

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

**Legislative Bulletin 05**

**2024 Session**

**February 2, 2024**



**Live Bill Tracker**

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## **Anti-Lobbying Bill Scheduled for February 7 at 11:00 a.m.**

On **Wednesday, February 7, at 11:00 a.m. in Legislative Office Building 203**, the **Legislative Administration Committee** will hear testimony on [HB 1479](#), prohibiting appropriation of a state, county, town, city, village district, unincorporated place, or school district for lobbying or attempting to influence legislation. In other words, the bill would prohibit NHMA and many other organizations from taking positions on legislation—making such activity a criminal offense.

If this bill passes, municipalities and other public entities will be effectively cut out of the legislative process, while private industry will continue to lobby and influence legislation without consequences.

Expressing a viewpoint or opinion should not be banned or criminalized, especially when giving an opinion to the government about what the government is up to. There are many ways to address your government, but perhaps none are more sacred than the ability to petition the legislature for a redress of grievances by way of asking the legislature to act (or not act) in a certain manner on specific legislation.

The legislature is free to ignore the information provided to it and the positions taken by those affected, but the mere ability to speak is vital. Criminalizing speech about what the legislature is thinking about doing is not acceptable or constitutional.

Please join us in opposing **HB 1479** on Wednesday; or, if you cannot make it, contact the [House Legislative Administration Committee](#) and ask them to vote to kill this bill.

## **How to Submit Testimony Online**

Testimony may be submitted to the House or Senate supporting, opposing, or providing neutral information online.

Changes to the House website clearly indicate that submission to the House's [Online Testimony Submission Portal](#) is the preferred method of providing information rather than emailing a chair or other members of a committee. The portal can be accessed via the link above as well as from the [main page](#) of the General Court's website near the bottom of the page on the right under the header "Meeting Resources."

Similarly, the Senate's [Remote Sign In Sheet](#) allows for submission of information. The Sheet can also be accessed via the link above as well as from the main page of the General Court's website near the bottom of the page on the right under the header "Meeting Resources."

## Seasonal Speed Limits

On **Tuesday, February 6**, at **10:00 a.m.** in **Legislative Office Building 203**, the **House Transportation Committee** will hear testimony on [HB 1550](#), allowing municipalities to enact seasonal speed limits. NHMA supports **HB 1550**.

Municipalities have long sought the authority to temporarily lower the speed limit in certain areas of town during high pedestrian traffic times of year. Lake towns with parking lots for lake access on the opposite side of a road from the lake, and ski and winter sports towns with parking lots for ski and winter sport access on the opposite side of the road have long experienced the problem that this bill is trying to solve.

This bill proposes a very reasonable approach: a local option of one seasonal speed limit of not less than 20 miles per hour for not more than 4 months in any 12-month period. We believe that this approach will address many of the concerns expressed by our members over the years.

Please contact the [House Transportation Committee](#) in support of **HB 1550**.

## Full Day of Hearings for Election Law Committee

On **Tuesday, February 6**, beginning at **9:00 a.m.** in **Legislative Office Building 306-308**, the **Election Law Committee** will hear testimony on the following bills of municipal interest:

|          |                         |                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:00 AM  | <a href="#">HB 1146</a> | relative to the removal of a voter from the checklist.                                                                                               |
| 10:30 AM | <a href="#">HB 1119</a> | relative to absentee ballots.                                                                                                                        |
| 11:00 AM | <a href="#">HB 1133</a> | relative to enabling UOCAVA voters to email back completed ballots.                                                                                  |
| 1:00 PM  | <a href="#">HB 1369</a> | relative to the verification of voter rolls every 4 years.                                                                                           |
| 1:30 PM  | <a href="#">HB 1442</a> | relative to penalties for failure of election officers to adhere to election law.                                                                    |
| 2:30 PM  | <a href="#">HB 1370</a> | relative to durable and tamper-proof containers for preserving ballots.                                                                              |
| 3:00 PM  | <a href="#">HB 1364</a> | relative to intimidation of election officers, improper influence over the electoral process, and tampering with electronic ballot counting devices. |

We ask election officials (who have hopefully recovered from a successful Presidential Primary) to come to Concord to share their thoughts with the committee on Tuesday.

## Local Level Housing Resources and Funding

Senate committees heard three important bills this week that would provide state investments in addressing housing and homelessness in our communities.

First, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee held a public hearing on [SB 406](#), which would establish a homelessness prevention pilot program and appropriate \$5 million in funding for local governments. Cities and towns could use the funding to assist populations experiencing homelessness, prevent eviction, or provide access to temporary shelter. The bill would also direct the Department of Health and Human Services to partner with the New

Hampshire Local Welfare Administrators Association to provide information and training on best practices for homeless prevention and response.

Please contact members of the [committee](#) and your state legislators to voice your support for **SB 406**, which seeks to address the immediate needs of our residents.

Next, the Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee held a public hearing on **SB 384**, which would appropriate \$10 million for the Median Income Rental Housing Program under the InvestNH umbrella and provide grants and loans to municipalities to acquire and develop rental housing. This program would require that at least 20 percent of the rental units be reserved for households with incomes up to 80 percent of the area median income.

Finally, the Senate Ways and Means Committee unanimously recommended Ought to Pass as amended on **SB 364**, which would provide a tax credit for those who preserve a historic structure and use it for residential rental housing and would appropriate \$15 million to the InvestNH fund for the development of affordable housing.

**Please urge your [senator](#) to support SB 406, SB 384, and SB 364, all of which would create and fund state-local partnerships to address the statewide housing issue.**

## Sanctuary City Bill Usurps Local Control

Yesterday, the Senate Judiciary Committee heard testimony on **SB 563**, a bill that would prohibit the adoption of sanctuary city policies by cities and towns. Although the bill was described as being “permissive,” **SB 563** creates a new mandate by *requiring* that “[a] law enforcement agency shall use best efforts to support the enforcement of federal immigration law.” NHMA opposed this bill as a clear intrusion on local control, usurping the authority of municipalities and local police departments to make decisions about how staff and resources should be allocated. The bill proposes no funding from the state, and several provisions—including what using “best efforts” means—would leave local officials guessing on how to comply.

It was encouraging to hear so many who testified speak to the importance of local control and oppose the bill as overriding both the decision-making authority of municipal police departments and the residents they serve. Local officials can still contact the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) to express opposition to this bill.

## Reminder: Local Solutions to the State’s Housing Crisis Webinar Series

NHMA is proud to partner with New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, New Hampshire Planners Association, New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions, University of New Hampshire Extension, PLAN NH, New Hampshire Housing, Community Development Finance Authority, and the Center for Ethics in Society at Saint Anselm College on a 5-part webinar series focusing on local solutions to New Hampshire’s housing shortage, which will kick off on February 15 with a program titled “[Our Housing Shortage](#).”

The other programs in the series are:

“[The Intersection of Development and Clean Water](#)” (Thursday, February 22)

“[YIMBYism: A Different Approach to Development](#)” (Thursday, February 29)

“[Transfer of Development Rights 101: A Primer](#)” (Thursday, March 7)

“[Attracting Developers](#)” (Thursday, March 14)

The series will highlight a variety of actions municipalities are taking to improve the housing shortage. We’ve all seen numerous news reports about, for instance, the [2,717 housing units that will shortly be under construction in Concord](#) (a **14% increase** in housing units), but this series will delve into the factors that lead to success and how growth can balance against existing demands for municipal services. We hope that you will register via the links above and join us during this series.

## Reminder: Get Involved in NHMA’s Legislative Policy Process

NHMA’s biennial legislative policy process is getting underway. 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 Government Affairs staff at 603-224-7447 or [governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org](mailto: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 for all committees on **Friday, April 5**. 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.

**[Bill Hearings Schedule](#)**

**[NHMA Events Calendar](#)**

**2023 Final Legislative Bulletin**

**Website: [www.nhmunicipal.org](http://www.nhmunicipal.org)**

**Email: [governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org](mailto:governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org)**

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