

**New Hampshire Municipal Association**

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

**Legislative Bulletin 21**

**2025 Session**

**May 30, 2025**



[Live Bill Tracker](#)

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***Editor’s note:** We’ve been informed that some Bulletin recipients are seeing random question marks in places they shouldn’t be. We’re trying to isolate this formatting issue, which we don’t see in test emails. Thank you for your patience as we sort this out.*

## **Poll: Housing Concerns Don’t Equal Zoning Mandates**

A [timely poll from the UNH Survey Center](#)—which asks an “unloaded” question—shows that the claims that there is widespread support to change local zoning is a bit of, pardon the pun, a [Potemkin Village](#). The survey, released this week, found that 36% of respondents say housing remains the state’s largest problem, but slightly more Granite Staters oppose (40%) “requiring NH towns & cities to relax zoning policies to encourage housing” than support it (38%).

As NHMA has repeatedly pointed out, the lack of affordable housing in New Hampshire is the result of a complex web of economic factors—low inventory, rising home prices and rents, higher interest rates, escalating costs for building materials, and shortages and cost increases for labor—which cannot be effectively addressed through zoning mandates that strip away local control. Apparently, many people outside the State House get that, too.

The results of this poll demonstrate a core truth: that decisions impacting individual communities should be made at the local level. The results also show that efforts to pass

zoning mandates on consent, with no debate, contradict the way that NH residents view this issue. Please share these results with your local legislators before it's too late.



Source: UNH Survey Center

## Amended Risk Pool Bill Faces House Vote

The [House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee](#) voted unanimously on Tuesday to adopt an amendment to [SB 297](#), which deals with 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.

**SB 297**, as amended ([am-2473h](#)), is currently on the House consent calendar for **Thursday, June 5**.

NHMA opposed the original bill because of 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 one or more pools, particularly by mandating that all pools operate under an “assessable” model that subjects members to potential mid-year assessments. The amendment addresses those concerns. **Please [contact your local House members](#) and ask them to support this common-sense solution.**

The amendment recognizes that two distinct models of risk pools exist in New Hampshire: assessable and non-assessable. Assessable pools will remain under the authority of the Secretary of State, while non-assessable pools will shift oversight to the Department of Insurance (DOI). This distinction is consistent with how pools have operated in our state for decades and provides clarity to local governments, helping them decide which model best suits their needs.

The amendment includes enhanced disclosures for both risk pool models and equips regulators with stronger enforcement tools than those currently in place. Both models have clear reserve level requirements, eliminating ambiguity, and also mandate actions to be taken if reserves fall too low, ensuring the financial security of the public sector. Additionally, risk pool governing boards are held to fiduciary standards, requiring them to act in the best interests of those they serve: local governments.

The section addressing assessable pools incorporates all provisions requested by the Senate in the original bill. This means that the Senate's version of **SB 297**, along with additional refinements proposed by the bill's primary sponsor, is included in this amendment.

For non-assessable pools, which would now operate under the "advance premium pooled risk management program" framework, oversight is robust—arguably even more stringent than the current regulations. Political subdivisions will be accountable for their monthly contributions without the risk of mid-year assessments, addressing a major concern in the Senate's version of the bill. Additionally, this amendment creates a new regulatory framework for the DOI, ensuring that enforcement is tied to licensure. Pools under this model must meet legal requirements to retain their license, marking a significant shift from the previous system, which relied on court action as the primary enforcement mechanism.

Should **SB 297** pass the House next week, [contact your local senator](#) and ask him or her to support concurrence with the House position.

## Senate Finance Approaches Budget Deadline

The [Senate Finance Committee](#) continues to work on the state budget, [HB 1](#) and [HB 2](#), which must be voted on by **Thursday, June 5**. The chair of Senate Finance has stated that the committee will wrap up its work on **Tuesday, June 3**, and decisions are still pending on several major provisions.

The committee meets this afternoon at **1:30 p.m.** in **State House Room 103**, and again on **Monday, June 2**, at **10 a.m.**, and **Tuesday, June 3**, at **1:30 p.m.** in the same room.

Some of these items may have been acted on by the time you read this, but we're still asking members to [reach out to the committee](#) to advocate on the following:

- **Support** restoring some amount of funding for State Aid Grants (SAG), which provide 20% to 30% of eligible principal and interest payments for completed municipal infrastructure projects, is also being discussed. Without sustained investment each biennium, the current funds will eventually be exhausted, leaving no resources for new wastewater projects in the coming years.

- **Advocate for** sustainable *state* funding for the proposal to restore retirement benefits for about 1,500 Group II (police and fire) members of the New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) who were hired prior to July 1, 2011. NHMA supports the continuing existence of a retirement system for state, municipal, school, and county government employees that is secure, solvent, financially healthy, and financially sustainable. However, we oppose legislation expanding benefits that increase current or future employer contribution costs.
- **Oppose** the House proposal to transfer \$10.7 million per year from the dedicated Opioid Abatement Trust Fund to the Alcohol Abuse Prevention and Training Fund, in conjunction with repealing the traditional funding source for the alcohol abuse fund—five percent of annual gross Liquor Commission revenue.
- **Support** more funding for CHIP, Medicaid, and Medicaid Advantage programs in the budget, which currently include new out-of-pocket premiums for participants that will have a trickle-down impact on local welfare budgets.

Earlier this week, Senate Finance accepted updated revenue estimates on three key taxes that added another \$107.8 million over the next two years. The new estimates are still lower than what the governor projected in February but give the Senate more wiggle room to address some of the cuts made in the House budget.

## **Advocate Against Zoning Mandate(s)**

The House has one final zoning mandate to vote on **Thursday, June 5**, and we're (again) asking officials and concerned citizens to **contact your local House members and ask them to oppose the ought to pass with amendment (OTP-A) recommendation on [SB 163](#) and support tabling or killing the bill.**

**SB 163**, as amended, prohibits local moratoria and limitations on building permits for housing developments and adds the language from the **House version of HB 685**, mandating manufactured housing by right in residentially zoned areas.

Additionally, **ask your representatives to support non-concurrence** on two House bills amended by the Senate:

**HB 342** allows property owners to build on their property without seeking a variance for minimum lot size or lot coverage if the proposed building density conforms to that of the surrounding neighborhood.

**HB 457** prohibits municipalities from adopting any ordinance that restricts the number of occupants of any dwelling unit to less than 2 occupants.

Finally, **encourage your representatives to oppose** any last-minute attempts to remove **SB 170** and **SB 174** from the table.

As part of NHMA's efforts to support local control and oppose statewide mandates, we've asked a lot of our municipalities this session—**and you have come through again and again.** (Thank you!) Please make one more push with the House to relegate these ill-advised attempts at central planning to the dustbin of history.

But wait, there's more! Please [contact the governor's office](#) and ask her to veto [HB 577](#), which requires municipalities to allow either one detached or attached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) by right on single-family lots. In addition to expanding to detached units, the bill would repeal several vital provisions that provide for local regulation in the current ADU statutes and would essentially **turn single-family residential zones into two-family residential zones with no on-site parking requirements.** While the governor has previously expressed support for incentivizing ADUs, let her know that this bill simply goes too far and rather than enact bad policy now, ask her to tell the Legislature to go back to the drawing board and send her another bill next year that's right for New Hampshire and respects local control.

## Committee Acts on Election Bills

The [House Election Law Committee](#) held executive sessions Tuesday on five bills NHMA has a position on, including [SB 43](#), which was recommended ought to pass as amended (OTP-A).

The amendment ([am-2475h](#)), revises RSA 652:16-h to read: "A person *who is* eligible to vote or register to vote in the voting district who is unable to *reasonably* remove or cover such clothing may wear such clothing in the polling place while actively *and expeditiously* engaged in the process of registering to vote or while actively *and expeditiously* engaged in the process of voting." In sum, if a piece of clothing can reasonably be removed, it must be removed, but if not, the person must directly proceed to and from voting.

The amendment also amends RSA 652:27 to authorize cities, towns and school districts to use electronic poll books at "town business and deliberative sessions and special meetings, and school district business and deliberative sessions and special meetings." This is beneficial, voter-friendly legislation for municipalities that utilize electronic poll books, and NHMA supports the amendment for this reason.

**SB 43** and the other bills below will be acted on by the House on **Thursday, June 5.**

The committee also adopted "replace all" amendments on a pair of bills, replacing the Senate versions with language from House bills opposed by NHMA that were killed or retained by the Senate. [SB 213](#), concerning absentee ballots was replaced by the text of [HB 340](#), banning and creating a misdemeanor-level offense for public employees who, in the performance of their official duties, act in "any way designed or having the effect of influencing the vote of a voter on any question or office." [SB 221](#), which changed the time

period for verification of the voter checklist from 10 years to four years, was replaced by the text of [SB 274](#), mandating annual verification. If the House passes these amendments, [contact your senator](#) ask him or her to non-concur on both bills.

The committee retained [SB 44](#) (oppose), relative to hand count ballots, and [SB 103](#) (oppose), relative to the number of polling stations in large towns.

## House, Senate Meet Next Thursday

The House and Senate will meet on **Thursday, June 5**—the last day for each chamber to act on bills passed by the other chamber. In addition to the bills listed above, there are a few others we have been following. NHMA's position on each bill is shown in parenthesis after the bill number. Priority bills are denoted with an asterisk (\*).

### House Calendar

\* [SB 245](#) (support), relative to reimbursement for ground ambulance services. This is the compromise bill negotiated between stakeholders. Recommendation: Ought to pass with amendment.

The House also may act on any House bills amended by the Senate, either concurring with the amendment (meaning the bill will go to the governor), non-concurring (meaning the bill dies) or non-concurring requesting a committee of conference (meaning the House and Senate will meet to seek a compromise).

### Senate Calendar

\* [HB 316](#) (oppose), relative to reimbursement for ground ambulance services. Recommendation: Re-refer to committee.

[HB 143](#) (oppose), relative to the issuance of no trespass orders on municipal or school district property. Recommendation: Ought to pass.

The Senate also may act on any Senate bills amended by the House, either concurring, non-concurring, or non-concurring requesting a committee of conference.

Please contact your [local representatives](#) or [local senator](#) before next Thursday to share your position on any bills that matter to your municipality.

## New Laws Impacting Municipalities

The governor signed a pair of bills of municipal interest into law last Friday:

- [HB 511](#), relative to cooperation with federal immigration authorities. (*Effective 1/1/26*)

- **SB 62** relative to law enforcement participation in a federal immigration program and relative to cooperation with federal immigration authorities. (*Effective 1/1/26*)

## House and Senate Deadlines

### House

- Thursday, June 5: Last day to act on Senate bills.

### Senate

- Thursday, June 5: Deadline to act on all House bills.

### House and Senate

- Thursday, June 12: Deadline to form committees of conference.
- Thursday, June 19: Deadline to sign committee of conference reports.
- Thursday, June 26: Deadline to act on committee of conference reports.

Note: A list of committees of conference will be [available here](#) after they are formed.

## How to Make your Voice Heard

At this stage of the session most committees have finished and few, if any, public hearings will be scheduled, so the most impactful way to make your voice heard is to contact your local legislators; there are [Contact a Senator](#) and [Contact a Representative](#) links on the [General Court](#) website.

## 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](mailto:info@nhmunicipal.org) to be added to our email list for the *Legislative Bulletin*.

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**NHMA Events Calendar**  
**2024 Final Legislative Bulletin**

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