

Legislative alert for March 11-14, from League of Women Voters NH. Reminder that if you live in a town with the traditional March town elections, that is coming up on March 12. Check your town's website or town clerk for polling hours and for town meeting date and time. House and Senate will each meet in voting session on Thursday, March 14.

Report on some bills of interest that were voted on March 7:

In the House:

HB455, repeal of the death penalty for capital murder, passed 279-88. Goes on to Senate.

Two proposed **constitutional amendments related to voting CACR 5 & 6** failed to get the 60% vote needed to go to the Senate. On its second vote, CACR 5 (allowing 17 yr olds vote in primaries if 18 by general election) did not get a majority on Inexpedient To Legislate. Then it was tabled. CACR 6 (allowing absentee voting) was tabled after getting a majority but before a vote of Inexpedient To Legislate was taken. *(See end of this alert to find out more about "tabled" as a vote in the legislature and a review of CACR voting.)*

Two happy outcomes in election law: **HB105 effectively overturns SB3 from 2017**, the voter registration bill over which the League sued the Sec of State. Vote Ought To Pass 209-155. Moves on to Senate. Unfortunately but not unexpectedly, this bill and HB106 were both voted along party lines, are not veto-proof.

Also **HB106 effectively overturns 2018's HB1264** that would disenfranchise or create a post-election poll tax on people living in NH for just a few years, such as medical interns, college students, military families. Happily that was voted OTP 213-154. (HB1264 is set to go into effect July 1 of this year.) Moves on to Senate.

HB611 allowing **any voters to vote by absentee ballot** without one of the current reasons, passed 198-173. Moves on to Senate.

Re **healthcare, HB604 to establish a commission to assess benefits & costs of a "health care for all"** program in NH. Passed on a voice vote, moves on to Senate.

HB158, requiring DHHS to publish an annual report in **aggregate statistical summary form of abortions** performed. Confidentiality of medical records was a key discussion point. Bill was killed 218-144.

It's nearly spring, so let's talk about growing things. **HB364 permits qualifying patients and designated caregivers to cultivate cannabis for therapeutic use** and to donate excess cannabis to other qualifying patients. Passed on a voice vote; moves on to Senate. *I can picture flowerpots on nursing home windowsills already.*

HB622, prohibiting collective bargaining agreements that require employees to join or contribute to a labor union (**right to work** bill again) was killed.

In the Senate, voted on March 7:

SB140, allowing each local school board to determine whether to grant academic credit for alternative, extended learning, and work-based programs. Passed on a voice vote. *(League is happy that this power stays with the local school board.)* Moves to the House—we urge reps to support.

SB309, restoring school stabilization grants, passed. Moves on to Senate Finance.

SB310, bill allowing 2 **casinos** to be licensed in NH. Voted Inexpedient to Legislate 13-11 (not along party lines), then immediately tabled on a voice vote. Then reconsidered. So we may see this bill again. *League opposes expanded gambling as an unreliable source of state revenue.*

SB24, continuing participation in **RGGI**, passed on a voice vote. Moves to the House.

SB76, prohibiting off-shore oil drilling passed on a voice vote with amendment. Moves to the House. *League supports this bill.*

The full list of bills for March 14 and upcoming hearings in the House can be found in this week's Calendar: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/calendars/2019/HC_15.pdf

The Senate Calendar is at this link:

http://gencourt.state.nh.us/Senate/calendars_journals/calendars/2019/sc%2013.pdf

Coming up for a vote on March 14, bills include the following:

In the House

HB415 that requires any vote to change a town's town meeting to or from **SB2 status** be put on the official ballot (to rescind SB2) or to be on the discussion part of town meeting with a ballot vote on adoption of SB2 (in other words, voters must attend a town meeting in person to vote for SB2 status so they don't have to go to town meeting in future). *Lots of arguments pro & con SB2; this bill makes sure that people have the opportunity to listen to the arguments before they adopt SB2.* Committee recommends Ought To Pass 18-1.

HCR 5, requesting the US Congress to propose a constitutional amendment to reverse the ruling of the US Supreme Court in **Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission**. Recommended Ought to Pass Amended 11-7.

HB 186, establishing a **state minimum wage** and providing for adjustments to the minimum wage. In a 3-year progression, the minimum wage moves to \$9.50, \$10.75, and \$12.00 per hour. Different for tipped workers. Recommended Ought To Pass 12-7.

HB 198, replacing the prohibition on texting while driving with a more comprehensive bill. commonly known as the **hands-free law** (while driving). Recommended 15-3 Ought To Pass

CACR 10, Providing that **revenue from any state income tax shall be returned to the cities, towns, school districts, and counties** to assist in property tax relief. Recommended Inexpedient To Legislate 16-1.

CACR 11, Providing that a **broad-based sales tax** shall be prohibited. Recommended Inexpedient To Legislate 12-8

HB 676-FN-A-LOCAL, repealing the collection of the **state education property tax**. Recommended Inexpedient To Legislate 16-1 (state has no way to replace these funds needed to support public schools.)

HB 132-FN, relative to **net neutrality**. Inexpedient To Legislate 16-0. "The size of the fiscal note, combined with the threat of legal action against the state by the national telecommunications companies, convinced the committee to unanimously recommend that the bill not pass."

Coming up for a vote on March 14, bills include the following:

in the Senate

SB 266-FN, education funding for kindergarten pupils, keno revenues, and school building aid. Recommended Ought to Pass with Amendment 5-0. *League supports.*

SB 7 as amended, the SMART voting improvement bill. Recommended Ought To Pass 3-2, will have an updated fiscal note. *League supports.*

SB 303-FN, state aid to school districts re special ed & medicaid. Already passed the Senate. Sen. Finance recommended unanimously Ought To Pass.

SB 305 online voter registration portal, sponsored by Sen. Gray and amended. A good idea that needs more work, and the committee voted to "re-refer to committee", which means to do more work on it.

SB 231 Truth in political advertising. Committee wants to re-refer this bill for more work too.

Hearings in committees next week. Most committees are holding executive sessions, which are open to the public to observe but no testimony will be taken. We have not listed them here except for Ed Funding bills. House Finance has lots of work on the budget to do all week.

Monday, March 11

HOUSE FINANCE will be on the road for two state budget presentations:

Boys and Girls Club of Souhegan Valley, 56 Mount Vernon Street, **Milford**

5:00 pm HB 1-A, making appropriations for certain departments for fiscal years ending June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021; HB 2-FN-A-L, re state fees, funds, revenues, and expenditures.

Lakes Region Community College, Academic Commons, 379 Belmont Road (Route 106), **Laconia**
5:00 pm (same topics as above)

Wednesday., March 13

SENATE ELECTION LAW LOB rm 102

10:30 am SB 106, clarifies the definition of political advocacy organization and expenditure. leading to greater campaign finance transparency

11:00 am SB 67, definitions of resident and residency for voter registration purposes. (*while this doesn't repeal HB1264, it undoes some of the harmful consequences, using language adopted in VT.*)

SENATE WAYS & MEAN State House room 100

9:15 a.m. SB 318, education tax credit program, apparently extending the program to home-schooled families. *Complicated bill we haven't had time to study but suspect League won't support.*

HOUSE FINANCE LOB 210-211

beginning at 10 am, *executive session* on a number of bills including these school funding bills: HB 176-FN-A, school building aid; HB 184-FN, calculation of kindergarten students in the average daily membership and repealing prorated kindergarten funding based on Keno revenues; HB 357 public school infrastructure fund.

HOUSE FINANCE - DIVISION II, Room 209, LOB

1:00 pm Or one half hour following the executive session, *division work session* on HB 177-FN, **stabilization grants**; HB 551-FN-A, **establishing a school funding commission**; HB 686-FN-A-L, calculating and funding the interim cost of an opportunity for an **adequate education** and **extending the interest and dividends tax to capital gains**; HB 709-FN-A-L, formula for **determining funding for an adequate education**. These bills already passed the House; now in finance to examine the \$.

Thursday, March 14

HOUSE PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS, Room 201, LOB

10:00 am HB 727-FN-A, boat ramp & parking improvements at Mount Sunapee state park beach and making an appropriation therefor. (already passed the House; this is the second committee)

11:00 am Full committee work session on HB 25-A, making appropriations for capital improvements. Important work on a large number of state capital projects. Read the list & amounts here:

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billText.aspx?sy=2019&id=1128&txtFormat=pdf&v=current

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS, Room 202, LOB

10:00 a.m. HB 481-FN-A-L, legalization of cannabis and making appropriations therefor (passed the House, now Ways & Means deals with the financial aspects of administration)

Tuesday, March 26

HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, Room 204, LOB

11:00 am HB 564, possession of **firearms in safe school zones** (passed House as an Education bill, now in its second committee). Executive session on March 27.

So what does it mean to “table” a bill? When the House or the Senate votes to table a bill, rather than vote Ought To Pass or Inexpedient To Legislate, the bill is not dead. It's just sleeping. It can be pulled “off the table” by a vote of the body (usually a simple majority.) How long can a tabled bill sleep? Not 20 years like Rip Van Winkle, but it could lie there until the second year of the session—I think. Or it could come “off the table” later in the 2019 session. Supporters and opponents use the time to get more votes to their side. In this case, the CACRs are not harmed by taking a good long nap, as the earliest they could appear on a ballot for the public to vote would be November 2020.

CACRs (proposed constitutional amendments) need a 60% vote in each body before they can appear on the ballot. The Governor does not need to sign them. Then they go on the general election ballot in Nov. 2020, where they need 2/3 of those who vote on the question to vote yes before the amendment becomes part of the NH Constitution.