

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 16

2026 Session

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Finally, a Zoning Update Worth Supporting!

The [Senate Commerce Committee](#) will hold public hearings on multiple zoning and development bills beginning at **9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 21, in State House (SH) Room 100.**

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

HB 1010 (9:30 a.m.), relative to multi-family residential development on commercially zoned land. This bill, **supported** by NHMA, makes **significant positive updates to the 2025 universal zoning mandate** requiring municipalities to permit multi-family residential uses on all land zoned to permit commercial uses. The bill:

- Allows planning boards to require applicants to demonstrate that existing infrastructure is adequate to support the proposed residential development on commercially zoned land.
- Allows municipalities to require the applicants to provide infrastructure if the existing infrastructure is not adequate.
- Requires the applicant to receive permission from the operator of a public water or sewer system to connect.
- Clarifies that nonconforming structures may be converted to multi-family dwelling units or mixed use provided that the structure is not altered to further violate zoning district dimensional requirements.
- Ensures that multi-family dwelling units on commercially zoned land are still subject to subdivision or site plan review regulations.

We encourage members to testify at the hearing or [sign in online](#) to support HB 1010.

Other bills being heard include:

- **HB 1103** (9:45 a.m.), allows municipalities to use community revitalization tax relief credits on a wider variety of properties and structures. NHMA **supports** this expanded local option.
- **HB 1079** (10:00 a.m.), allowing accessory dwelling units to be built within or attached to certain non-conforming structures. Although the bill was requested by NHMA to clarify a specific section of the state’s ADU law, the House amended the bill to apply the vesting procedures for approved subdivisions to approved building permits for ADUs. We are unsure how this could work in practice. NHMA **opposes**.
- **HB 1540** (10:15 a.m.), relative to municipal health ordinances and accessory dwelling units. NHMA **supports**.
- **HB 1681** (10:30 a.m.), relative to the definition, inspection, and local approval of tiny houses and yurts as innovative housing structures. Although **HB 1681** is a local option, the bill’s requirements for assessing innovative housing structures need to be significantly updated to address technical flaws. NHMA **opposes** the

bill in its current iteration and believes further work is needed to make this a workable choice for municipalities.

Senate Hearings on Spate of Troubling Bills

The [Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee](#) will hold public hearings on four disparate bills **opposed** by NHMA beginning at **9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 21, in SH Room 122-123.**

This is the last chance to oppose any or all of these bills—which have negative impacts on local government—before they are reported out of committee.

HB 1184 (9:30 a.m.), relative to the issuance of no trespass orders on municipal or school district property, sets up a process for issuing no trespass orders (NTOs) on public property. The bill, opposed by NHMA, allows the governing body responsible for public property, or a person designated by the governing body, to issue an “emergency” NTO good for 72-hours “when immediate action is reasonably necessary to protect public safety, prevent substantial disruption of governmental operations, or prevent damage to public property.” The NTO must be in writing and require certain details; it expires after 72 hours unless the governing body meets at a duly noticed public meeting and approves—by a three-fifths vote—the continuance of the NTO for a period up to 90 days. The bill requires the governing body to seek a restraining order should it find that extension of the NTO beyond 90 days is necessary. The bill also establishes administrative appeal rights for the individual issued the NTO to appear before the governing body, as well as to appeal to superior court. **This overly restrictive process could, frankly, put public employees at risk.**

HB 1195 (9:45 a.m.), relative to municipal zoning requirements for child day care providers, establishing **new universal zoning mandates** for commercial child care. The bill expands the existing law requiring municipalities to allow home-based child care as an accessory use to any residential use, and updates it to:

- Require the municipality to allow the use by right rather than as a conditional use.
- Allow home-based child care to operate in an accessory structure by right, even if the structure violates current zoning ordinances.
- Prohibit municipalities from adopting additional requirements or enforcing existing ones greater than the rules adopted by the Department of Health and Human Services for child care.

Additionally, **HB 1195** includes a second section that requires municipalities to allow commercial child care centers by right on land zoned to permit commercial uses or in industrial structures. However, like the first section of the bill, it goes much further to:

- Prohibit municipalities from adopting additional requirements or enforcing existing ones greater than the rules adopted by the Department of Health and Human Services for commercial child care centers.
- Require municipalities to permit commercial child care centers on land that permits industrial and manufacturing uses, as long as the child care center is for the exclusive use of employees of a business located in one of those zones.
- Allow an existing building or portion thereof to be converted to a child care center, provided that the exterior dimensions of the building do not change, even if it's a change of use.
- Exempt commercial child care centers with a licensed capacity of the 30 children or less from local site plan review regulations.

NHMA **opposes** the bill due to unaddressed concerns with tying local zoning and site plan review regulations to state rulemaking and exempting large commercial uses from local site plan review regulations. Additionally, **the bill does nothing to alleviate the real barriers to increasing child care access in New Hampshire**—labor availability and wage, overhead, and insurance costs.

HB 1213 (10:00 a.m.), relative to the number, selection, and terms of town highway agents and relative to the appointment of an expert highway agent. NHMA opposes this bill because it **overcomplicates the existing process** for electing or appointing highway agents.

HB 1224 (10:15 a.m.), would **greatly impact the default budget calculation** for towns under the official ballot law (“SB 2 towns”). The bill requires the default budget to be reduced by the amount equal to any reductions to line items for transfers made for one-time expenditures, by the amount of any positions that have been vacant for more than a year (excluding public safety positions and town positions with snow removal duties under recruitment), and prohibits the default budget from including any salary or benefit increases issued after the last budget was adopted. NHMA **opposes** this bill because it would **micromanage municipalities’ ability to adjust their budgets** to meet ongoing and fluid needs and make it harder to hire necessary staff for unfilled positions or retain existing staff. Officials from **SB 2 towns should testify at the hearing or, if that’s not possible, [sign in online](#) to oppose HB 1224.**

Ask Your House Members to Oppose SB 564

The House will vote **Thursday, April 23**, on **SB 564**, prohibiting municipal limits on dead-end road length if the road is compliant with the state fire code and requiring municipalities allow developers to treat perimeter buffers as developable land. The bill also prohibits limiting the number of lots allowed on dead end roads.

Ask your [local House members](#) to oppose the ought to pass (OTP) motion and support an alternative motion (interim study, inexpedient to legislate, or table).

NHMA **opposes SB 564** because it would **undermine safe and effective local planning, creating safety risks, hindering emergency access, encouraging poorly connected, high-density development, and defeating the purpose of perimeter buffers and cluster development ordinances**, which serve to protect natural resources, separate incompatible uses, or block out light and noise for neighboring properties.

Overall, **SB 564** promotes unsafe, inefficient development patterns and imposes a **one-size-fits-all mandate** that ignores local conditions and established planning practices.

Senate Committee Likes Housing Champions

A Senate committee unanimously voted this week to recommend [HB 1196](#)—which would have repealed the state’s Housing Champions program—as inexpedient to legislate. The bill is on next week’s Senate consent calendar.

Housing Champions is a voluntary program created in 2023 and funded with a \$5 million appropriation to provide communities with another tool encouraging affordable housing development. Municipalities designated as Housing Champions are eligible to apply for grants to help them develop solutions and advance infrastructure that will help alleviate the state’s housing shortage. The return on investment of the bill is undeniable. According to a January 2026 [report](#) issued by the state Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA), the 28 cities and towns in the state designated as Housing Champions communities were responsible for approving 45% of housing units that were built in 2025!

While no additional Housing Champions funding was included in the 2026-27 state budget, maintaining the program’s infrastructure and advocating for future funding is a win for cities and towns. For more background on the success of state and local partnerships and the recent troubling drift to heavy-handed state preemption of local options, check out NHMA’s whitepaper, “[Room for Everyone](#).” The paper traces the roots of the housing deficit back nearly two decades and advocates for renewed partnerships between the state and municipalities, emphasizing that effective housing policy must include infrastructure investment, targeted incentives, and flexible, locally tailored tools.

House, Senate to Meet

The House and Senate will be in session on **Thursday, April 23**, and several bills NHMA is watching are on the respective agendas:

House

- [**SB 441**](#), on the consent calendar as refer to interim study. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA and local welfare officials, requires a memorandum of understanding (MOU) be in place before a municipality can transport a homeless individual or other person showing symptoms of addiction unrelated to an application for general assistance to another municipality for the purpose of receiving housing, shelter, addiction treatment, or related services and imposes financial penalties for violating the statute.
- [**SB 538**](#), on the regular calendar as ought to pass as amended (OTP-A). The bill, **supported** by NHMA, extends the eligibility terms for municipal energy projects to receive net metering compensation under alternative tariffs approved by the Public Utilities Commission.
- [**SB 541**](#), on the consent calendar as OTP. This bill, **supported** by NHMA, reallocates \$ 5 million from an existing state fund toward the Southern NH Regional Water Interconnection Project-2B. This project addresses MtBE and PFAS contamination, water quality, and water supply needs in Windham, Salem, Hampstead, Atkinson, and Plaistow.
- [**SB 564**](#), *see above*.
- [**SB 593**](#), on the regular calendar as OTP. This bill, **supported** by NHMA, fixes a loophole in the solid waste surcharge enacted last year that inadvertently left solid waste districts out of the state rebate process.

Senate

- [**HB 1196**](#), *See above*.
- [**HB 1526**](#), on the consent calendar as refer to interim study. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, overhauls the process for adopting a budget committee in RSA 32:14 and other statutes.
- [**HB 1575**](#), on the consent calendar as OTP. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, transfers the determination of the default budget to the budget committees. Under current law, the governing body prepares the default budget unless the legislative body votes to delegate the preparation of the default budget to the budget committee.
- [**HB 1600**](#), on the regular calendar as OTP. The bill, **supported** by NHMA, requires the secretary of state to ensure that all polling places have access to the statewide centralized voter registration database during election days.
- [**HB 1602**](#), on the regular calendar as inexpedient to legislate (ITL). The bill, **supported** by NHMA and other organizations across the political spectrum,

creates a manufacturer-funded, third-party battery-recycling program for specific types of batteries.

- **HB 1759**, on the consent calendar as ITL. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, makes a land use board's vote on whether a member should be disqualified binding rather than advisory, requiring recusal if a majority finds disqualification is warranted.

Risk Pool Update

The [House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee](#) held a brief, sparsely attended public hearing this week on **SB 661**, the Senate's take on updating the regulation of public risk pools. **SB 661**, **opposed** by NHMA, introduces assessable risk pools into the NH statutory scheme, which subjects members to potential unbudgeted, mid-year assessments at any time. A subcommittee work session on this and some unrelated bills is scheduled for **10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, April 22, in Government Place (GP) Room 229**.

The House risk pool bill, **HB 1491**, remains with the [Senate Finance Committee](#), which is fine-tuning an amendment. NHMA **supports** the original version of the **HB 1491** but has concerns about the Senate's initial attempt at amending it.

As you've already read in most of this year's *Legislative Bulletins*, risk pools are created by political subdivisions to reduce risks and associated insurance costs. Across the country, two primary types of risk pools exist: assessable and non-assessable. The Association of Governmental Risk Pools (AGRIP) recognizes both models, **although state regulators strongly favor the assessable model despite its potentially catastrophic impacts on local budgets**. The House and Senate were unable to reach agreement on this issue last year, and it's hard to see what's changed since then beyond an increasing desire to put this issue to bed.

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. If your community has been impacted by assessments or is concerned about the long-term viability of risk pools, please **reach out to your [local Senator](#) and [House delegation](#)** to share your thoughts and concerns.

Senate Roundup

The Senate met Thursday and acted on several bills NHMA is watching:

- [HB 686](#) was referred to **interim study**. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, prohibits certain public entities from conducting or sponsoring political surveys, polls, or questionnaires in their official capacities.
- [HB 1066](#) was referred to **interim study**. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, would greatly limit municipalities' ability to enter into lease agreements, including those with non-appropriation clauses.
- [HB 1309](#) was **passed**. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, requires municipalities to not only state the subject matter of all warrant articles to be acted upon, but also “the intent and effect ... stated clearly and without commentary or ambiguity.” Currently, the selectmen are required to “distinctly state” each question on the warrant. While the intent of the bill was to prohibit commentary or ambiguity, the bill inadvertently requires commentary on the “intent and effect” or each warrant article. The bill will be enrolled and sent to the governor.
- [HB 1516](#) was referred to **interim study**. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, allows municipalities to vote to require that pie charts, bar charts, and QR codes be placed on property tax bills depicting where and how tax dollars are being allocated.
- [HB 1581](#) was referred to **interim study**. The bill, **opposed** by NHMA, allows municipalities to adopt a requirement that property owners be given notice when the assessed value of their property changes by certain amounts.
- [HB 1788](#) was referred to **interim study**. 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, voids contracts that contain such language, and created a private right action.

Quick Hits

Brief updates on bills and other matters referenced in previous Bulletins:

Contact committee on liability bill: [HB 1064](#), **opposed** by NHMA, remains with the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) and members only have a few more days to [email committee members](#) to explain how this well-intentioned bill goes too far and creates serious financial risks for municipalities. The bill eliminates municipal immunity regarding negligence that results in personal injury or property damage. It also increases the liability limits from \$325,000 to \$475,000 per claimant and from \$1 million to \$1.425 million per incident. For more on this bill, see the [March 27 Legislative Bulletin](#).

NHMA recorded webinar: As the New Hampshire legislature heads into the home stretch, hundreds of bills with municipal impact are still in play. Do you know which ones will affect your community's operations or bottom line? Check out NHMA's recently recorded [Legislative Half-Time Webinar](#) for the scoop on the most impactful bills.

New email address: There is a new email address to contact NHMA's legislative advocacy team: advocacy@nhmunicipal.org. The address was created to better reflect the work of the team. Messages sent to the government affairs email will be forwarded to the new mailbox for the foreseeable future, but please update your contacts now.

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.

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NHMA Events Calendar **2025 Final Legislative Bulletin**

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