

New Hampshire Municipal Association

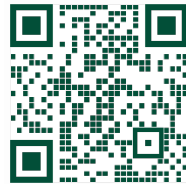
THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 3

2026 Session

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

In this issue:

- Fight Legislative Takeover of NHMA
- House Proposes Perpetual Tax Cap Referendum
- Busy Start for House Housing Committee
- M&R Distribution, Variances and Local Options
- Trio of 'Second Home' Bills This Year
- Act Now to Support Paint Recycling
- Get Involved in Legislative Policy Process
- Legislative Conference Open to NHMA Members
- How to Make Your Voice Heard
- Follow Bills That Matter to You Online
- The Bulletin is for Sharing!

Fight Legislative Takeover of NHMA

On **Thursday, January 22, at 9:00 a.m. in Government Place (GP) Room 234**, the [House Legislative Administration Committee](#) will hold hearing on a pair of bills that specifically **take aim at NHMA's ability to advocate and at member municipalities' ability to govern the organization**. These bills are attempts by the

legislature to take over a private, member-run corporation—a **heavy-handed big government approach**:

- [HB 1359](#) requires a two-thirds majority vote of the legislative body, by roll call or ballot, to authorize funding the lobbying portion of municipal association dues. This means a roll call or secret ballot vote by the town meeting for most municipalities. Worse, the bill would change the business model under which NHMA has operated for decades by requiring us to split up the educational, legal and advocacy services we offer and bill for them separately, which would certainly cost more for members.
- [HB 1360](#) creates a legislative oversight commission to review NHMA's finances, activities, and use of public funds and adds new reporting requirements over and above what is required of other non-governmental entities that receive public funding. The commission can issue suspension orders for up to one year if NHMA is found to be noncompliant in reporting lobbying activities or "acting in a manner contrary to the best interests of its member municipalities."

Both bills contain sections that would make it impossible for NHMA—a non-profit, non-partisan, voluntary membership organization overseen by a board of local officials—to continue operating in its current manner (of course, that's the point).

HB 1359 treats membership in NHMA differently than membership a municipality has in other organizations, including the state, which includes dues for organizations that lobby in its budget (no separate roll call vote required). It also treats receiving services from NHMA differently than when a municipality purchases professional services (legal, their own lobbyist, finance support, etc.) directly from other providers.

The "statement of finding" in **HB 1360** contains false claims that NHMA is not subject to oversight, transparency, or reporting requirements. Taxpayers do have a legitimate interest in ensuring funds are spent transparently, and they **can already** see all our lobbying activity through our quarterly reports to the Secretary of State (SOS) and our website. They can also vote against our dues in the budget.

Unlike other recent bills seeking to make it more difficult for municipalities to have a collective voice at the State House that affected other governmental affiliate groups—like [HB 314](#), *which was killed just last week*—these two bills **are all about NHMA**.

Plain and simple, these bills are an intentional effort to silence local voices in the state's legislative process and make it harder for towns and cities to engage in collective advocacy.

We're asking local officials to **attend the hearings** and **testify against these bills** or oppose them online and [contact members](#) of the **House Legislative**

Administration Committee to explain the value of NHMA membership and of having a shared voice at the State House.

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

House Proposes Perpetual Tax Cap Referendum

On **Tuesday, January 20, at 10:15 a.m. in GP Room 158**, the [House Election Law Committee](#) will hold a hastily scheduled public hearing on a non-germane amendment to [HB 1300](#) that would **create biennial local tax cap referendums for every city, town, county and school district in New Hampshire**.

The introduced version of **HB 1300** deals with congressional redistricting, but the draft amendment ([am 2026-0093h](#)) mandates a **biennial local property tax limitation ballot question for each state general election** held in November of even-numbered years. The question would read: “For the next 2 fiscal years, shall the total property taxes levied by this [town/city/school district/county] be limited so they may not increase faster than inflation plus new taxable property growth?”

For the cap to take effect, it must be approved by a 3/5 majority in an individual jurisdiction. The votes will be counted separately for towns and cities, counties, and school districts. The bill does not impact the statewide education property tax. The same question will appear every other year in perpetuity, beginning this November, based on the effective date of the proposed amendment. Divorcing this ballot question from local elections and town meetings makes it easier to confuse voters as to what they are actually voting for. It also hamstring municipalities from authorizing long-term capital projects or labor agreements due to the threat of a future cap.

Despite the short notice and upcoming long weekend, **please attend the hearing and oppose this amendment**, which is the most egregious example yet of legislators trying to change the rules because a majority of local voters consistently support responsible local budget proposals. If you can’t make it to Concord, **sign in to oppose the bill, contact the committee members**, and [alert your local House members](#).

Busy Start for House Housing Committee

The [House Housing Committee](#) hit the ground running this week, hearing 10 bills Tuesday and voting six bills supported by NHMA as inexpedient to legislate (ITL) on a combined vote of 101-0. In addition, a House resolution on local zoning that NHMA did not take a position on, but which garnered some media coverage, was recommended ITL, 17-0.

Four other bills NHMA supports were heard Tuesday and not acted upon:

- [HB 1007](#), relative to manufactured housing.
- [HB 1008](#), relative to modifying innovative land use controls, requirements, and appeals.
- [HB 1010](#), relative to residential development on commercially zoned land.
- [HB 1017](#), relative to accessory dwelling units and workforce housing.

Please [contact the House Housing Committee](#) and ask [your local legislators](#) to encourage the committee to work with NHMA on these bills.

The pace continues next week with hearings in **GP Room 231** on **Tuesday, January 20**, when the committee holds hearing on 11 more bills (most of which are unrelated to municipalities) and **Thursday, January 22, beginning at 9:30 a.m.** with a dozen more bills (most of which impact municipalities).

Many of the bills this week and next week were filed in response to the multiple changes to zoning, land use and local choice enacted last year, with some bills making revisions or addressing technical issues, some promoting ways to increase affordable housing development, and some seeking outright repeals of the recent changes. NHMA continues to support balanced, community-driven growth that delivers needed housing and commercial development while managing local impacts through creative, shared solutions.

Hearings Next Week

The hearings next Tuesday are on a mixed bag dealing with programs under the NH Housing Finance Authority, condominium disclosures, evictions and the use of price-fixing websites or other software by landlords. NHMA is only following some of these bills, including one we support, [HB 1625](#), which would require annual reporting on accessory dwelling unit construction and use.

Thursday's hearings include multiple bills impacting municipalities:

- [HB 1357](#) (9:30 a.m.), which permits by right the placement of newly constructed manufactured homes in all residentially zoned areas. (NHMA opposes)
- [HB 1065](#) (10:00), relative to multi-family and mixed-use development in commercially zoned areas. (Support)
- [HB 1136](#) (10:30), relative to accessory dwelling units. (Support)
- [HB 1145](#) (11:00), relative to affordable housing investment fees. (Support)
- [HB 1349](#) (11:30), relative to exemptions from multi-family zoning requirements for small or low-density communities.
- [HB 1496](#) (noon), which repeals the cap on residential parking spaces. (Support)
- [HB 1525](#) (1:00 p.m.), relative to zoning restrictions concerning dwelling unit occupancy. (Support)

- [HB 1540](#) (1:30), which establishes uniform requirements for accessory dwelling units and provides municipalities with authority and guidance for zoning, permitting, and environmental protections. (Support)
- [HB 1079](#) (2:00), which allows accessory dwelling units to be built within or attached to certain non-conforming structures. (Support)
- [HB 1103](#) (2:30), which allows municipalities to utilize community revitalization tax relief credits on a wider variety of properties and structures. (Support)
- [HB 1120](#) (3:00), which allows subdivision regulations concerning water supply. (Support)

Please **testify or [sign in](#) to support** these bills.

Meanwhile in the Senate ...

On **Tuesday, January 20, at 10:15 a.m. in State House (SH) Room 100, the [Senate Commerce Committee](#)** has a hearing on [SB 564](#), which NHMA opposes. The bill creates a universal mandate prohibiting municipalities from placing limits on maximum road length and imposing a numerical cap on the number of housing lots on a dead-end road or street. The bill also permits municipalities to place utilities within open space or perimeter buffer areas of subdivisions. **Please attend this hearing or [sign in](#) to oppose the bill.**

M&R Distribution, Variances and Local Options

No action was taken following public hearings this week on a trio of bills we flagged in last week's bulletin. If you have not already weighed in on these bills, **there is still time to reach out to committee members:**

- [HB 1474](#) (neutral) would change the distribution formula for the meals and rooms tax (M&R). Historically, the municipal share is distributed to cities and towns based on annual population estimates compiled by the state. The bill subtracts "those living in property tax exempt housing including on-campus college housing, prisons, jails and similar institutions, county nursing homes and not for profit nursing homes" from the population estimates and adds equalized property value to the distribution calculation. NHMA is currently monitoring the bill because it does not change the total amount of money distributed to cities and towns. However, a [spreadsheet provided by the bill sponsor](#) and based on a draft amendment he handed out at Wednesday's hearing listed **34 municipalities that would get no M&R revenue** under the bill, and **another 16 that would see a reduction of more than 50% of their current share**. More than one-quarter of cities and towns would see a reduction of 30% or more, and **100 municipalities would lose some portion of their current M&R share**. As one legislator who spoke against the bill pointed out, **M&R funds are not a state**

subsidy akin to education funding, they are revenue sharing. You can contact the [House Ways and Means Committee](#) to weigh in on this proposal.

- **[SB 435](#)** (oppose) would remove “unnecessary hardship” from the items a zoning board of adjustment may consider when reviewing a variance request, **significantly lowering the standard under which variances may be denied.** Contact the [Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee](#) to share your concerns with this proposal.
- **[SB 634](#)** (support) would **allow municipalities to adopt a local option fee** of no more than \$2 per day to be assessed on hotel occupancies to fund municipal public safety services, helping offset the cost burden of services associated with increased tourism and transient traffic. This bill represents a long-standing NHMA policy. Contact the [Senate Ways and Means Committee](#) if you support this local option.

Trio of ‘Second Home’ Bills This Year

Two of three bills that would create supplemental taxes or surcharges on non-primary residences, including vacation homes and seasonal rentals, had public hearings this week before the [House Ways and Means Committee](#).

No action was taken on either [HB 1580](#), relative to the taxation of non-primary residences, or [HB 1707](#) creating an additional property tax for certain unoccupied properties.

Another bill, [HB 1786](#), relative to creating a state assessment on non-homestead luxury second homes to fund statewide housing development programs and address housing shortages, has been assigned to the [House Housing Committee](#).

Supporters argue that these measures could generate significant revenue for housing initiatives and encourage owners to keep properties occupied or available for rent. Critics, however, warn that such taxes could penalize property owners, distort local funding, and fail to deliver meaningful relief for communities struggling with affordability. Under **HB 1580**, which NHMA supports, any additional revenue would be retained by the municipality; revenue would go to the state under the other proposals.

New Hampshire is not alone in exploring this approach. Rhode Island recently enacted a surcharge on second homes valued at \$1 million or more, dubbed the “Taylor Swift Tax,” to fund affordable housing programs. Vermont approved an increased property transfer tax on second-home purchases, while Montana implemented a tiered property tax system distinguishing primary residences from vacation properties. Other states, including Massachusetts and California, have debated similar measures targeting high-value homes and absentee owners.

It is unclear whether any of these bills have enough support to advance this year, but they represent the beginning of what may be a multi-year conversation.

Act Now to Support Paint Recycling

HB 451 cleared the Senate last week with bipartisan support and now awaits the governor's signature. This legislation would create a statewide paint stewardship program, allowing residents and businesses to recycle leftover paint and cans at participating retailers.

The program, operated by PaintCare, is already in 11 states, collecting more than 75 million gallons of paint. Funding to cover program costs comes from a fee on new paint purchases, ranging from about 30 cents to \$2.45 per can depending on size.

Today, old paint that doesn't end up piled in basements and garages is dropped off at municipal hazardous waste disposal days or dried and dumped in landfills, which costs municipalities money.

HB 451 is backed by a broad coalition, including environmental groups, businesses, and paint manufacturers. NMHA members are urged to [contact the governor's office](#) and encourage her to sign **HB 451**.

Get Involved in Legislative Policy Process

NHMA's biennial legislative policy process is getting under way. NHMA has a member-driven process by which it establishes the legislative policy positions to guide staff advocacy activities over the coming legislative biennium. As a first step, we are recruiting volunteers to serve on our three legislative policy committees. These committees will review legislative policy proposals submitted by local officials and make recommendations on those policies, which will go to the NHMA Legislative Policy Conference in September.

If you are a municipal official in a city or town and are interested in serving on one of the policy committees, please contact the advocacy staff at: governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org.

Each of the committees deals with a different set of municipal issues. The committees and their subject areas are as follows:

- **Finance and Revenue**: budgeting, revenue, tax exemptions, current use, assessing, tax collection, retirement issues, education funding.
- **General Administration and Governance**: elections, Right-to-Know Law, labor, town meeting, charters, welfare, public safety.

- Infrastructure, Development, and Land Use: solid/hazardous waste, transportation, land use, technology, environmental regulation, housing, utilities, code enforcement, economic development.

When you contact us, please indicate your first and second choices for a committee assignment. We will do our best to accommodate everyone's first choice, but we strive for equal membership among the committees. We hope to have 15-20 members on each committee.

There will be an organizational meeting in Concord for all committees on **Friday, April 3**. After that, each committee will meet separately as many times as necessary to review the policy proposals assigned to it—typically three to five meetings, all held on either a Monday or Friday, between early April and the end of May.

Legislative Conference Open to NHMA Members

The NH Association of Counties' 2026 Legislative Conference, taking place **Tuesday, February 24**, from 8:00 a.m. to noon at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord is open to NHMA members. The event will bring together county officials, policymakers, and community leaders to engage in constructive dialogue regarding pressing legislative issues. NHMA will be represented in one of the panel discussions. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

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 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/>

Because the House and Senate have moved to digital calendars, committees now have the ability to reschedule when there is bad weather, when there are absences, or when issues with bills just haven't quite 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.

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. This tool can help ensure that you know when the bills that you care about most are scheduled for public hearing or votes.

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.

Reminder: The Bulletin is for Sharing!

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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](#).)

NHMA Events Calendar
2025 Final Legislative Bulletin

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