

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 9

2025 Session

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

Alert: Anti-Lobbying Effort Just Won't Go Away

[HB 314](#), the anti-speech bill targeting local governments and organizations like NHMA that was retained in committee just weeks ago, is trying to stage a comeback in [Amendment 25-0721h](#), a non-germane, “replace all” amendment to [HB 456](#). The [House Legislative Administration Committee](#) will consider the amendment at a public hearing **on Wednesday, March 12 at 9:30 am in LOB 203. We are urging local officials to attend the hearing, [contact](#) the Legislative Administration Committee and tell them to reject the amendment, or sign in opposition online (select March 12, House Legislative Administration Committee, HB 456, I am “a member of public,” representing myself; then click both “I oppose this bill” and “Testimony is for non-germane amendment.”) If your representative sits on the committee, please [reach out to them](#) directly.**

The proposed amendment allows the legislature to micromanage the speech and decision-making authority of local officials by limiting organizations like NHMA to providing “information” only to the legislature, while prohibiting such organizations from registering a position, nullifying NHMA’s member-adopted policies and principles. In a not-so-subtle way, this would make NHMA a tool of the *state legislature*, as opposed to *the voice of the cities and towns* that are members. And while the amendment specifically permits “an individual public official” to register a position, this is a red herring. As local

officials know, organizations like ours are formed because it is not possible for individual local officials to follow the pace of the legislative session or attend hearings regularly; in fact, delegating such responsibility to a voluntary organization is by far the more efficient and responsible manner of engaging in the legislative process while ensuring local officials can focus on serving their communities. Therefore, the amendment is a hampering of local efficiency that would lead to one of two outcomes: Less local government perspective and input in the legislative process or more time for local officials spent away from their regular duties to follow and engage in the process. Either result is to the detriment of local governments and their taxpayers especially since the private sector would continue to lobby for their interests as the local governments' voice and perspective diminish. Any argument that that outcome better reflects the needs and interests and taxpayers is patently false. As we testified to at the **HB 314** hearing, most bills NHMA takes positions on do one of two things: Downshift costs onto taxpayers or take away voter authority.

The amendment also explicitly prevents lobbying by the New Hampshire Association of Assessing Officials and the New Hampshire City and Town Clerks' Association and the New Hampshire Tax Collectors' Association, and contains the same prohibitions on organizations receiving local, state, or federal funds that would sweep into its speech ban nonprofits and even for profit entities that receive any of their funding from those public sources.

For detailed instructions on how to share your voice on this and any other bills, see "How to Make Your Voice Heard" below.

A Chance to Weigh in on the State Budget

On **Wednesday, March 12**, at **2 p.m.** in **Representatives Hall**, the **House Finance Committee** will host a public hearing on the proposed state budget contained in **HB 1** and **HB 2**. While House Finance divisions have been meeting on various aspects of the spending plan for a couple of weeks, this is the public's chance to chime in.

Municipalities are encouraged to use this opportunity to testify or submit written testimony opposing any cuts to municipal aid and explaining how **downshifting** hurts taxpayers, as well as any other specific concerns your community has.

Crunch Time for Ambulance Reimbursement Bills

On **Wednesday, March 12**, at **1:15 p.m.** in **LOB Room 302-304**, the **House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee** will hold executive sessions on two competing bills regarding ground ambulance services that eliminate balance billing— *i.e.* billing a patient for the difference between the full cost of the service and the amount their insurance plan pays—and set reimbursement rates for private insurers. Municipal

ambulance services are essential services and not profit-driven; thus, appropriate reimbursement rates are crucial for their sustainability.

Now is the time to [reach out to committee members](#) regarding these bills.

[HB 316](#) would eliminate balance billing and set a reimbursement rate for non-Medicare/Medicaid health insurance carriers at approximately 200% above the current Medicare reimbursement rate, which NHMA opposes because in many cases reimbursement is much lower than the actual cost.

[HB 725](#) also would eliminate balance billing but set the reimbursement at 325% above the current Medicare reimbursement rate. NHMA supports **HB 725** because it strikes a fair balance between competing interests.

Ahead of the work session, the New Hampshire Insurance Department will host an information session on **Monday, March 10**, from **1:00 to 3:00 p.m.**, at the **Department of Safety Main Auditorium** in Concord. The session, which is in-person only, will review findings from the [New Hampshire Ground Ambulance Cost Study](#) conducted last year by Public Consulting Group LLC (PCG) in collaboration with New Hampshire Health Plan. The study was mandated under **SB 407** in 2024. If any of the invited parties are unable to attend in person, questions may be submitted in advance. If you plan to attend or have questions, email Jennifer Smith at the New Hampshire Insurance Department at Jennifer.l.smith@ins.nh.gov.

NHMA will be attending the informational session and suggests all interested parties attend or at least submit questions. The report is problematic and doesn't seem to contain the full picture of the costs associated with providing ground ambulance services. It would be useful for stakeholders to raise questions that help highlight that fact that **HB 316** relied heavily on this report to come up with its 200% rate, which would severely impact the financial viability of all ambulance services and would require property taxpayers to further subsidize municipal ambulance services.

Meanwhile, the Senate is scheduled to vote on two related bills on **Thursday, March 13**.

[SB 245](#), which NHMA supports, eliminates balance billing with the reimbursement rate set at 325% of the current urban, rural, or super-rural Medicare rates, depending on the geographic area where the ambulance service originated. An amendment has been adopted that clarifies balanced billing prohibitions, removes co-pay caps and waivers, and points to statute regarding prompt pay requirements.

[SB 130](#), as amended, simply establishes a commission to study delivery models for emergency medical services. NHMA is neutral on the bill.

This issue is coming to a head next week, so please:

- Attend Monday's presentation on the 2024 cost study or submit questions in advance.
- Contact members of the [House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee](#) to oppose **HB 316** and support **HB 725**.
- [Contact senators](#) to support **SB 245**.

Senate to Vote on Statewide Zoning Mandate and More

The Senate is expected to vote **Thursday, March 13** on **SB 84** which mandates zoning ordinances to allow smaller lot sizes for single-family homes, overriding current zoning regulations. The bill also requires municipalities to provide empirical evidence that the sewer system cannot support the lots, which adds a layer of complexity and burden on local governments. NHMA opposes this bill because it would essentially eliminate all agricultural zoning districts and increase property taxes.

What would **SB 84** do to Granite Staters in agricultural zones?

- Mandate lot sizes inadequate to support farming, limiting future agriculture in New Hampshire.
- Incentivize subdividing prime agricultural land that would be forever lost to dense housing development.
- Promote dense development next to farms, creating potential hindrances on farmers who have worked their land peacefully for years.

What **SB 84** would do to most Granite Staters:

- INCREASE THEIR PROPERTY TAXES because their property tax assessment would increase if their land could suddenly be subdivided into multiple lots.
- Overburden their municipality's local infrastructure, increasing costs and property taxes for residents.
- Override voter's decisions on zoning ordinances made at Town Meeting.

[Contact senators](#) now to oppose **SB 84**.

The Senate is also scheduled to vote Thursday on another NHMA priority bill, **SB 291**, which expands religious tax exemptions. NHMA opposes this bill because, even as amended, it would reduce assessed property value, shifting the tax burden to other property taxpayers, and would represent a major expansion of the religious property tax exemption by exempting rental housing that the religious institution profit.

[Contact senators](#) now to oppose **SB 291**.

The Senate will also act Thursday on seven additional bills NHMA has a position on.

Bills (with NHMA position on the bill):

SB 44 (oppose), relative to hand counts of ballots in elections. Recommendation: OTP-A.

SB 103 (oppose), relative to the number of polling stations that are available for certain towns. Recommendation: OTP-A.

SB 218 (support), relative to absentee ballot outer envelopes. Recommendation: OTP.

SB 231 (oppose), relative to road frontage requirements and setbacks for wetlands. Recommendation: Re-refer to committee.

SB 245 (support), prohibiting surprise ambulance billing and regulating ground ambulance reimbursement. Recommendation: OTP-A. (See above for more information on this bill).

SB 259 (support), creating an exception to physical attendance and quorum requirements under the right-to-know law for individuals with disabilities. Recommendation: ITL.

SB 279 (support), establishing the housing champion business loan program and making appropriations to the department of business and economic affairs and the business finance authority. Recommendation: OTP.

HB 123: A Common-Sense Solution

On **Thursday, March 13**, the House will vote on **HB 123**, which would enable municipalities to tax standing wood and timber on land used for carbon sequestration. This bill, as amended (**amendment 25-0654h**), modifies the existing yield tax on cut timber in RSA 79, often called the “timber tax,” to include taxing the yield of the metric tonnage of carbon sequestered from standing timber. **HB 123** is not a new tax or a “carbon tax,” as opponents will surely argue.

Carbon sequestration is a type of yield from timber that RSA 79 does not account for because the concept of profiting from forests absorbing and sequestering atmospheric carbon did not exist when the state statute was originally written in 1949. The market for sequestered carbon is growing and the revenues municipalities receive from the timber tax are already being negatively impacted, with the burden shifting to local property taxpayers.

The state has a history of using timber tax revenues to offset the loss of local revenues when private or public conservation efforts impact municipal revenue. The yield tax of 10% on timber has existed for 75 years and is constitutionally permitted by an amendment

to Part II, Article V of the state constitution, which was ratified in 1942. RSA 79 was created as an alternative to taxing standing timber under a general property tax. All **HB 123** ensures is that timber yields—whether cut or sequestered—are treated the same.

HB 123 supports the North Country and other heavily timbered areas where less timber is being cut and, instead, being put into carbon sequestration agreements. The bill will promote local property tax relief.

Please [tell your state representatives](#) to support **HB 123** as amended.

HB 123 came out of the [House Municipal and County Government Committee](#) with an 18-0 recommendation of ought to pass as amended (OTP-A) and is currently on the House consent calendar. However, an attempt may be made to bring the bill to a floor vote, so we are also asking members to contact the [House Speaker](#), [Deputy Speaker](#), [Majority Leader](#), and [Minority Leader](#) and ask them to leave **HB 123** on the consent calendar.

Also in the House This Week

The House will vote on another problematic zoning mandate on Thursday. **HB 382**, as amended, would restrict the ability of municipalities to require more than one parking space per residential unit in a development removing. NHMA opposes this bill because it eliminates local control, creates potential planning issues including traffic management concerns, community aesthetic concerns, health/safety concerns, snow removal, and potentially more neighbor disputes, which could require law enforcement presence. The bill has a recommendation of ought to pass as amended (OTP-A).

Please [contact your state representatives](#) to oppose **HB 382** as amended.

The House will also act Thursday on 14 additional bills NHMA has a position on.

Bills (with NHMA position on the bill):

HB 149 (oppose), relative to warrant article approvals at ballot referenda form of town meeting. Recommendation: ITL.

HB 185 (support), relative to reimbursement rates for ambulance service providers. Recommendation: ITL.

HB 247 (support), authorizing municipalities to hold a referendum on whether to allow historic horse racing. Recommendation: OTP-A.

HB 342 (oppose), relative to the approval process for new construction. Recommendation: OTP-A.

HB 451 (support), establishing the paint product stewardship program. Recommendation: OTP-A.

[HB 490](#) (support), relative to indemnification for municipalities adopting policies to address homelessness. Recommendation: ITL.

[HB 512](#) (oppose), relative to preventing municipal employees from being paid under multiple municipal contracts simultaneously. Recommendation: ITL.

[HB 521](#), authorizing online voter registration. Recommendation: ITL.

[HB 536](#) (oppose), relative to a cost of living adjustment in the state retirement system. Recommendation: OTP.

[HB 562](#) (oppose), relative to the filling of vacant positions on elected municipal boards and school boards. Recommendation: ITL.

[HB 569](#) (oppose), relative to the establishment of county-wide communication districts. Recommendation: OTP-A.

[HB 572](#) (support), establishing the “partners in housing” program, a low-interest loan and grant program under the housing champions fund to assist municipalities, counties, and developers in building workforce housing. Recommendation: OTP-A.

[HB 668](#) (support), authorizing municipalities to hold a referendum to rescind the licenses of historic horse racing facilities. Recommendation: ITL.

[HB 688](#) (support), authorizing municipalities to tax charitable gaming facilities based on their enterprise value. Recommendation: ITL.

Monday Features Myriad Municipal Bills

On **Monday, March 10**, beginning at **9:30 a.m.** in **LOB room 301-303**, the [House Municipal and County Government Committee](#) will hold executive sessions on more than a dozen bills NHMA is following:

[HB 124](#) (support), enabling a city or town forest committee to offer surplus money to the town for deposit in the city or town general fund.

[HB 138](#) (oppose), relative to tax impact notation on warrant articles with multi-year tax impacts.

[HB 168](#) (support), relative to including municipal public works facilities as eligible capital facilities for the assessment of impact fees.

[HB 200](#) (oppose), relative to the procedure for overriding a local tax cap.

[HB 228](#) (oppose), relative to petitioned articles at annual or special town meetings.

[HB 229](#) (neutral), repealing the alternative procedure for adoption of zoning ordinances.

[HB 284](#) (oppose), requiring tax impact statements on municipal warrant articles.

[HB 372](#) (oppose), relative to lease agreements of equipment for building or facility improvements.

[HB 373](#) (oppose), relative to the management and regulation of town real property.

[HB 374](#) (neutral), relative to clarifying references under local tax cap and budget laws.

[HB 413](#) (oppose), relative to subdivision regulations on the completion of improvements and the regulation of building permits.

[HB 432](#) (oppose), relative to recovery houses.

[HB 475](#) (oppose), relative to the reductions from the default budget for official ballot town meetings.

[HB 495](#) (oppose), requiring cities and towns to provide a breakdown of tax changes and information on bills sent to residents.

[HB 613](#) (oppose), relative to enabling local political subdivisions to vote and set a reduced default budget option.

Members are encouraged to [contact committee members](#) and express their positions on any or all of these bills before Monday's session.

Senate Votes This Week

The Senate met Thursday and acted on 12 bills NHMA has taken a position on, including [SB 188](#), a priority bill opposed by NHMA. As amended ([am 25-0563s](#)), the bill allows property owners or developers to use licensed, insured private providers for building code plan reviews and inspections related to the state building code and any local technical amendments, excluding fire prevention and fire safety codes, and requires a municipal regulatory body to review and approve, or provide written notice to the independent provider of any specific deficiencies or compliance issues, within a required number of days (3 days or 5 days for code inspections depending on the type of building and 8 days for reviews of development documents and permits). Approvals will be considered granted as a matter of law if the municipal regulatory body fails to respond within the mandated time limit.

NHMA believes **SB 188** creates a troubling “building permits by default” model and would have multiple impacts on municipal revenue and expenses. The bill will cross over to the House, where we will continue to oppose it with your help.

Other Bills (with NHMA position on the bill):

[SB 71](#) (oppose), relative to cooperation with federal immigration authorities. **Passed;** the bill moves to the House.

SB 78 (oppose), setting the zoning board of adjustments appeal period at 30 days. **Passed**; the bill moves to the House.

SB 81 (support), increasing the annual real estate transfer tax revenue contribution and making an appropriation to the affordable housing fund. **Passed**; referred to Senate Finance Committee.

SB 115 (support), making an appropriation to the Southern New Hampshire Regional Water Project. **Passed and tabled**.

SB 155 (support), allowing for the use of highway toll credits by municipalities as a match for federal highway funds for certain projects. **Re-referred to committee**; no further action expected this session.

SB 217 (oppose), relative to public notice of historic tax rates and tax impacts of proposed projects. **Passed**; the bill moves to the House.

SB 220 (oppose), relative to public hearings and deliberation for the denial of tax exemptions. **Re-referred to committee**; no further action expected this session.

SB 225 (oppose), requiring public notice before reassessment of property values for local tax purposes. **Passed** with [amendment 25-0602h](#); referred to Senate Finance Committee.

SB 242 (oppose), relative to the cost-of-living adjustments for certain police and fire retirees in the NH retirement system. **Passed and tabled**.

SB 261 (oppose), requiring that custodial interrogations be recorded and establishing a fund to make grants to law enforcement agencies to purchase equipment. **Re-referred to committee**; no further action expected this session.

SB 289 (oppose), relative to use and preservation of body-worn camera recordings in certain matters. **Re-referred to committee**; no further action expected this session.

Meanwhile, in the House ...

The House also met Thursday and 14 bills NHMA has a position on were acted on, including two priority bills.

Priority Bills:

HB 425, allowing religious organizations to keep their tax exemption even if they rented the property, was **tabled**. NHMA opposes this bill as it will increase property taxes for all other taxpayers, which would be a material reallocation in communities where religious organizations own land that they don't use and is currently taxed.

[HB 577](#), allowing either one detached or attached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) by right on single-family lots. NHMA opposes this bill because it requires municipalities and cities to allow detached ADUs, which would put a strain on municipal services and infrastructure. The bill would essentially turn single-family residential zones into two-family residential zones. The amendment clarifies tools municipalities can use to regulate ADUs by being able to determine aesthetic requirements and mandate one of the structures remains owner-occupied; however, the bill would repeal several other provisions that provide for local regulation in the current ADU statutes. **Passed** with [amendment 25-0449h](#); the bill moves to the Senate.

Other Bills (with NHMA position on the bill):

[HB 114](#) (oppose), removing fees and charges for governmental records under the right-to-know law and reinstating potential liability for disclosure of information exempt from disclosure. **Inexpedient to legislate (ITL)**.

[HB 143](#) (oppose), relative to the issuance of no trespass orders on municipal or school district property. **Passed** with [amendment 25-0408h](#); the bill moves to the Senate.

[HB 230](#) (oppose), relative to the adoption of public health ordinances by municipalities. **Passed**; the bill moves to the Senate.

[HB 294](#) (support), removing the ability of 10 voters to postpone the processing of absentee ballots until after the polls close. **Passed**; the bill moves to the Senate.

[HB 305](#) (support), relative to speed and red-light cameras for traffic enforcement. Recommendation: **ITL**.

[HB 624](#) (support), establishing a local river management advisory committee grant program and making an appropriation therefor. **Passed with amendment** (25-0368h); referred to House Finance Committee.

[HB 625](#) (support), relative to enabling municipalities to levy payments against non-profits at a percentage of their assessed property values. **ITL**.

[HB 649](#) (oppose), eliminating the requirement of a physical safety inspection and on-board diagnostics testing for all private passenger vehicles. A portion of inspection fees go to municipalities. **Passed**; referred to House Ways and Means Committee.

[HB 683](#) (oppose), expanding the list of counties where off-highway recreational vehicle (OHRV) operations are allowed on designated roads. **ITL**.

[HB 685](#) (oppose), mandating manufactured housing by right in residentially zoned areas. **Passed with amendment 25-0392h**; the bill moves to the Senate.

[HB 691](#) (oppose), prohibiting the addition of fluoridation chemicals to public water systems. **ITL**.

[HB 746](#) (oppose), relative to an award of attorney’s fees upon a successful appeal of a local property tax assessment. Recommendation: **ITL**.

[HB 782](#) (oppose), expanding property tax exemptions for certain elderly and disabled persons and raising public awareness regarding tax credits and exemptions. **ITL**.

Protecting the Competitive Energy Market

On **Monday, March 10**, in **LOB Room 302-304**, the [House Science, Technology and Energy Committee](#) will hold a work session at 9:00 a.m. and executive session at 1:00 p.m. on [HB 759](#) and [HB 760](#). The aim of these bills is to protect and enhance the current framework that allows for a competitive energy market.

HB 759 introduces true competition for net-metered distributed energy, ensuring cost reductions without shifting expenses to the broader utility customer base. **HB 759** also will allow municipalities and commercial entities to develop local power generation and use the output to offset wholesale load obligations for their suppliers or Community Power Aggregations.

HB 760 will protect the continued viability of NH’s competitive retail energy market, by ensuring that customers of community power and competitive suppliers are not forced to subsidize utility supply rates. **HB 760** will prevent utilities from setting artificially low utility supply rates, which will stop the growth of the state’s competitive market.

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 legislators, there are [Contact a Senator](#) and [Contact a Representative](#) links on the [General Court](#) website.

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

Reminder: Sharing is Caring ... About Good Public Policy!

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](#).)

Nonmembers can email info@nhmunicipal.org to be added to our email list for the *Legislative Bulletin*.

[NHMA Events Calendar](#) [2024 Final Legislative Bulletin](#)

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