare/Medicaid health insurance carriers at approximately 200% above the current Medicare reimbursement rate, which NHMA opposes because reimbursement at this percentage is significantly lower than the actual cost. **Officials from municipalities that provide ambulance services are encouraged to attend the hearing and testify or go online to oppose HB 316.**

The **[House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee](#)** has not yet scheduled a hearing on **[SB 245](#)**, a competing proposal that NHMA supports, which also eliminates balance billing with the reimbursement rate for insured patients set at 325% of the current urban, rural, or super-rural Medicare rates, depending on the geographic area where the ambulance service originated.

Municipal ambulance services are essential services and not profit-driven; thus, appropriate reimbursement rates are crucial for their sustainability. Further, it’s unfair to put local taxpayers over a barrel to the benefit of private insurers.

Crossover Update on NHMA-Tracked Bills

Of the 360-plus bills the NHMA advocacy team is following this session, 170 of them remain active at legislative crossover. Among the other bills, 102 have been killed, meaning they can’t be brought forward next year. Another 25 bills have been tabled or indefinitely postponed beyond the crossover deadline, meaning they are unlikely to be acted on this session. Finally, House or Senate committees held onto another 65 bills to work on in the fall.

As a reminder, 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.

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 legislators, there are [Contact a Senator](#) and [Contact a Representative](#) links on the [General Court](#) website.

Note: For anyone who prints these emails out, all of the above links are available 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 when issues with bills haven’t been worked out. 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 the State House. 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.

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

If you know of 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](#).)

Nonmembers can email info@nhmunicipal.org to be added to our email list for the *Legislative Bulletin*.

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