

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Legislative Bulletin 16

2025 Session

April 25, 2025



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

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## Update on NHMA Priority Bills

All legislative sessions have a similar pace. A blizzard of bills are introduced in January—primarily on the House side—and there’s a mad rush to deal with them all before legislative crossover in early spring. Throw in the state budget process every other year and the first three-and-a-half months of the session can be pretty frantic. As 2025 crossover fades in the rearview mirror and we head into school vacation week, things are far from over and the stakes are higher than ever. With that in mind, here is an update on 16 NHMA priority bills still wending their way through the State House. Twenty-one other bills on our priority list—some good, most bad for municipalities—have been killed, tabled, held in committee or otherwise taken off the board this spring. The fate of these bills remains uncertain, so we’re asking members to remain **engaged on this legislation, as the concerted efforts of municipalities could still sway—or temper—the outcome of many proposals**. For detailed instructions on ways to give your position on these and any other bills, see “*How to Make Your Voice Heard*” below.

### Right-to-Know Law

**HB 66** (oppose), replaces “citizen” in RSA 91-A, the Right-to-Know law, with “person.” **Status:** **Senate Judiciary Committee** held a public hearing this week and subsequently recommended the bill inexpedient to legislate (ITL); the bill will be on the

consent calendar at a future Senate session. Thank you to all the local officials who spoke at the hearing and contacted their senators on this deeply problematic bill.

## Risk Pools

**SB 297** (oppose), relating to the operations and oversight of pooled risk management programs that 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. **Status:** **House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee** held public hearing Wednesday; subcommittee work session to be scheduled. *See more on this bill below.*

## Zoning Mandates

In terms of sheer volume, attempts to shift control of zoning and planning away from local voters and municipal authorities have proliferated this session. Because these bills carry no cost to the state, they have—until recently—enjoyed bipartisan support. Framed as attempts to tackle the growing shortage of affordable housing and foster development, these sweeping, one-size-fits-all statewide mandates do nothing to incentivize or encourage the building of *affordable* housing. Thanks to the sustained efforts of municipalities and other advocates of local control from across the political spectrum, serious concerns about statewide mandates, as well as the specific technical deficiencies and potential conflicts between these bills, are finally being considered—but much **more advocacy is needed to stop these bills from passing**. As you will see below, the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Housing has already recommended most of these problematic bills as ought to pass.

**HB 577** (oppose) requires municipalities to allow either one detached or attached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) by right on single-family lots. In addition to expanding to detached units, the bill would repeal several vital provisions that provide for local regulation in the current ADU statutes and would essentially turn single-family residential zones into two-family residential zones with no on-site parking requirements. **Status:** Three-member subcommittee of the **Senate Commerce Committee** is recommending ought to pass (OTP); full committee can hold executive session at any time.

**HB 631** (oppose) permits residential building in commercial zones by right, mandating mixed-use development in nearly every zoning district in New Hampshire. While promoting urban density, it may lead to conflicts over land use priorities and contradicts one of the key purposes of zoning in RSA 674:17: to “consider the character of the area involved and its peculiar suitability for particular uses.” **Status:** Three-member subcommittee of the **Senate Commerce Committee** is recommending OTP; full committee can hold executive session at any time.

[HB 685](#) (oppose), mandates manufactured housing by right in residentially zoned areas. The bill's language directly conflicts with RSA 674:32, the existing statute that says, "Municipalities shall afford reasonable and realistic opportunities for the siting of manufactured housing..." and mandates several updates to local zoning ordinances. **HB 685** establishes a conflicting requirement that will create confusion for municipalities, local land use boards, voters, and developers. Status: Three-member subcommittee of the **Senate Commerce Committee** is recommending OTP; full committee can hold executive session at any time.

[Click here](#) to watch the **Senate Commerce subcommittee** discussions on **HB 577**, **HB 631**, and **HB 685**.

[HB 410](#) (oppose) prohibits municipalities from enforcing or adopting any "extraordinary restriction of residential property," an undefined term, unless the ordinance is directly necessary for the health or safety of the community. It would somehow require the legislative body (the voters) to produce "empirical evidence" to defend adoption of such an ordinance, with no process outlined for how that works; the bill also states empirical evidence "may be relevant ... but are not necessarily dispositive"! Additionally, HB 410 would conflict with all the other zoning mandates relative to residential zones. **Status:** Three-member subcommittee of the [Senate Commerce Committee](#) is recommending the bill be re-referred; full committee can hold executive session at any time.

[SB 84](#) (oppose), mandates zoning ordinances to allow smaller lot sizes for all 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 bureaucracy in local government. **Status: House Housing Committee** executive session on **Tuesday, May 6, at 10:00 a.m. in LOB Room 305**.

[SB 163](#) (oppose), prohibiting local moratoria and limitations on building permits. **Status: House Housing Committee** executive session on **Tuesday, May 6, at 10:00 a.m. in LOB Room 305**.

[SB 170](#) (oppose), relative to development and related requirements in cities, towns, and municipalities. The bill has several conflicting and unworkable zoning mandates, such as, but not limited to, ending most connectivity requirements for subdivisions, mandating unlimited development at the end of dead-end roads or cul-de-sacs, tying maximum dead-end roads lengths to the state fire code (the state fire code does not regulate road lengths), preventing or limiting cluster developments and other innovative land uses, and banning any setback or frontage requirements larger than 50 feet. It also establishes a new, convoluted, and conflicting process for recording of plats and plans at the registry of deeds, which would conflict with RSA 674:37. **Status: House Housing Committee** executive session on **Tuesday, May 6, at 10:00 a.m. in LOB Room 305**.

**SB 188** (oppose), 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 creates a “building permits by default” model if communities fail to meet strict deadlines. **Status:** **House Housing Committee** executive session on **Tuesday, May 6**, at **10:00 a.m.** in **LOB Room 305**.

**SB 284** (oppose), limits residential parking spaces to one parking space per residential unit. **Status:** **House Housing Committee** amended the bill with its preferred parking language from **HB 382** as passed by the House, and **SB 284** is on next Thursday’s House consent calendar with a recommendation of OTP as amended (OTP-A). (Note: The **Senate Commerce Committee** adopted a replace all amendment to **HB 382** relative to vehicle funding loan contracts.)

Unfortunately, these aren’t the only problematic zoning bills targeting local control; earlier this month we posted a **“special legislative bulletin** covering the full list of mandates that have been passed by the House or Senate and are now with the other chamber. A special interest group launched a multimedia campaign this month to push as many zoning mandates across the finish line as possible, so **it’s essential for local officials and residents to continue to engage with legislators, share their concerns, and advocate for balanced, practical approaches to zoning and housing development.**

## **Ground Ambulance Reimbursement**

There’s broad agreement for eliminating balance billing—*i.e.* billing a patient for the difference between the full cost of the service and the amount their insurance plan pays—for ground ambulance services, but the House and Senate have very different ideas about where to set reimbursement rates for private insurers to offset the loss of revenue from balance billing. NHMA believes municipal ambulance services are essential services and not profit-driven; thus, appropriate reimbursement rates are crucial for their sustainability.

**HB 316** (oppose), eliminates balance billing and sets a reimbursement rate for non-Medicare/Medicaid health insurance carriers at approximately 200% above the current Medicare reimbursement rate. **Status:** **Senate Health and Human Services Committee** held public hearing on April 16; bill remains in committee.

**SB 245** (support), 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. **Status:** With **House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee**; public hearing has not yet been scheduled.

## Elections/Taxes

**HB 67** (support), makes permanent last year's pilot program regarding Accessible Voting Systems, ensuring that the state provides accessible voting systems through agreements with municipalities. Under this bill, the state would pay for the systems and municipalities would continue to be responsible for programming costs. **Status:** With [Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee](#); public hearing has not yet been scheduled.

**HB 123** (support), allows municipalities to tax standing timber that's on land used for carbon sequestration, which would make up for any lost timber tax revenues that towns and cities would have otherwise received if the timber were cut. **Status:** With [Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee](#); public hearing has not yet been scheduled.

**SB 291** (oppose), modifies the law regarding property tax exemptions for religious entities and allows for up to six residential housing units or congregate housing units used residential purposes to be exempt, provided they are owned by the religious organization on or before January 1, 2025, or for a minimum of five years. **Status:** [House Ways and Means Committee](#) public hearing scheduled for **Tuesday, April 29, at 10:00 a.m.** in **LOB Room 202-204**.

Please continue to engage with your [local senator](#) and [representatives](#) on these bills, attend upcoming public hearings, and make your voices heard.

## Risk Pool Bill Panned at Public Hearing

Representatives of several communities that participate in a risk pool came to Concord on Wednesday to speak against **SB 297** at a public hearing held by the [House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee](#).

The bill, which relates to the operations and oversight of pooled risk management programs that are created by cities, towns, counties, and school districts to reduce risks and associated insurance costs, is opposed by NHMA for two primary reasons: The effect it would have on the operations of insurance risk pools and the effect it would have on municipalities that choose to participate in health pools.

Among the local officials testifying against the bill was Rye Selectman Mike Coutu, who consulted on risk pool issues for the secretary of state's office in 2010 and advocated at the hearing for the risk pools to be regulated by the NH Department of Insurance. Speaking in his individual capacity, Coutu gave a presentation to interested Rockingham County municipal and state officials this week; the slides can be viewed [here](#).

The committee will hold a workshop on the bill the first or second full week of May and a committee amendment is likely. The secretary of state's office will continue to push hard for its preferred outcome, so **municipal officials who have not yet done so are**

encouraged to [contact the committee](#) to register their opposition and also speak with their [local senator](#) and [representatives](#) and encourage them to support legislation that will further maintain the integrity of the risk pools and not regulate them out of existence.

## House, Senate in Session Next Week

The House and Senate will meet on **Thursday, May 1**, and several bills that NHMA has a position on are up for a vote. Although most of these bills are on the consent calendar and likely to be adopted without debate, it's still worth contacting your [local senator](#) or [representatives](#) about any of the bills you feel strongly about—particularly [SB 284](#)—before next Thursday and let them know your position. NHMA's position on each bill is shown in parenthesis after the bill number. Priority bills are denoted with an asterisk(\*).

### House Session

[SB 91](#) (oppose), allowing owners of residences in industrial/commercial zones to submit a single application for a special appraisal based on current residential use and removes the requirement for annual reapplication. **Recommendation:** OTP-consent calendar.

\* [SB 284](#) (oppose), relative to the required maximum number of residential parking spaces. **Recommendation:** OTP-consent calendar.

### Senate Session

[HB 124](#) (support), enabling a municipal forest committee or conservation commission to offer surplus money to the municipality for deposit in the municipal unreserved fund balance. **Recommendation:** OTP-A-consent calendar.

[HB 230](#) (oppose), amends the existing authority of town health officers by removing the phrase “and such other regulations relating to public health”, thereby narrowing the scope of regulations that health officers can enact to only those for the prevention and removal of nuisances. **Recommendation:** OTP-regular calendar.

[HB 451](#) (Support) **Recommendation:** Re-refer to committee-regular calendar.

[HB 474](#) (oppose), requiring a second witness at the counting of write-in votes. **Recommendation:** OTP-consent calendar.

[HB 569](#) (support), relative to the establishment of county-wide communication districts. **Recommendation:** OTP-consent calendar.

[HB 250](#) (support), enabling local governing bodies to regulate the muzzling of dogs. **Recommendation:** OTP-consent calendar.



[HB 272](#) (support), exempting certain agricultural practices from municipal noise regulation. **Recommendation:** OTP-consent calendar.

[HB 146](#) (oppose), relative to the use of body-worn cameras. **Recommendation:** Inexpedient to legislative (ITL)-consent calendar.

[HB 737](#) (support), creating local options for games of chance. **Recommendation:** OTP-A-consent calendar.

## Listening Phase of Budget Process Continues

The [Senate Finance Committee](#) will continue to hear presentations next week from executive branch agencies and other statutory entities funded through the state budget, [HB 1](#) and [HB 2](#), in advance of its public hearing scheduled for **Tuesday, May 6**, beginning at **1:00 p.m.** in **Representatives Hall**.

As noted in previous *Bulletins*, the budget passed by the House contains several provisions that would have an adverse impact on municipalities, including suspension of the 30% municipal share of the rooms and meals tax, which would be replaced with a flat \$137 million appropriation annually in FYs 26-27. This change is projected to reduce municipal aid by \$11 million compared to the current statutory formula.

NHMA and the New Hampshire Association of Counties submitted a commentary to media outlets outlining each organization's specific and shared concerns with the budget passed by the House earlier this month. You can read the op-ed [here](#). NHMA also has a one-page budget summary [here](#). You can read a more detailed letter about the budget that NHMA submitted to Senate Finance [here](#).

The Senate is expected to make several changes to the budget over the next six weeks, so the process is far from over and NHMA and our members can and will **continue to advocate for the interests of municipalities**. The Senate must pass its budget by June 5 and both chambers must agree on a spending plan to send to the governor by June 26.

## 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.

Note: For anyone who prints these emails out, all of the above links are available on the General Court website at: <https://gc.nh.gov/>

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](mailto:info@nhmunicipal.org) to be added to our email list for the *Legislative Bulletin*.

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



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