

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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2026 Session

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

In this issue:

- Committee to Act on Anti-NHMA Bills
- House and Senate Roundup
- Day Care Mandate Ties Zoning to State Rules
- HB 1704: Costly Headache for Public Employers
- Limited Legislative Activity Next Week
- Quick Hits: Updates on Other Bills We Are Following
- Legislative Policy Proposals Welcome
- How to Make Your Voice Heard
- Follow Bills That Matter to You Online

Committee to Act on Anti-NHMA Bills

The [House Legislative Administration Committee](#) will hold work sessions on [HB 1359](#) and [HB 1360](#) on **Wednesday, February 25, at 9:00 a.m. in Government Place (GP) Room 234**. Executive sessions will follow beginning at **10:00 a.m.** 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 House members](#) to impress upon them the value of NHMA membership and of having a shared voice at the State House.

HB 1359 and **HB 1360** are attempts by the legislature to take over a private, member-run corporation. See the [January 23 Bulletin](#) for more on these bills, which 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 and receive services from organizations like NHMA.

We encourage members to send **letters or resolutions, approved by their governing bodies, in support of NHMA and in opposition to these bills to your [local House members](#)**. If your municipality requires assistance with a letter or resolution, feel free to contact us at governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org.

House and Senate Roundup

The House and Senate were in session Thursday and acted on several bills NHMA is following:

House

[HB 1010](#), relative to multi-family residential development on commercially zoned land, **passed with an amendment**. The bill gives municipalities more authority to review the potential impacts of proposed multi-family projects in commercial zones on road, water, and sewer infrastructure. NHMA **supports** this bill and the amendment, which will go to the Senate.

[HB 1427](#), a bill **opposed** by NMHA, was **killed**. **HB 1427** would have significantly limited the ability of a municipality or other political subdivision to issue bonds except in circumstances of declared emergencies, or where essential infrastructure is at risk, or to secure matching federal or state funds.

[HB 1474](#), which would have radically changed the distribution formula for the meals and rooms tax, was **killed**. NHMA was neutral on the bill because it did not modify the total amount a M&R revenue going to cities and towns, although we were concerned that the complicated formula would create winners and losers by changing the historical population-based distribution method.

[HB 1622](#), a landfill-siting bill **supported** by NHMA, **passed with an amendment**. Unlike other legislation on this topic, **HB 1622** does **not** give the state the power to override existing municipal agreements with landfill operators. The bill was referred to the [House Finance Committee](#).

[HB 1786](#), the last of three bills introduced this year creating some permutation of a new property tax assessment on non-homestead luxury second homes, was **tabled**. The other two bills on this topic were killed last week, but **HB 1786** had to be tabled because it never had a public hearing in committee due to what was described as a "clerical" error. NHMA was neutral on this bill.

Senate

SB 564, which NHMA **opposes**, was **passed**. The bill creates a universal mandate prohibiting municipalities from placing limits on maximum road length or imposing a numerical cap on the number of housing lots on a dead-end road or street. The bill also permits developers to place utilities within open space or perimeter buffer areas of subdivisions. The bill advances to the House.

SB 508, which creates a deadline for municipalities to stamp and accept revised building plans submitted by applicants, **passed with an amendment** that increased the deadline to respond from three business days to 10 business days. NHMA **opposes** this bill, which will be sent to the House.

SB 435 passed with an amendment. The original bill would have removed “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. The amendment, which is **supported** by NHMA, clarifies the relatively confusing language in current law by replacing “unnecessary hardship” with “unreasonable restriction.” The bill will proceed to the House.

Day Care Mandate Ties Zoning to State Rules

HB 1195, which greatly expands the existing zoning mandate requiring home-based day care be permitted as an accessory use, was reported out of the [House Municipal and County Government Committee](#) this week as ought-to-pass as amended (OTP-A) on a 10-7 vote. Unfortunately, the amendment adopted **does not address many of the core issues** with the bill, including the provisions that tie zoning ordinances related to in-home child care centers to state rulemaking.

NHMA **opposes** this bill as introduced and as amended. The House won't vote on **HB 1195** until **March 5** at the earliest, but please begin contacting **your local House members and ask them to oppose this bill**. Tell them more zoning mandates can't alleviate the primary factors driving child care cost and access in New Hampshire—labor availability and wage and overhead costs.

HB 1704: Costly Headache for Public Employers

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.

HB 1704 requires municipalities to negotiate with individual employees, even if they prefer to negotiate only with a certified bargaining agent or the municipality chooses not to negotiate individual contracts. It would prevent municipalities from setting contractual terms for employees not employed under a collective bargaining agreement that match the wages, benefits, and working conditions of an existing collective bargaining agreement covering employees doing the same work. These requirements make it harder to predict budget impacts when considering labor costs and limit local decision-making.

Additionally, a municipality would arguably be prohibited from requiring employees to be paid in accordance with established pay scales created after doing a wage study. The bill exempts public safety employees from negotiating individually.

If **HB 1704** became law, municipalities would likely need to negotiate hundreds of individual contracts, track multiple pay scales, benefits, and grievance procedures, and manage legal risk from inconsistent agreements. It would also greatly increase local costs, including more human resources staff, more lawyers or associated legal costs, more lawsuits, and larger legal budgets. If two workers doing the same job or work are paid or compensated differently, or if they have different working conditions, municipalities may face an increased risk of pay equity lawsuits, discrimination claims, and allegations of favoritism, which also increases costs.

HB 1704 requires municipalities to address grievances from independent public employees either through a process negotiated in each individual contract with those employees or through a municipality-established policy for independent grievances. This could be very onerous and costly.

Nothing in current law prohibits a municipality from negotiating with a union over which employees are covered under a collective bargaining agreement. Municipalities can always privatize or use contracted services, if permitted under the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, to meet labor needs or increase flexibility. These issues should be addressed at the bargaining table, where municipal officials can determine how best to meet the town or city government's labor needs and the level of legal risk they wish to assume, rather than being mandated by state law.

It is unclear exactly when **HB 1704** will go to the House, but please start **contacting 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.

Limited Legislative Activity Next Week

The Senate is in recess next week, which is February vacation week in most school districts, and the House has a limited meeting schedule. March is shaping up to be a real meat grinder heading into Legislative Crossover on March 26, so here's hoping legislators, advocates, and staff can enjoy some much-needed R&R.

Quick Hits

Updates on other important bills we are following:

Manufactured mandate: On Tuesday, March 3 at 10:00 a.m. in GP Room 231, the [House Housing Committee](#) has an executive session on [HB 1357](#), which would allow manufactured housing in all residential zones. NHMA **opposes** this bill and encourages members to [contact the committee](#) to share their opposition to this statewide mandate.

Sludge application moratorium: On Tuesday, February 24, at 10:00 a.m. in GP Room 153, the [House Environment and Agriculture Committee](#) has a work session on [HB 1275](#), which creates a fund for farmers who have experienced losses or

incurred costs due to the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in soil, water, or agricultural products, including as a result of standard agricultural practices like the application of sludge or biosolids. The fund will be financed through litigation recoveries, grants, and donations. This bill also imposes a five-year moratorium on the land application of sludge and biosolids for agricultural use, which would deprive municipal wastewater utilities of a major pathway of biosolid management and lead to higher costs and operational challenges. NHMA **opposes** the moratorium.

Champions still in limbo: The [Senate Commerce Committee](#) held a public hearing Tuesday on [HB 1196](#), which repeals Housing Champions, a voluntary program created in 2023 and funded with a \$5 million appropriation to provide communities with another tool encouraging affordable housing development. No action was taken following the hearing.

Perpetual tax cap referendum: No action this week on [HB 1300](#), which would create biennial local tax cap referendums for every city, town, county, and school district in New Hampshire.

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.

Beginning in April, three legislative policy committees will review existing policies as well as legislative policy proposals submitted by local officials and make recommendations on those policies. The process culminates with 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. Email proposals to governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org or mail to NHMA, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord, NH 03301 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](#).

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 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 can reschedule when there is severe 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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