

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 11

2024 Session

March 15, 2024



Live Bill Tracker

Good-Bye and Hello

Many local officials completed their terms of office this week, and some will next week. Whatever the timing, we thank all of you for the time and energy you have devoted to public service, including your work on behalf of NHMA. For those who have never served in local government, it is difficult to appreciate how much work and time are involved, and how thankless the task can be. We hope you will enjoy your time off. Meanwhile, we enthusiastically welcome all of the new officials. We look forward to working with you in the coming years.

Whether you're new to NHMA or need a refresher on how to optimize your membership with us, there's always more to see at NHMA. For a full walk-through of all the membership benefits, including access to a treasure-trove of free resources, available to you as members, please view our webinar [here](#), and please set up your login to our member portal by following [these instructions](#).

Speak Up Now: HB 1479 Goes to the House Floor on Thursday!

HB 1479, which we wrote about [extensively last week](#), will go to the House floor for a vote on Thursday.

A growing and diverse coalition has come out in opposition to this shocking bill, including the NH Center for Nonprofits, the NH AFL-CIO, and the Business & Industry Association—along with NHMA, the NH Association of Counties, the NH School Boards Association, the NH Building Officials Association, the NH Tax Collectors Association, and the NH Association of Assessing Officials.

We anticipate an amendment—either the same or substantially similar to the [one that failed in the executive session](#)—will be offered on the floor. There is no iteration of **HB 1479** that is acceptable for New Hampshire.

We urge you to read (and share) [this Q&A](#), explaining how the bill is an authoritarian ban on speech, and the amendment is an effort to interfere with the operations of **both local government and private industry** in New Hampshire.

Out of state lobbying money and efforts—including mass mailers from a lobbying organization out of Austin, Texas—are being used to lobby in favor of this bill, and misinformation is being shared about the effect of both the bill and the proposed amendment.

Local officials must speak up now before they lose the right to do so. Please contact your representatives today and urge them to vote:

- **NO on a Motion of Ought to Pass**
- **NO on any proposed floor amendment**
- **YES on a Motion of Inexpedient to Legislate**

You can watch the [full hearing here](#) and the [full executive session here](#).

House to Vote to Reverse the SB 2 Adoption Process

With an 8-8 vote down party lines, the House Municipal & County Government Committee sent [HB 1175](#) to the floor without a recommendation. The House will vote on it next Thursday. This bill, which NHMA strongly opposes, would change the process for a town to adopt the official ballot referendum (“SB 2”) form of government, reversing an important change to the law that passed in 2019.

In a town with a “traditional” town meeting, only a very limited number of matters are voted on by official ballot in a voting booth: election of officers, zoning amendments, and a few other scattered questions. Therefore, the process under the current law, which requires the question of whether to adopt SB 2 be voted on at the business session (not the ballot), makes perfect sense: The question of whether to fundamentally change your town government should be voted in using the town’s current process. Under the bill, we would return to the illogical pre-2019 process, where voters in a traditional town meeting would vote on this important question on the official ballot instead.

Aside from not making sense, this change in process would also strip voters of their opportunity to discuss and debate—and really understand—the SB 2 proposal before

voting. The question that would go on the ballot is prescribed by statute, and it provides almost no insight into the consequences of the vote: “Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB 2) to allow official ballot voting on all issues before the town on the second Tuesday of March [or April or May]?” That’s it. Only the most diligent and informed voters have any idea what it means before voting. A huge, and likely permanent, change in how town meetings operate should be based on thorough discussion and debate, not on the whims or guesses of voters who have a few seconds to make up their minds about a question they are seeing for the first time.

Please urge your representatives to keep the law intact and oppose **HB 1175**.

House Kills Local Option Public Safety Assessment Fee

Yesterday, the House voted 195-171 to indefinitely postpone [HB 1254](#). This bill, as amended, would have allowed municipalities to adopt a \$2 local option fee to be assessed on hotel occupancies to offset the cost of municipal public safety services. The indefinite postponement prohibits reconsideration of **HB 1254** this session.

Thank you to our members who came out to support this policy, including the mayors who submitted a joint letter in support of the bill. Your voice is a critical part of the legislative process; and, because of your advocacy, many legislators are more aware of the cost burden on municipal services associated with increased tourism and transient traffic in many of our cities and towns.

GET INVOLVED: NHMA'S 2025-2026 LEGISLATIVE POLICY PROCESS

Deadline Approaching: Submit a Legislative Policy Proposal and Create Change

Time is almost up for municipalities to submit proposed legislative policies to NHMA to be considered as part of the legislative policy process. 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 through legislation, this is your opportunity to make a change.

Use the [Legislative Policy Proposal Form](#) to submit a proposal for consideration. The deadline for submitting proposals is April 15, although earlier submission is encouraged. Please follow the instructions on the form for submitting your proposal.

Serve on a Legislative Policy Committee: Only a Few Spots Left!

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 governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org no later than March 29.

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.

There will be an in-person organizational meeting for all committees on **Friday, April 5** at NHMA's offices in Concord.

[Bill Hearings Schedule](#)

[NHMA Events Calendar](#)

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