

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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Legislature Says Yes, No and Maybe on Multiple Bills NHMA is Following

The House and Senate met Thursday to decide if they could accept the amendments made to their bills by the other chamber and, if not, whether they would just let them die—or agree (“accede”) to a committee of conference.

Here’s a status report on bills NHMA is following, starting with proposals that members may still be able to influence:

Committees of Conference

Several committees of conference have been formed in recent weeks (and a couple have even finished already), but most of the heavy lifting will happen between now and **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 28**—the deadline to sign off on committee reports. Each committee consists of seven lawmakers: four representatives chosen by the House

speaker and three senators chosen by the Senate president. Generally speaking, committees are limited to amendments that are “germane,” i.e. language or concepts already contained in the House or Senate version of the bill. Committee reports must be unanimously agreed to; members may be replaced up until the sign-off deadline. Committees of conference are streamed on the [House](#) and [Senate](#) YouTube channels. There is no public comment at these sessions, which are basically conversations between House and Senate members; however, NHMA has flagged a few bills below that we are asking members to contact conferees about.

Each committee report—which in some cases states that the committee could not reach agreement—will go to both the House and the Senate on **Thursday, June 4**. Each body will vote on the committee report separately, and the only choice is a yes or no vote; no further amendments can be made by either chamber. With respect to those bills on which a committee of conference has reached agreement, if both chambers adopt the committee report, the bill is passed and goes to the governor. If either chamber rejects the committee report, the bill dies.

The General Court website has a [page listing committees of conference](#). Please note that meetings are often adjourned and rescheduled on short notice, so the website will not always have the most current information.

Priority Bills

[HB 1588](#), as amended by the Senate, is **one of the most anti-local control bills of the session**. The bill would:

- Effectively **exempt** all proposed residential development on land zoned to permit commercial uses from all zoning ordinances except those ordinances regulating frontage, setbacks, and height.
- **Prohibit** municipalities from adopting zoning ordinances for residential development in commercial zones that differ from those for commercial development.
- **Mandate** that municipalities reimburse private property owners “reasonable attorney's fees” if they go to court over whether a proposed residential development in a commercial zone is legal and conforming.

HB 1588, passed by the House, was a reasonable measure that allows the establishment of special assessment districts and expands the housing infrastructure grant program. Please **contact the [House members on this committee](#) and ask them to reject the Senate position** and let the bill die if the Senate sticks by its mandates.

HB 1010 updates the universal mixed-use zoning mandate passed last year that takes effect on July 1. The House version of the bill made significant positive updates; however, the Senate amendment removes key provisions from the bill and expands the mandate. **Contact the House members on the committee and ask them to oppose the Senate position.**

SB 564, opposed by NHMA, prohibits municipal limits on dead-end road length if the road is compliant with the state fire code and requires municipalities to allow developers to treat perimeter buffers as developable land. The bill also prohibits limiting the number of lots allowed on dead end roads. The House and Senate versions of this bill are materially similar. **Contact all members of the committee and ask them to remove Section 2, Numeral III of the bill** because it defeats the purpose of perimeter buffers and open space subdivision ordinances, which serve to protect natural resources, separate incompatible uses, or block out light and noise for neighboring properties.

HB 340 updates the statute regarding electioneering by public employees. While the Senate version of the bill is an improvement over what the House passed last year, NHMA believes the existing statute is effective and supports leaving it as-is. **Contact all members of the committee to oppose both versions of the bill.**

HB 639, relative to the use of and disputes over blockchain and digital currencies. NHMA has no position on the personal use of blockchain technology and cryptocurrency systems; however, we **oppose** language in the House version of HB 639 that provides specific legal protections and exemptions from state and local laws for blockchain infrastructure, including **universal limits on municipal noise and zoning ordinances** and rate schedules. The House version also mandates that towns and cities permit digital asset mining businesses in any zoning district that permits industrial uses, even if other incompatible uses, like light commercial and residential, are also permitted in that zoning district. Please **contact the Senate members on this committee and ask them to reject the House position** and let the bill die if the House won't agree.

HB 1184, relative to the issuance of no trespass orders on municipal or school district property. NHMA **opposes** the bill; however, the Senate version is far more workable and reasonable. **Contact all members of the committee to oppose both versions of the bill.**

Other Bills

- **SB 538**, extending net metering eligibility terms for municipal energy projects. NHMA **supports** the Senate version.

- [HB 244](#), updating and recodifying the municipal enforcement of the building and fire code. NHMA **supports**.
- [HB 609](#), relative to the general court’s authority over the sale, purchase, ownership, use, possession, transportation, licensing, permitting, taxation, and other matter pertaining to firearms, stun guns, Tasers, pepper spray devices, knives and other self-defense tools. NHMA **opposes**.
- [HB 1109](#), relative to notice requirements regarding public employee suspensions and investigations and transferring certain positions in the department of corrections to Group II retirement system status. NHMA **opposes** the public employee notice requirements; however, the Senate version is more workable.
- [HB 1187](#), relative to the time in which candidates for state representative may file their candidacy for a special election at their town clerk’s office. NHMA **opposes** the House version.
- [HB 1234](#), identifying certain school district offices as incompatible for purposes of school district elections. NHMA **opposes** the House version, which impacts municipalities where the school district is a city department.
- [HB 1275](#), relative to the effects of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on agriculture, exempting certain per- and polyfluoroalkyl products from use restrictions, and relative to the definition of “drinking water standard.” NHMA is watching this bill to ensure that language impacting municipal wastewater treatment operations that was taken out of an earlier version of the bill does not resurface.
- [HB 1300](#) mandates a local school tax cap question and related limitations on central office administrative expenses in school districts. The Senate version is a one-time referendum in the November 2026 state election; the House version authorizes a referendum every two years in perpetuity. NHMA **opposes** this bill because it does not contain a state appropriation for the cost of these additional ballots, meaning a city or town will be required to pay for the ballots.
- [HB 1306](#), relative to the counting of absentee ballots. NHMA **opposes**.
- [HB 1469](#) deals with regulating massage establishments. Both versions of the bill create establishment licenses for these businesses. Currently, only individual massage therapists must be licensed, but the state does not currently require separate licenses for massage parlors or the establishments where they operate. The Senate version is more comprehensive and provides municipalities and law enforcement with additional tools to address unlawful massage businesses statewide. Members should [contact House members](#) on the committee and **ask them to support the Senate position**.
- [HB 1540](#), relative to municipal health ordinances and accessory dwelling units and relative to on-premises licenses for licensed barbershops and salons. NHMA **supports** the House version.

Concurrences

These bills will be enrolled and sent to the governor.

House

- [HB 707](#), a landfill-siting bill that represents a long sought-after compromise that has eluded previous legislatures. The bill, **supported** by NHMA, would establish a seven-member solid waste site evaluation committee to review applications for new landfill capacity in New Hampshire, following a model similar to the existing state process for energy facilities. **HB 707** does not preempt local zoning ordinances, as many previous legislative proposals had done. It also does not override existing legal agreements between towns and private entities.
- [HB 1079](#), 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 in RSA 674:39 to approved building permits for ADUs. We are unsure how this could work in practice. The Senate amended the bill but neglected to fix the problem. Instead, the Senate's amendment removed a section of the bill eliminated a redundant statute relative to detached ADUs. NHMA **opposes**.
- [HB 1491](#), supported by NHMA, creates a pathway for a risk pool that wants to remain non-assessable to be regulated by the state Department of Insurance. 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. For more on risk pools, see [last week's Bulletin](#) (as well as nearly every other Bulletin this spring!)
- [HB 164](#) authorizes the state to create and maintain a website for electronic records and allows municipalities to store electronic records on the website. This option could be useful for municipalities to be able to refer right-to-know requests to a website managed by State Archives instead of having to compile and supply the information directly. NHMA **supports**.
- [HB 1021](#), amending the date to provide written notice to a municipality of a taxpayer's election to be assessed under the low-income housing tax credit program. NHMA **supports**.
- [HB 1103](#), allowing municipalities to utilize community revitalization tax relief credits on a wider variety of properties and structures. NHMA **supports**.
- [HB 1555](#), relative to the administration and enforcement of the state fire code. NHMA is **neutral**.

- [HB 1681](#), a local option bill relative to the definition, inspection, and local approval of tiny houses and yurts as innovative housing structures. NHMA **opposes** due to technical issues with the bill.
- [HB 1756](#), allowing organizations to file for property tax exemptions once and receive those exemptions unless and until a town assessor finds the organization ineligible for an exemption. NHMA is **neutral** on this member-requested bill.

Senate

- [SB 223](#), relative valid photo identification for purposes of obtaining a ballot and relative to the production of lists of certain schools of higher education.
- [SB 418](#) prohibits municipalities from requiring licenses for the production and sale of homestead food products (a.k.a. the “pickle bill”). NHMA **opposes**.
- [SB 438](#), relative to access to the centralized voter registration database on election days.
- [SB 585](#), relative to audits for communications districts.

Non-Concurrences (bill dies)

There will be no further action on these bills, all of which were of significant concern to our members.

House

- [HB 1131](#), relative to the official ballot referendum form of town meetings. NHMA **opposed** the House version proposal, which would have eliminated the ability for voters at town meeting to debate the question of switching to the official ballot. The changes to the bill made by the Senate were not acceptable to the House.

Senate

- [SB 409](#), to which the House included the text of [HB 1064](#), dealt with penalties for disobeying a police officer. **HB 1064**, **opposed** by NHMA, was a budget-busting expansion of local liability exposure that would have eliminated municipal immunity regarding negligence that results in personal injury or property damage.
- [SB 557](#), to which the text of [HB 1131](#) was added by the House, would have made synthetic and semisynthetic kratom illegal to prepare, distribute, manufacture, sell, possess or advertise. The new amendment, opposed by NHMA, would have required municipalities to place the question for adopting the official ballot referendum form of meeting (usually called “SB 2”) on the official ballot for electing officers. NHMA **opposed** the House version.

- [SB 643](#), to which the text of [HB 1505](#) was added by the House, would have required municipalities to hold a public hearing and conduct a roll call vote when seeking to override a tax or spending cap—and required cities and charter towns to include the roll call vote on the override on the property tax bill. The House amendment would have required municipalities to submit documentation to the department of revenue administration proving they are in compliance with local budget and tax caps. NHMA **opposed** both versions.
- [SB 653](#), to which the text of [HB 1526](#) was added by the House, dealt with county government. The House amendment, **opposed** by NHMA, would have overhauled the process for adopting a local budget committee, replacing the straightforward language in current law.

Governor Signs Municipal Bills

The governor recently signed several bills NHMA is following into law:

- [HB 365](#) (Chapter 68), relative to proof of United States citizenship for indigent voters. Effective July 17, 2026
- [HB 1113](#) (Chapter 70), enabling towns to establish a 3-year term for town moderators. Effective July 17, 2026.
- [HB 1118](#) (Chapter 71), increasing the limit for moneys remitted to municipal treasurers. Effective July 17, 2026.
- [HB 1151](#) (Chapter 72), relative to conservation commission appropriations. Effective July 17, 2026.
- [SB 503](#) (Chapter 77), relative to the use of Hew Hampshire-harvested spruce-pine-fir lumber. Effective November 14, 2026.

Note: NHMA’s final 2026 *Legislative Bulletin*, which will be issued in late summer, will list all bills with municipal impacts that were enacted this year, along with links to any updated legal guidance on specific changes.

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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2025 Final Legislative Bulletin

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