

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 22

2026 Session

May 29, 2026



[Live Bill Tracker](#)

In this issue:

- Conference Reports Face Final Vote; Stay Engaged!
- Governor Signs Municipal Bills
- Follow Bills That Matter to You Online

Conference Reports Face Final Vote; Stay Engaged!

The House and Senate will be in session on **Thursday, June 4**, to act on committee of conference reports on the remaining bills of the 2026 session. These committees are formed for bills where both bodies passed the bill but didn't agree on amendments made by the other chamber. Small groups of senators and representatives—referred to as conferees—met to discuss each side's position and try to come to a compromise. Bills that the conferees can reach agreement on go back to the House and Senate, where each body can either agree or disagree; no other actions or further floor amendments can be made.

Priority Bills

Here are some key bills where NHMA is **asking members to take immediate action**:

HB 1588 is one of the most anti-local control bills of the session, made worse by the committee of conference. Contact your local senator and House members and urge them to vote against the committee of conference report.

Under the existing universal mixed-use zoning mandate passed last year, which goes into effect July 1, 2026, municipalities can require a special exception or conditional use permit, with certain objective requirements for a developer to meet, in order to ensure the residential development is safe for future occupants and doesn't negatively impact abutters, the greater neighborhood, or local infrastructure. If **HB 1588** were to become law, multi-family dwellings on commercially zoned lots would be **allowed by right and be exempt from local density limits**. While it remains unclear how the changes adopted last year will affect residents, infrastructure, and development, **the legislature is already rushing to expand this universal mandate at the 11th hour—with no public input!**

Among the issue with **HB 1588** are that it:

- Allows multi-family dwelling units on land zoned to permit commercial uses **by right** and **prohibits** municipalities from adding additional requirements unless expressly authorized in the statute.
- **Exempts** proposed residential development in commercial zones from all zoning ordinances except those ordinances regulating frontage, setbacks, and height.
- **Prohibits** municipalities from adopting zoning ordinances for residential development in commercial zones that differ from those for commercial development.
- **Costs taxpayers money** by mandating 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.

There is a good chance of defeating this bill because it is such a blatant attack on local governance, but NHMA needs you to contact your local senator and House members and ask them oppose HB 1588!

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 version of the bill agreed to by conferees 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. Further, the bill would require municipalities to permit up to 100 lots on a single dead-end road before requiring additional ingress and egress. Most egregiously, the bill imposes **potentially illegal prior restraint on municipalities by barring them from adopting “additional**

restrictions or requirements regarding building or lot size for affected properties” before the April 1, 2027 effective date of the bill. **Contact your [local senator](#) and [House members](#) and urge them to oppose SB 564—a bill originally introduced at the request of a single developer.**

HB 340, as **[agreed to by conferees](#)**, updates the statute regarding electioneering by public employees to create a civil fine of up to \$1,000 for any public employee who posts or distributes a card, handbill, poster, placard, picture, pin, sticker, circular, or any other form of communication that a “reasonable person” would believe explicitly advocates for or against any candidate, political party, or measure and defines political surveys as those that show a clear preference for policies likely to appear on a ballot or in an election. This broad standard could discourage or prevent public employees—such as police chiefs, department heads, and directors—from gathering information on issues that might later become ballot questions. Further, the expanded definition of “public employee” may deter municipal staff and public safety leaders from even answering questions about a proposal or using surveys to seek input on public issues that could eventually appear on the ballot. Finally, the effective date of January 1, 2026, **impermissibly turns this into a retroactive law**. NHMA **opposes** this bill and encourages members to contact **your [local senator](#) and [House members](#) and ask them to vote no on HB 340**.

HB 609, relative to the General Court’s authority over municipal or agency rules and regulations regarding the sale, purchase, ownership, use, possession, transportation, licensing, permitting, taxation, and other matters pertaining to firearms, stun guns, Tasers, pepper spray devices, knives, and “other self-defense tools.” The **[conference report](#)** bans any “public official, public employee, political subdivision, or any other public or quasi-public entity” from adopting any charter provision, ordinance, bylaw, rule, regulation, or policy that is “repugnant to, or inconsistent with, the general court’s occupation of the whole field of the regulation of firearms and ammunition.” It creates a private right of action for any individual aggrieved by local weapons regulation and states that acting in good faith or on the advice of legal counsel is not a valid defense against such claims. **Contact your [local senator](#) and [House members](#) and ask them to oppose HB 609.**

Other Bills

- **HB 1010** also updates the universal mixed-use zoning mandate passed last year. The conferees accepted the Senate version of the bill with a pair of tweaks, including the deletion of allowing multi-family units in commercial zones “by right”—although **HB 1588** (above) adds that language back in a different section of the same statute. That said, NHMA **supports HB 1010**, which makes some positive updates to the statute.

- [**HB 1184**](#), relative to the issuance of no trespass orders (NTOs) on municipal or school district property, allows an emergency NTO to be issued for no more than 35 days, which can be extended for up to one year by a majority vote of the governing body. It also allows for an individual to appeal the NTO to the governing body within 10 days. Finally, the bill requires all existing NTOs to be reviewed within 90 days of passage and be reissued or rescinded. Although the current language is more workable than the bill as introduced, NHMA continues to **oppose HB 1184**.
- [**HB 1300**](#) mandates a local school tax cap question and related limitations on central office administrative expenses in school districts. The conferees agreed to put the question on the November 2026 and 2028 state election ballots, despite concerns raised by the Department of Revenue Administration and local assessors about the tax cap methodology and calculation. Although the bill no longer requires municipalities to pay to print a separate ballot for this question, NHMA continues to **oppose** the bill because of the technical issues raised, which could lead to increased local administrative and legal costs.
- [**HB 1469**](#) deals with regulating massage establishments. The conferees accepted the Senate version of the bill with a minor addition. The bill, **supported** by NHMA, creates 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 bill also provides municipalities and law enforcement with additional tools to address unlawful massage businesses statewide.
- [**SB 538**](#) now includes language extending net metering eligibility terms for municipal energy projects. NHMA **supports**.
- [**HB 244**](#), updating and recodifying the municipal enforcement of the building and fire code. The conferees only made technical corrections to the underlying bill. NHMA **supports**.
- [**HB 1306**](#), relative to the counting of absentee ballots. The conferees agreed to the Senate version of the bill with no changes. NHMA **opposes**.

The agreed-upon version of the following bills no longer include sections that were opposed by NHMA:

- [**HB 639**](#), relative to the use of and disputes over blockchain and digital currencies. The conferees agreed to the Senate version of the bill, which **did not** include House language opposed by NHMA that set universal limits on municipal noise and zoning ordinances; NHMA has no position on the personal use of blockchain technology and cryptocurrency systems.

- [**HB 1275**](#), relative to the effects of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on agriculture and relative to the definition of “drinking water standard.”

As of this morning, it appears the House and Senate could not reach an agreement on these bills, which were listed as still waiting for sign-off, even though the deadline was 4 p.m. Thursday. If that is the case, the bills will not advance this year, although they could be brought back in the 2027 legislative session:

- [**HB 1091**](#) creates a local option for municipalities to modify ordinances or bylaws prohibiting sleeping or camping on private property to include a non-monetary penalty that may be elected by the offender in lieu of a financial penalty. Options for non-monetary penalties include, but are not limited to, community service, enrollment in a program designed to assist the individual with obtaining stable housing, and verification of secured stable housing.
- [**HB 1540**](#), relative to municipal health ordinances and accessory dwelling units and relative to on-premises licenses for licensed barbershops and salons.

Governor Signs Municipal Bills

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

- [**HB 348**](#) (Chapter 81), relative to eligibility for local assistance. The bill, which NHMA worked on extensively with the sponsor and local welfare officials, allows municipalities to adopt an optional proof of residency requirement as part of their local welfare guidelines. Temporary emergency assistance still must be provided, but a municipality would then coordinate with the alleged municipality of residency by either seeking reimbursement of costs, requesting that the municipality of residency undertake ongoing relief and maintenance of the applicant pursuant to the municipality of residency’s welfare guidelines, or request an intermunicipal hearing to determine residency and financial responsibility of the applicant. Should a municipality adopt proof of residency requirements, the bill requires a municipality to accept certain documentation or an attestation by specific public officials/social service providers to establish residency. It also creates exceptions to any residency requirements for an individual who is the victim of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, or human trafficking. Effective July 21, 2026.
- [**HB 1161**](#) (Chapter 83), removing the requirement for municipalities to have an advisory board for development districts. Effective July 21, 2026.
- [**HB 1274**](#) (Chapter 84), increasing the annual fee for dog licenses by 25 cents. Effective July 1, 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.

Information from the NHMA Legislative Bulletin may be republished online or in print with attribution to the New Hampshire Municipal Association. Light editing for style or to shorten is allowed.

<https://www.nhmunicipal.org/legislative-bulletins>.

If you share NHMA content on social media, please mention our Linked In page:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/new-hampshire-municipal-association>

NHMA Events Calendar **2025 Final Legislative Bulletin**

Editorial Staff:

Margaret M.L. Byrnes, Executive Director
Marty Karlon, Editor in Chief, Policy & Research Analyst
Sarah Burke Cohen, Legislative Advocate
Brodie Deshaies, Legislative Advocate

Layout & Communications:

Miranda Blaikie, Communications Coordinator

New Hampshire Municipal Association
25 Triangle Park Drive
Concord, NH 03301
Tel: 603.224.7447

Email: advocacy@nhmunicipal.org

Website: www.nhmunicipal.org