

Legislative alert April 24-28+ from the League of Women Voters NH

Update for towns that postponed town meetings due to blizzard on March 14—On April 20 in general session the House and Senate each passed an amended HB329 that resolves the issue of ratifying the results of postponed elections. [from WMUR website] “Gov. Chris Sununu will sign into law legislation allowing officials of towns and school districts that postponed their elections due to the March 14 snowstorm to take action to ratify the results of those elections.... In rapid fire action [on April 20], the House and Senate suspended their rules and established a committee of conference, which quickly reached agreement on a minor change to the bill. They then suspended their respective rules to consider the committee of conference report, which was adopted by the Senate on voice vote and by the House on a roll call of 294-42.” Towns with bond issues or other warrant articles that also need ratification will first have to hold a public hearing before ratifying results, but a full election will not be required.

League applauds the efforts of a number of legislators to work together and quickly across party lines to resolve this issue. Another bill to create a study committee should also pass, so that in any future emergency situation towns will have clear guidelines in advance.

THE SENATE WILL MEET IN SESSION ON THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2017 AT 10:00 A.M. A number of bills are on the consent calendar, including the Education bill below (not likely to be debated). A limited range of bills are on the regular calendar (suggesting floor debate) that you may want to call or email your state senator about in advance. None of them are League priorities. You can find the full list of bills on the NH Senate Calendar:

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/Senate/calendars_journals/calendars/2017/sc%202020.pdf

HB 557-FN relative to school attendance in towns with no public schools. **Education** committee recommends **keeping this bill for further study** by a vote of 5-0 because “This bill would allow a school board to assign a child to an approved nonsectarian private school if there is no public school for the child’s grade in the child’s resident district, as well as execute a contract. Although there has been significant progress in working with stakeholders to address concerns in the legislation, the committee believes that more time is needed to work towards the best solution.”

SENATE COMMITTEE HEARINGS April 25-28:

Monday, April 24: CAPITAL BUDGET Room 100, State House AGENCY PRESENTATIONS

10:00 a.m. Treasury

10:15 a.m. Dept. of Administrative Services

11:00 a.m. Adjutant General

11:30 a.m. Dept. of Corrections

Tuesday, April 25:

Public hearing on an unrelated amendment to an innocuous education bill will be held on **Tuesday, April 25, 10 am**, probably in Legislative Office Bldg room 103 unless citizen turnout necessitates move to a larger room. At Education Commissioner Edelblut’s urging, an **AMENDMENT** was offered in the Senate which would give Edelblut power to redraw the Department of Education, move personnel around as he wishes, and move monies between budgets and budget lines as he sees fit. The Commissioner did not consult the Board of Education before submitting the request. This is a non-germane amendment offered to **HB 356**. The Senate Education Committee wisely postponed their executive session on this bill when they realized that the public demands transparency and public input on such an important issue—that tacking it on as an unrelated amendment without public testimony is simply not good government. Thank you to the committee for rescheduling their work to allow public and expert testimony with full public notice and for postponing their executive session.

Tues., April 25 ELECTION LAW, Room 102, LOB 10:00 a.m. Executive session on various bills—probably including SB3.

Wed., April 26 EXECUTIVE DEPTS & ADMINISTRATION LOB room 101, 10 am.
HB209, “This bill provides that, if Massachusetts adopts Atlantic standard time, the state of New Hampshire shall also adopt the Atlantic standard time, the effect of which shall be to make daylight saving time permanent in both states.” (League has no position on this—does anyone?)

The State Budget—Senate Finance is holding sessions just about all week again to come up with the state’s two-year budget. For complete list of presentations by Departments, see the NH Senate Calendar: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/Senate/calendars_journals/calendars/2017/sc%2020.pdf
We highlight here a very important **Senate Finance** session on **Friday, April 28**. This committee today will focus on **Health and Human Services expenditures** that affect so many people in our state. So here are details on that day’s presentation—these sessions are open to the public.

SENATE FINANCE in Room 103, State House

9:00 a.m. Overview of Budget; Commissioner’s Office; Office of Human Services

11:00 a.m. to noon, Public Health

1:00 p.m. to 2:30, Mental Health, including Behavioral Health, NH Hospital & Glencliff Home

2:45 p.m. Substance Abuse

3:45 p.m. Developmental Services

The SENATE FINANCE committee will continue its work on **Monday, May 1** with **Health and Human Services**:

1:00 p.m. State and County Long Term Care Funding, including Elderly and Adult

2:00 p.m. - 3 p.m. Medicaid, including Managed Care and **Expanded Medicaid**

3:15 p.m. Medicaid Enhancement Tax and Uncompensated Care

Looking ahead, SENATE CAPITAL BUDGET COMMITTEE May 1 and 5: State House room 100. The Capital Budget, as distinct from the Operating Budget, appropriates funding for infrastructure-type major expenses.

Monday May 1: AGENCY PRESENTATIONS

10:00 a.m. Dept. of Transportation 10:45 a.m. Secretary of State

11:00 a.m. University System of New Hampshire 11:45 a.m. Legislative Branch

Friday, May 5: AGENCY PRESENTATIONS

9:00 a.m. Dept. of Information Technology 9:45 a.m. Judicial Branch

10:00 a.m. Community College System of New Hampshire 10:30 a.m. Cultural Resources

10:45 a.m. Dept. of Education 11:30 a.m. Dept. of Fish & Game 12:00 p.m. Break

1:00 p.m. Dept. of Environmental Services 1:45 p.m. NH Housing Finance Authority

2:00 p.m. Dept. of Health and Human Services 2:45 p.m. Dept. of Resources & Economic

Development 3:30 p.m. Liquor Commission

THE HOUSE WILL MEET IN SESSION ON THURSDAY, MAY 4, 2017 AT 10:00 A.M.

Thus we do not yet have a list of bills the House is likely to vote on. That will come out next Friday.

House committee hearings of note: for the complete list of hearings and bills being heard in committee check the House calendar. Some committees are holding executive sessions, where they decide how to recommend specific bills to the full House. The public is allowed to listen but not testify at executive sessions: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/calendars/2017/HC_21.pdf

Tuesday, April 25:

FINANCE - DIVISION I, Room 212, Legislative Office Bldg

10:00 a.m. Division work session on SB 57-FN-A, making appropriations to the department of environmental services for the purposes of funding eligible drinking water and wastewater projects under the state aid grant program and relative to making an appropriation from the drinking water and groundwater trust fund to the department of environmental services to address drinking water contamination in Amherst.

11:00 a.m. Division work session on SB 197-FN-A, making an appropriation to the department of justice to enforce election and lobbying laws. (League supports.)

EDUCATION, Legislative Office Bldg room 207, the executive session on **SB193** (bill text:

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billText.aspx?sy=2017&id=914&txtFormat=html)

is likely to be held anytime after 10 am. SB193 is the “freedom savings account” education bill, a kind of voucher system. Apparently last week’s work session on this bill left some questions unanswered, and the committee may have more expert testimony this week. They have been receiving a lot of public input, too, about a possible dilution of funding for public schools if this passes as well as concern about state money going to private schools. You can read more about this bill at Reaching Higher NH, a public education advocacy group. <http://reachinghighernh.org/2017/04/20/work-session-sb-193-questions-remain-nhs-voucher-bill/#more-596408>

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES and JUDICIARY are holding executive sessions on a number of bills.

Wednesday, April 26 WAYS AND MEANS, Legislative Office Bldg room 202: in and around a couple of other bills, the committee is likely to have executive session on SB242, the bill allowing two casinos in NH to be created. (League opposes expanded gambling as a way to raise state revenue—see your testimony on the Action and Testimony page of LWVNH.org)

(Light week for some House committees—it’s school vacation week too, so let’s all get out and rake leaves or plant pansies or something.)

Advance notice of HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARING for following weeks:

Tuesday or Wednesday, May 2 or 3: HOUSE Election Law: There is no scheduled meeting of the Committee this week, so there is more time for concerned supporters to contact Committee members about [SB 33](#). This critical bill closes the loophole that allows independent spending groups like Americans for Prosperity to avoid registering with the Secretary of State and filing expenditure reports. We urge all supporters of transparency in elections to contact Election Law members. For more information on the bill, see <http://www.opendemocracyaction.org/sb33>.

Tuesday, May 9

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, Room 204, LOB 10:00 a.m. Executive session on SB 66-FN, including a fetus in the definition of “another” for purposes of certain criminal offenses; SB 133-FN, relative to security screening at state correctional facilities.

Brief report on past week’s legislative activities:

The hearing on **SB3**, the voter registration bill, was well attended, lengthy, and revealed several negative points that hadn’t been considered earlier that make this bill even more unpalatable. At the very least the House should vote to retain it for further study—too many inconsistencies in the bill. At best we hope the House will kill this bill that attempts to restrict voters’ rights and complicate the registration process solely on the basis of unsupported perceptions of voter fraud in our fine state.

House Election Law will likely exec this bill on Tuesday. (League opposes SB3, in case any doubts linger.)

The Senate killed **HB537**, a small campaign finance reform bill closing a loophole. (League is sad it failed.)

The Senate also killed **HB489**, to create a study committee about the state's tax structure. (League is sorry to see the Senate bury its head in the sand on this important issue, especially since the House passed the bill in February on a voice vote.)

The Senate passed **HB354**, an education bill that provides adequacy aid to some communities shortchanged in the past (good idea, avoids more lawsuits).

The Senate killed **HB276**, which passed the House 203-155, about exempting students from assessments at parents' request. Not sure why Senate and House see this so differently.

The two ENERGY bills we included in last week's call to action both passed the House on voice votes, move to Governor's desk. They are **SB125** and **SB51**. Reminder that you can find the text of any bill if you know the number on this webpage: http://gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/quick_search.html