

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 15

2025 Session

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

Speak Up at Risk Pool Hearing

On **Wednesday, April 23**, at **1:30 p.m.**, on **Legislative Office Building Room 302-304**, the **House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee** will hold a public hearing on **SB 297**, which relates to the operations and oversight of pooled risk management programs that are created by cities, towns, counties, and school districts to reduce risks and associated insurance costs, shifting risk from an individual political subdivision to the pool.

Officials and employees from municipalities impacted by the potential loss of health insurance coverage as a result of this bill—or concerned about the financial exposure their municipality would face as a member of a health pool under the bill’s model—should attend this hearing. For detailed instructions on ways to give your position on these and any other bills, see “*How to Make Your Voice Heard*” below.

NHMA continues to receive questions and hear concerns from our members about **SB 297**. While we take no position on whether cities and towns should obtain their coverage from risk pools, we stand for local control, which includes the right of municipalities to form, join, and govern risk pools if they choose to do so. As such, NHMA is opposed to SB 297 for two primary reasons: The effect it would have on the operations of insurance risk pools and the effect it would have on municipalities that choose to participate in health

pools. **SB 297** would establish a regulatory regime that would create new obligations for municipalities, some of which apply only to health pools:

Creates additional costs for members: Pools would be required to collect additional funds from municipalities, in the form of assessments or replenishments, if losses cause the pool to fall below certain minimum reserve amounts specified in the statute or if the pool is deemed insolvent.

Establishes a new mandate for municipalities: Municipalities would be required to create a non-lapsing reserve fund (a health care stabilization fund) to participate in a health pool. These reserve funds would be used to pay for assessments that may be levied during the year if the pool's reserves fall below the mandated levels in the bill or the pool becomes insolvent.

- The bill requires the municipal member to fund the reserve fund in amount equal to at least 1% of the municipality's health contribution, until the fund is equal to 4% of contributions. If the reserve fund is used to pay an assessment or replenishment, then the municipality must again rebuild at the rate of at least 1% per year until the fund is at 4%. In the end, this is a state mandate to appropriate more money than would otherwise be required to be a member of the health pool.
- Although the bill does say the municipality cannot participate in the health pool if the reserve fund isn't in place, we do not know what would happen to a health pool member if the legislative body did not appropriate the necessary minimum amount, especially since, for most municipalities, pool membership renewals each year occur before the annual meeting at which reserve fund appropriations are approved.
- And, although the purpose of the mandate stabilization fund is to set aside money to pay an assessment or replenishment, there is no guarantee that the money set aside in the fund would be sufficient to pay such a "surprise bill." **In other words, the municipality faces unlimited financial risk under the model in SB 297.**

Changes to pool members' responsibilities: These changes include that municipality must agree in writing that they are ultimately the responsible party for any potentially losses incurred while participating in a risk pool and that municipalities that terminate coverage are responsible for losses that occurred during the prior year. **Read NHMA's letter to our members [here](#).**

RTK Bill is Bad News for Cities and Towns

On **Thursday, April 24**, at **1:00 p.m.** in **State House (SH) Room 100**, the **[Senate Judiciary Committee](#)** will hold a public hearing on **[HB 66](#)**, which replaces "citizen" in

RSA 91-A, the Right-to-Know law, with “person.” This change is opposed by NHMA because it will likely lead to a flood of requests from non-residents, increasing administrative burdens and costs for municipalities. It could also aid in fraudulent activities and identity theft – including, but not limited to, AI “bots” posing as individuals to harvest personal information from various municipal records.

HB 66 runs counter to both Article 8 of the New Hampshire Constitution, which states the government be responsive to *the people who formed it*, and to the current language in RSA 91-A, which has endured through numerous amendments to the statute, referencing that it is the right of “*every citizen*” to access governmental records.

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. Even with the amendment, NHMA opposes this bill.



The House Housing Committee had a packed house Tuesday for public hearings on several bills usurping the voice of local voters on planning and zoning issues. (Photo by Brodie Deshaies)

Zoning Mandates Draw a Crowd

Municipal officials and residents from across the state turned out in force Tuesday at public hearings on a slate of zoning mandates, which generated media coverage in print and on TV.

The biggest crowd was in the [House Housing Committee](#), where local officials, residents, and current and former state representatives from Rollinsford to Raymond, Londonderry to Lyme, and Brookline to Weare, spoke out against these mandates. Across

the street in the State House, others testified before the [Senate Commerce Committee](#) about other zoning bills. **NHMA is grateful to everyone who turned out to oppose these bills, which would fundamentally shift control away from municipal authorities—and local voters**—replacing local decision making with statewide dictates. The importance of addressing housing shortages is undeniable, but urgency must not come at the expense of thoughtful policymaking and responsible, sustainable growth. In the end, zoning and planning are not merely technical exercises—they are reflections of the values and visions of the communities they serve.

No actions on the bills were taken following these hearings, so if you were not able to attend, **there's still time to contact members** of the [House Housing](#) and [Senate Commerce](#) committees, as well as your [local representatives](#) and [senator](#), to share your opposition.

What's happening this week:

On **Tuesday, April 22**, in **LOB Room 305**, the [House Housing Committee](#), will hold subcommittee work sessions on two priority zoning mandates opposed by NHMA.

At **10:00 a.m.**, the committee will review [SB 188](#), which allows property owners or developers to use licensed, insured private providers for building code plan reviews and inspections related to the state building code and any local technical amendments, excluding fire prevention and fire safety codes. The bill also requires a municipal regulatory body to review and approve or provide written notice to the independent provider of any specific deficiencies or compliance issues within a required number of days (3 days or 5 days for code inspections depending on the type of building and 8 days for reviews of development documents and permits). Approvals will be considered granted as a matter of law (i.e., “building permits by default”) if the municipal regulatory body fails to respond within the mandated time limit.

At **1:00 p.m.**, the committee will take up [SB 170](#), relative to development and related requirements in cities, towns, and municipalities. Some specific state mandates in this bill that would negatively impact municipalities are banning frontage or setback requirements greater than 50 feet and prohibiting municipalities from capping the number of housing lots on a dead-end road or street.

Work sessions are not public hearings but are less formal than executive sessions, and some committees allow input relevant to a bill from members of the public. It's unclear if that will be the case with these bills. If you can't attend the work session, please [email committee members now](#) to provide your feedback on these particularly troubling bills.

On **Thursday, April 24**, at **1:00 p.m.** in **LOB Room 103**, the [Senate Commerce Committee](#)'s Subcommittee on Housing meets for a work session. No specific bills were

listed in the calendar notice, as has been the practice with this subcommittee, but the following bills were referred to the subcommittee: [HB 296](#) (building on Class VI roads), [HB 410](#) (prohibiting “extraordinary restrictions” on development), [HB 631](#) (residential building in commercial zones), [HB 685](#) (manufactured housing by right in residential zones)—and [HB 649](#), the bill repealing motor vehicle inspections. **Please contact the subcommittee members (Sens. [Innis](#), [Murphy](#), [Reardon](#)) and reiterate your opposition to these bills.**

We have entered “crunch time” on all these mandates and the combined—and sustained—efforts of NHMA and our members is crucial over the coming months. Please stay informed and engaged on these bills impacting your communities. For the full list of mandates that have been passed by the House or Senate and are now with the other chamber, please see our [“special” legislative bulletin](#).

In case you missed it: NHMA Executive Director Margaret Byrnes [appeared on a segment of WMUR-TV’s “CloseUp”](#) on April 13, discussing the impact of statewide zoning mandates on local control.

Election Law and Municipal Bill Hearings Tuesday

On **Tuesday, April 22**, beginning at **9:15 a.m.**, in **LOB Room 103** the [Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee](#) will hold public hearings on six bills:

[HB 124](#) (9:15 a.m.), enabling a municipal forest committee or conservation commission to offer surplus money to the municipality for deposit in the municipal unreserved fund balance. NHMA supports this bill.

[HB 138](#) (9:30 a.m.), relative to tax impact notation on warrant articles with multi-year tax impacts. (NHMA opposes)

[HB 168](#) (9:45 a.m.), relative to including municipal public works facilities as eligible capital facilities for the assessment of impact fees. (NHMA supports.)

[HB 284](#) (10:00 a.m.), requiring tax impact statements on municipal warrant articles. (NHMA opposes)

[HB 200](#) (10:15 a.m.), relative to the procedure for overriding a local tax cap. (NHMA opposes)

[HB 374](#) (10:30 a.m.), relative to local tax cap and budget laws. (No position)

To share your position on these bills remotely, the Senate has [a remote sign-in sheet](#). Written testimony can be submitted via the “Email Entire Committee” link found on the [Senate committee page](#).

Also on **Tuesday, April 22**, beginning at **10:00 a.m.**, in **LOB Room 306-308**, the [House Election Law Committee](#) has hearings on several election bills we are following.

SB 44 (10:00 a.m.), relative to hand counts of ballots in elections. (Oppose)

SB 218 (10:40 a.m.), relative to absentee ballot outer envelopes. (Support)

SB 103 (11:20 a.m.), relative to the number of polling stations that are available for certain towns. (Oppose)

SB 16 (1:00 p.m.), requiring municipalities to post a copy of election return forms on their websites and in public locations. (No position)

SB 45 (1:20 p.m.), clarifying the placement of advertising signs on state-owned property. (No position)

Municipal election officials can share their positions on any of these bills by attending the hearings or using the House [online testimony submission system](#) to indicate your position on the bill with an option to attach testimony.

Senate Acts on Municipal Bills

The Senate met Thursday and passed three NHMA-supported bills, as well as six other bills of municipal interest. Amended bills will go back to the House; all other bills will be enrolled and sent to the governor.

Bills supported by NHMA:

- **HB 86**, increasing the cost of service for notice of civil forfeiture of unlicensed dogs to the rate for certified mail.
- **HB 134**, updating the state building code to incorporate a more recent (2023) version of the National Electrical Code. Passed with amendment 2025-1436s.
- **HB 294**, amending the current law regarding the processing of absentee ballots by removing the provision that allows 10 or more voters present at the polls to postpone the processing of absentee ballots.

Other municipal bills:

- **HB 92**, requiring recusal of members of zoning boards of adjustment and planning boards in certain circumstances. Passed with amendment 2025-1472s.
- **HB 99**, modifying the optional property tax exemption for permanently and totally disabled veterans to increase the maximum amount from \$4,000 to \$5,000.

- [**HB 165**](#), increasing the maximum amount of disaster relief funding provided to municipalities after a natural disaster.
- [**HB 265**](#), requiring that a public body's meeting minutes include start and end times of the meeting and the printed name of the recording secretary. Passed with amendment 2025-1544s.
- [**HB 269**](#), amending the procedure for correcting the voter checklist prior to election day by removing the requirement for a Saturday session of the supervisors of the checklist, allowing for flexibility as long as the session occurs in accordance with the statutory requirements.
- [**HB 426**](#), allowing charitable organizations to request a retroactive property tax exemption for the 2024 and/or 2025 tax years if they can demonstrate to the selectmen that they were unable to file their statement of financial condition due to accident, mistake, or misfortune.

Senate Finance Begins Budget Work

The [**Senate Finance Committee**](#) met Monday to hear presentations from members of the [**House Finance Committee**](#) on their version of the state budget, [**HB 1**](#) and [**HB 2**](#), which the House adopted last week. Senate Finance met later in the week to begin hearing from executive branch agencies and other statutory entities that are funded through the budget, with more sessions scheduled for next week.

A public hearing on the budget has been scheduled for **Tuesday, May 6**, beginning at **1 p.m.** in **Representatives Hall**.

NHMA has reviewed the budget and submitted a letter to Senate Finance, providing feedback on sections of the budget that impact municipalities, including a change to the meals and rooms tax distribution. You can read the [full letter here](#).

The Senate is expected 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. The Senate must pass its budget by June 5 and both chambers must agree on a spending plan to send to the governor by June 26.

2025 Legislative Half-Time Webinar

NHMA legislative advocates Sarah Burke Cohen and Brodie Deshaies and Executive Director Margaret Byrnes recorded an update on the key bills and topics affecting municipalities in a “Legislative Crossover” video [available here](#).

Crossover (Thursday, April 10) was the date by which a bill must pass either the House or the Senate in order to cross over to the other chamber for consideration.

Ambulance Rate Debate Continues

The [Senate Health and Human Services Committee](#) held a hearing Wednesday on [HB 316](#) with NHMA—and multiple ground ambulance providers—testifying in opposition. The bill eliminates balance-billing and sets the reimbursement rate for non-Medicare/Medicaid health insurance carriers at approximately 200%. According to municipal and private ambulance providers, whose off-duty rigs literally surrounded the Legislative Office Building on Wednesday, the reimbursement rate set by **HB 316** is not adequate and would likely lead to the collapse of the state’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system. Instead, they endorsed the higher reimbursement rate (325%) proposed in [SB 245](#), which most providers feel could allow services to continue.

The commissioner of insurance and insurance department staff testified about a cost study done pursuant to legislation last year, which has been repeatedly panned by providers. Although the department originally touted the report as definitive in demonstrating the appropriate reimbursement rate was in the 200% range, staff noted Wednesday that the cost study was conducted on a tight deadline and had to rely on secondary sources for information.

Senate Health and Human Services took no action on the bill Wednesday. **SB 245**, which contains the higher reimbursement rate, has not yet been scheduled for a hearing before the [House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee](#). **Please continue to reach out to your local representatives and senator** to explain the need for a fair reimbursement rate to ensure that ground ambulance services remain viable.

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*.

[NHMA Events Calendar](#) **[2024 Final Legislative Bulletin](#)**

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