

Legislative Alert from the League of Women Voters NH, for bills in the NH Legislature first week of February (and a peek at week after too).

The big day for League and anyone opposed to gerrymandering was Tuesday Jan. 28, when the new bill for an **independent redistricting commission** was heard in House Election Law. Committee members raised several questions that supporters and sponsors of HB1665 will discuss. We thank all the legislators who already support this bill, and we believe that others will join that support when their questions have been answered. It is likely that the House Election Law committee will appoint a sub-committee to work on this, as they did last year with HB706. We'll update you as we learn more.

The Senate met in session on Thursday, Jan. 30, to vote on a number of bills. Among the bills that they passed was [SB 410-FN](#), raising the **state minimum hourly rate** to \$10 this year, \$12 in 2023.

The Senate will meet in session on Thursday, Feb. 6, first in joint session in which Governor Sununu will give his State of the State speech at 10 am., then in Senate session to vote on bills. These are mostly on the Consent Calendar (meaning the committee recommends them unanimously.) Other bills include the following:

SB 420, permitting qualifying patients and designated caregivers to cultivate **cannabis** for therapeutic use. Recommended Ought to Pass, Vote 3-2.

SB 651-FN, prohibiting collective bargaining agreements that require employees to join or contribute to a **labor union**. Recommended Inexpedient to Legislate, Vote 4-1.

The House will meet in session on Feb. 6, following the joint session with the Governor. Before the Governor's speech, the House will meet in "caucus" by party at 9 am. *For a bit of explanation about "caucus" in the NH legislature, see note at the end of this alert.*

Among the bills the House will vote on are many with unanimous consent of the respective committees. We will not list those here. You can find them all in the House Calendar for this week http://gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/calendars/2020/HC_5.pdf

Bills on which there is likely to be debate and of general public interest are these:

HB 1615-FN, requiring **criminal background checks** for persons brought into a library to interact with minors in library-sponsored events. Recommended INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE 19-1. This would impact libraries that bring in guest presenters and is opposed by the NH Library Trustees Assn and the NH Library Assn.

HB 1649-FN-A, establishing a **road usage fee** and making an appropriation therefor. Recommended OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT 17-3. "The intent of the road usage fee is to ensure that motor vehicles using our state's roads and bridges provide their fair share of funds for the maintenance of the roads and bridges....This bill establishes a road usage fee for motor vehicles registered to travel on our roads based on the combined Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) city/highway miles per gallon (MPG) rating of the vehicle at the time of registration. This fee would be collected at the time of the annual vehicle registration and deposited into the Highway Fund...." [p 7 of the Calendar]

HB 1605-FN, requiring **children under the age of 2 years** be restrained in a motor vehicle. MAJORITY: OUGHT TO PASS. MINORITY: REFER FOR INTERIM STUDY Vote was 10-9. "This bill provides for better protection to infants, and younger and smaller children, as they ride in rear-facing car seats in the event of a motor vehicle crash. It requires children to be rear-facing up to two years of age if under 40 lbs." Minority argues this is different from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommendations.

Public hearings in the House and the Senate committees: Tuesday, Feb. 4

HOUSE CHILDREN AND FAMILY LAW, Room 206, Legislative Office Bldg

1:00 pm HB 1349, establishing a committee to **study firearms incidents involving children** with access to unsecured firearms.

HOUSE COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Room 302, Legislative Office Bldg

10:00 am Executive session on a number of bills including these that have generated much public interest: HB 1410, prohibiting the use of flavors and certain chemicals in **vaping products**; HB 1624-FN, establishing a moratorium on sales of **e-cigarettes**; HB 1662-FN, increase the age for sales and possession of **tobacco products and e-cigarettes to 21**.

HB 1166, establishing a committee to study obtaining **health insurance** for those persons who are uninsured in New Hampshire;

HB 1230, relative to credit for reinsurance;

HB 1233-FN, relative to coverage for children's early intervention services;

HB 1280-FN, relative to copayments for **insulin**;

HB 1281-FN, requiring insurance coverage for **epipens**; [see page 9 of the House Calendar for complete list] *[reminder that Executive sessions are open to the public but no public testimony is taken nor are there pro/con sign-in sheets]*

HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, Room 204, Legislative Office Bldg

10:00 am HB 1560-FN, relative to the criminal penalties for certain negligent actions which cause the **death of an animal**.

11:00 am HB 1602-FN-L, establishing a registry for persons convicted of **animal cruelty**.

1:00 pm HB 1350, requiring a locking safety device be provided for **commercial firearm sales**

2:00 pm HB 1130-FN, relative to assault against an elderly person

HOUSE EDUCATION, Room 207, Legislative Office Bldg

10:00 am Several education bills of interest. [Check list on p. 9 of the House Calendar.]

SENATE EDUCATION room 103 Legislative Office Bldg

9:30 am SB 514, relative to alternative learning credit rules of the state board of education.

SENATE ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES State House Room 103

9:30 am SB 591, establishing a statewide **solid waste disposal reduction goal**.

9:45 am SB 629-FN, establishing the solid waste reduction management fund and establishing a **solid waste disposal surcharge**.

10:00 am SB 668-FN-A, establishing an **offshore wind commission**, establishing an office of offshore wind industry development in the department of business and economic affairs

HOUSE FINANCE - DIVISION I, Room 212, Legislative Office Bldg

1:00 pm Division work session on SB 7-FN-L, establishing the secure modern accurate registration act (SMART ACT). *[League supports this bill to initiate **voter registration** via DMV transactions.]*

HOUSE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES & ELDERLY AFFAIRS, Room 205, Legislative Office Bldg

A number of sub-committee work sessions on **healthcare related bills**, followed by executive session at 1 pm. [see p 10 of Calendar for detailed list of bills]

HOUSE PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS, Room 201, Legislative Office Bldg

10:00 am Presentation: Governor's update to the **10-year Transportation Plan**. Followed by a hearing on the plan at 1 pm. *Developing a ten-year plan for maintenance and improvement of our state's roads and bridges is a big task! Eventually public hearings will be held in each county to review the draft plan. Will your pot-hole riddled stretch of a state road make it to the plan? You can advocate at the public hearings.*

HOUSE RESOURCES, RECREATION & DEVELOPMENT, Room 305, Legislative Office Bldg

1:00 pm HB 1425-FN, requiring the removal of all containers containing **PFAS** compounds from public schools and hospitals.

1:45 pm HB 1537, relative to standards for perfluorochemicals in **drinking water** and a groundwater.

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION, Representatives Hall, State House (2nd floor) [expect a crowd]

1:00 pm HB 1621-FN, **protective head gear while operating motorcycles** and motorized bicycles.

Wednesday, Feb. 5

HOUSE EDUCATION Rooms 205-207, Legislative Office Bldg

1:00 pm HB 1285, relative to possession of **firearms on school property**.

HOUSE ELECTION LAW, Room 308, Legislative Office Bldg

11:00 am Executive session on a number of bills, *including League's favorite feel-good bill of the year*, HCR 8, celebrating August 26, 2020 as the 100th anniversary of the **19th Amendment**, which guarantees that the right to vote shall not be denied on the basis of sex.

HOUSE FINANCE, Rooms 210-211, Legislative Office Bldg

10:00 am Executive session on SB 7-FN-L, establishing the **secure modern accurate registration technology act** (SMART ACT); *[League supports]*

SB 8, **establishing an independent redistricting commission** *[League supports]*

HOUSE LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATION, Room 303, Legislative Office Bldg

10:00 am **CACR 13**, Providing that members of the legislature shall receive mileage for attendance on veto days and when voting on a budget following a continuing resolution. *[reminder: a CACR is a proposed constitutional amendment—Executive session on these Feb. 19.]*

10:30 am **CACR 16**, providing that the general court may authorize recall elections.

11:00 am **CACR 18**, Providing that the house or the senate may independently order a referendum to reduce a penalty established in law.

11:45 am HB 1297, directing the legislative budget assistant to conduct a **financial audit of the secretary of state's office**.

HOUSE PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS, Room 201, Legislative Office Bldg

11:00 am Executive session on several bills including HB 1650-FN-A-L, establishing a **road usage registration fee** and making an appropriation therefor.

Looking ahead a week: Wednesday, Feb. 12

HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, Room 204, Legislative Office Bldg

1:00 pm HB 1608-FN, prohibiting the manufacture, sale, transfer, and possession of **large capacity am-munition feeding devices**.

2:00 pm HB 1613-FN, allowing prisoners serving **life sentences** to be eligible for parole after 25 years

Tuesday, Feb. 18

SENATE TRANSPORTATION, Room 103, Legislative Office Bldg

1:00 pm SB 610, establishing a commission to evaluate the **transportation climate initiative framework** for a draft memorandum of understanding and associated modeling and scenarios.

“Caucus” – when a legislative committee or the House or the Senate meets in private, by party designation. The Democrats meet in one room; the Republicans meet in another. What does each group do? Wish I could be a fly on the wall and find out!

A caucus in a committee, such as House Election Law, may be called by the party chair or the minority party leader, to discuss bills that will be coming up in Executive Session (see last week's alert). They may be planning how to argue the bill, or they may be planning how their party should vote. The public is not allowed. If you go to a hearing room and see a sign on the door, sometimes handwritten, that says “caucus” just wait in the hall. If by mistake you enter the room and someone says “We're in caucus,” just say “sorry” and leave.

Before a voting session of the House or the Senate a similar call may go out to members of the party from the party leadership that they will caucus before the session. Again, closed to the public. Leadership makes known the preferred party-line vote on specific bills, but the members are of course free to vote their consciences.