

**New Hampshire Municipal Association**

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

**Legislative Bulletin 7**

**2026 Session**

**February 13, 2026**



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

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## Priority Alert: Oppose Local Liability Bill!

A bill **opposed** by NHMA that expands municipal liability, increases damage caps, and mandates indemnification of employees was unanimously backed by the [House Judiciary Committee](#) this morning.

While intended to expand liability and improve compensation for injured parties, **HB 1064 goes too far and creates serious financial risks for municipalities**. Significantly raising liability caps will increase insurance and risk pool costs, which will lead to a combination of property tax increases and reductions in municipal services.

Additionally, **HB 1064** will limit a municipality's ability to claim immunity as a defense in negligence claims, meaning municipalities will have greater financial exposure. **Small communities will be disproportionately impacted**, as a single large claim could force cuts to public safety, roads, or education. Further, mandatory indemnification removes important local discretion and weakens accountability.

The bill will be on the House consent calendar at a future date, but it's time **contact your local legislators now and ask them to remove HB 1064 from the consent calendar and oppose it because it will lead to fiscal instability and higher taxes**.

The bill is also opposed by the NH Police Association, NH School Boards Association, NH Chiefs of Police Association, NH Association of Counties, and the State Employees Association.

## Support Amendment on Day Care Siting

On **Tuesday, February 17, at 9:00 a.m. in Government Place (GP) Room 154** the [House Municipal and County Government Committee](#) will hold executive sessions on multiple bills, including **HB 1195**, which greatly expands the existing zoning mandate requiring home-based day care be permitted as an accessory use for all residential uses. **HB 1195**, as currently drafted, would tie zoning ordinances related to in-home child care centers to state rulemaking, exempt these commercial uses from all site plan review regulations, and allow these uses in any accessory structure 950 square feet or smaller (such as, but not limited to, a shed or garage). The bill would also mandate that child care centers be permitted by right on all land that permits commercial uses, including some industrial and manufacturing uses, and be effectively fully exempt from site plan review regulations.

NHMA **opposes** this bill as introduced because of several technical issues, including the unique and onerous requirement that a municipality must ensure that all its zoning ordinances related to home-based care are in line with state administrative rules, which

can change without the municipality knowing and outside the municipality's timeline to amend its zoning ordinances, and exempting a commercial use from all site plan regulations, which creates issues for safety and would allow these commercial uses to negatively impact abutters.

A draft amendment that NHMA consulted on is expected to be introduced on Tuesday, addressing these concerns. The amendment:

- Removes language that expands the in-home day care zoning mandate and requirement that links day care zoning to state rulemaking.
- Allows “child care centers,” as defined in the current **HB 1195**, by right on “commercially zoned land.”
- Defines “commercially zoned land” so it’s clearer to municipalities where child care centers would be allowed by right.
- Allows nonconforming structures on commercially zoned land to be converted by right, “provided that the structure is not altered to further violate zoning district dimensional requirements.”
- Ensures that site plan review regulations, if adopted by a municipality, are still applicable for these proposed commercial uses, like any other commercial use.
- Ensures that the applicable state fire, building, water supply, and sewage disposal requirements are followed by the applicant.

Please [email committee members](#) today and over the long weekend and ask them to support NHMA’s proposed amendment to the **HB 1195** and oppose any other amendments, as well as the bill as introduced. Tell them although zoning mandates are unlikely to alleviate the real barriers for child care—labor availability and wage and overhead costs driving child care cost and access in New Hampshire—the NHMA amendment is a compromise that reasonably expands siting for new child care centers while maintaining local choice.

## ‘Free Agency’ for Public Employees

**HB 1704** would give large swaths of public employees the ability to negotiate wages, hours, or other employment terms directly with their employer, which would dismantle established labor relations, create administrative burdens and decrease efficiency, and raise significant legal and constitutional concerns that will lead to expensive lawsuits—all of which, ultimately, increase costs for taxpayers.

The bill came out of the **House Labor, Industrial and Rehabilitative Services Committee** with a narrow (11-9) recommendation of ought to pass and will be voted on by the House at a future date.

Contact [your local legislators](#) now and tell them that under this bill municipalities would face dozens, potentially hundreds, of individualized negotiations, requiring them to track different pay scales, benefits, and other employment conditions.

## House Session Roundup

The House met on **Thursday** to act on dozens of bills. Here are the outcomes of some bills of interest to NHMA members:

[HB 1580](#) and [HB 1707](#), two of three bills that would create supplemental taxes or surcharges on non-primary residences, including vacation homes and seasonal rentals, were killed.

Two bills dealing with road salt failed to advance. [HB 1607](#), regulating the storage of sodium chloride, calcium chloride, magnesium chloride, or salt treated abrasives or other chemicals used for snow and ice management, was tabled. As amended, municipal compliance would be “contingent on available funding from grants, gifts, and municipal revenues.” [HB 1810](#), which would have imposed a fee on the sale bulk road salt, road salt mix, and brine, was killed.

[HB 1655](#) passed. This bill creates annual fees for real estate with waterfront access (\$100) or deeded water access (\$50) to a waterbody impounded by a state-owned dam that would be deposited in a dam maintenance fund. Municipalities can adopt and retain a \$5 fee for administrative costs.

[HB 1002](#) was tabled. The bill sought to eliminate the *local option* property tax exemption for solar systems.

## Final Risk Pool Gets Hearing

The last of three proposals dealing with the regulation of risk pools was heard by the [Senate Finance Committee](#) on Tuesday. [SB 661](#), **opposed** by NHMA, is a repeat attempt by the Senate to regulate risk pools in a way that will add uncertainty to municipal budgeting and change the terms of risk pool membership.

Risk pools are created by cities, towns, counties, and school districts to reduce risks and associated insurance costs, shifting risk from an individual political subdivision to the pool. See [last week's Bulletin](#) for more information on [SB 661](#).

Two other risk pool bills **supported** by NHMA—[SB 605](#) and [HB 1491](#)—remain in committee. See the [January 30 Bulletin](#) for more details on these bills.

It is important to keep in mind that the stability of healthcare risk pools is tied to the future stability of healthcare for thousands of public employees in our state. One healthcare pool has already gone out of a business, and another has stated it would cease

offering healthcare coverage if the new provisions found in SB 661 pass. 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. With health insurance being a huge driver of municipal costs, regularly outpacing inflation, providing legislative clarity is crucial.

## Lifeline for Housing Champions?

The Governor came out this week against the House repeal of the Housing Champions program ([HB 1196](#)). The [Senate Commerce Committee](#) has scheduled a public hearing for the bill on **Tuesday, February 17, at 10:45 a.m. in State House (SH) Room 100**—a fairly quick turnaround for a bill passed by the House only a week ago.

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. Even if your community is not a Housing Champion (or does not plan to pursue this designation if it survives), please [sign in to oppose the bill](#) or contact committee members. The return on investment of the bill is undeniable.

For more background on the success of state and local partnerships and the troubling drift to heavy-handed state preemption of local options, check out **NHMA’s recently released whitepaper, “[Room for Everyone](#),”** which traces the roots of the housing deficit back nearly two decades, outlining the economic, demographic, and market forces that fueled rising prices and constrained supply. The NHMA paper, which was featured this week on [WMUR-TV’s NH Business segment](#) also advocates for renewed partnership between the state and municipalities, emphasizing that effective housing policy must include infrastructure investment, targeted incentives, and flexible, locally tailored tools.

## House, Senate Have Lots to Talk About

The House and Senate both meet on Thursday. [Click here](#) for a full list of bills the House is acting on; [click here](#) for the Senate list.

## Quick Hits

Updates on some important bills we are following:

**Committee puts the kibosh on meals and rooms overhaul:** The [House Ways and Means Committee](#) voted 18-1 to recommend [HB 1474](#) inexpedient to legislate (ITL). The bill, which would change the municipal distribution formula for the meals and rooms tax, is on the **February 19** consent calendar.

**Manufactured mandate:** [HB 1357](#), which would allow manufactured housing in all residential zones, remains with the House Housing Committee and an executive session on the bill can be held at any time.

**Still no update on anti-NHMA bills:** [HB 1359](#) and [HB 1360](#) remain with the [House Legislative Administration Committee](#). These bills specifically **take aim at NHMA's ability to advocate** and at member municipalities' ability to govern the organization. **There is still time for local officials and concerned citizens to contact committee members and their local legislators** to impress upon them the value of NHMA membership and of having a shared voice at the State House. See the [January 23 Bulletin](#) for more on these bills.

## Legislative Policy Proposals Welcome

NHMA has a member-driven process by which it establishes the legislative policy positions to guide staff advocacy activities over the coming legislative biennium.

For the past month we have been (and still are) recruiting volunteers to serve on our three legislative policy committees. These committees will review existing policies as well as 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 there is a law affecting municipal government that you think needs to be fixed, or if you have an idea for how the functions of local government might be improved with legislation, this is your opportunity to propose a change. To share your proposal, complete this [Legislative Policy Proposal Form](#). Include a brief (one or two sentence) policy statement, a statement about the municipal interest served by the proposal and an explanation that describes the nature of the problem or concern from a municipal perspective and discusses the proposed action that is being advocated to address the problem. Mail to NHMA, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord, NH 03301; or e-mail to [governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org](mailto:governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org) no later than the close of business on **April 17, 2026**.

Learn more about NHMA's 2027-2028 Legislative Policy Process in this [Questions and Answers fact sheet](#).

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](mailto:governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org). For more information on what the committees are and how they work, see [last week's Bulletin](#).

## 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.

Finally, remember that House committees are meeting in a new location. The Legislative Office Building (LOB), where House committees typically meet, is closed for renovation and hearings are now being held at 1 Granite Place (GP), which is about 1.6 miles north of the State House. NHMA has [prepared a handout](#) on how to navigate Government Place.

## **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.

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

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