

Legislative alert April 3-5, 2018, from the League of Women Voters NH

Reminder that we have reached the time of year when bills being voted on in the House or in the Senate have already passed the other body. That does not mean they will automatically pass again. It does mean that if voters care about an issue, it is critically important to make your views known now to your own state representatives and senator.

Reminder also that the first part of each House or Senate session is usually a single vote to agree with the Consent Calendar. The Consent Calendar is a collection of bills that have come out of the committees' public hearings with a unanimous (or nearly unanimous) recommendation of Ought To Pass (now send the bill to the Governor to sign), Inexpedient To Legislate (=kill the bill), or in some cases Refer to Interim Study (either a slow death by inaction or a real plan to study the issue further).

The SENATE WILL MEET IN SESSION on Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 10 am.

To see the complete list of bills, read the Senate Calendar for March 29:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/scaljournals/calendars/2018/sc%2015.pdf>

Among the bills to be voted on are the following of particular interest to League of Women Voters or of great public interest:

On the Consent Calendar, recommended unanimously by the Senate Education committee, are HB1493, HB1494, and HB1551 to align NH school procedures with the Every Student Succeeds Act federal bill. None of them create issues and Ought To Pass easily.

There are no League priority bills on the Regular Calendar for the Senate.

The HOUSE WILL MEET IN SESSION on Thursday, April 5 at 10:00 a.m. The House will also be in session on April 12, April 26, May 2nd and May 3. Also possibly April 19.

The list of bills to be voted on by the House can be found on the House Calendar for March 30:

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/calendars/2018/HC_13.pdf

All these bills have already passed the Senate, but often House members look at issues from a more local point of view and may vote differently. Make your views known to your state representative(s). Of particular interest to League or of broad general interest are the following bills:

On the Consent Calendar with a unanimous or nearly unanimous committee recommendation, thus likely to be voted on without debate:

SB 385, establishing a foster care children's bill of rights. OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT

SB 384, allows hospice patients to get medical cannabis more quickly. OUGHT TO PASS 15-1.

SB 573-FN-A, ongoing financing of the Controlled Drug Prescription Health and Safety Program (PDMP). The program is strengthened by the more direct involvement of the medical examiner's office. It also addresses and corrects the findings of a recent audit. OUGHT TO PASS 17-1. **[opioid crisis]**

SB 563-FN, establishing a recovery friendly workplace initiatives tax credit against business taxes administered by the community development finance authority. (a good bill that needs work, seems to be the consensus) REFER FOR INTERIM STUDY.

On the **Regular Calendar**, meaning we should expect floor debate:

[healthcare]

SB 313-FN, reforming New Hampshire's Medicaid and Premium Assistance Program, establishing the granite workforce pilot program, and [using certain liquor funds to help fund treatment programs]. OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT (unanimous). Rep. William Marsh for Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs. "The committee recommends that medicaid expansion should be continued as a managed care program. Actuarial information demonstrates this will be substantially less expensive to NH than the current program. It is critically important to maintain coverage for the 50,000 people currently covered by this program. It would be prohibitively expensive to alternatively fund necessary programs, such as those to address the opioid problem, with general fund dollars instead of this program. Amendments address self-employment as a means to satisfy the work requirement, seasonal employment, membership of the commission set up to review the program, and the items to be evaluated by that commission." *[League supports health care for all, and this is one part of that.]*

SB 477, establishing a therapeutic cannabis medical oversight board.

[medical marijuana]

MAJORITY: OUGHT TO PASS. MINORITY: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE. Vote 15-5.

Rep. Mindi Messmer for the Majority of Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs. "...we feel is an important step in providing clinical data to evaluate the effectiveness of the medical cannabis program in New Hampshire. The oversight board will assess clinical evidence, provide information, and review best practices for medical providers, which is a crucial step in assessing medical cannabis efficacy and use in New Hampshire under RSA 126-X." (The minority say this should have been done years ago, needs a sunset provision, and "some are more generally opposed to the trend in an increasingly permissive society.")

SB 408-FN, licensing historic racing.

[gambling bill]

MAJORITY: REFER FOR INTERIM STUDY. MINORITY: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE. Vote 16-4. Rep. Bill Ohm for the Majority of Ways and Means. This bill permits electronic gaming devices that would let wagers be taken on previously run horse races. It requires the Lottery Commission to make rules for such devices, since they claim to operate as pari-mutuel pools under current state law. As with live racing, the state would receive 1.25% of the total amount wagered. The operator's take can be as high as 19% of the pool. Charitable gaming would receive 35% of that 19%. It is unclear if the \$300 licensing fee to the hosting cities and towns for daily racing applies. A video of similar historic racing devices reveals a striking similarity to slot machines, carefully modified to show videos of past races and providing racing form data on the horses in the race. However, the operation is similar to a slot machine in that cash is inserted, bets are made, and races have an option to run very quickly, with just the finish being shown. Bets can be made as quickly as every 12 seconds.

Rep. Susan Almy for the Minority: The minority believes that no amount of study can make the historic racing machines any less of a slot machine. Their introduction would lead to the development of mini-casinos, devoid of revenue and regulation, in those parts of the state far from regular casinos. *[The League opposes expansion of gambling as a state revenue source, but since the state would get only 1.25% of bets, this doesn't seem to have that intent.]*

SB 539-FN-A, The Department of Education accidentally, incorrectly underpaid the grant due to school districts for FY 16 and FY 17 for children who are not reading at the third grade level, and this bill corrects that error. OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT. Vote 17-1.

Legislative Committee Hearings: All hearings are open to the public. Public testimony is taken at hearings for bills, but not at work sessions or executive sessions. However, listening can be fascinating!

TUESDAY, APRIL 3

Senate EDUCATION Room 103, LOB

[education]

9:00 a.m. **HB 1598-L**, about towns voting to withdraw from a cooperative school district.

9:10 a.m. **HB 1612**, relative to data security in schools.

9:20 a.m. **HB 1674**, [adding] computer science and digital skills [to list of skills for] an adequate education.

9:30 a.m. **HB 1744**, authorizing a parent to exempt his or her child from participating in the statewide assessment program.

9:40 a.m. **HB 1761**, relative to the math learning communities program in secondary schools.

Senate ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES Room 103, State House

[environment]

9:25 a.m. **HB 485-FN**, setting standards for emerging contaminants in drinking water.

10:00 a.m. **HB 1766-FN**, remediating the Coakley Landfill in Greenland.

10:15 a.m. **HB 1101-FN**, regulating groundwater pollution caused by polluting emissions in the air.

Senate JUDICIARY, Room 100, State House starting at 9:30 a.m. (several bills dealing with **minimum age of marriage**) **HB 1377, HB 1586, HB 1587, HB 1661**

Senate WAYS AND MEANS , Room 100, State House

[taxes & education]

9:10 a.m. **HB 1686-FN**, This bill allows a taxpayer to use credit computed under the education tax credit against taxes due under the interest and dividends tax [currently only businesses can so designate part of their taxes due, the funds going into a scholarship fund for students who wish to attend private schools] Under the bill's text is the Fiscal Note methodology: "This bill amends the Education Tax Credit statute to allow taxpayers to utilize this credit against the Interest and Dividends Tax and caps the Education Tax Credit program at \$5,100,000 in a program year. In FY 2017, the amount of Education Tax Credit applied against the Business Profits Tax, Business Enterprise Tax or both was \$188,000. The Department has no information on how many Interest and Dividends taxpayers will donate and utilize the Education Tax Credit against their Interest and Dividends tax liability to determine the decrease in general fund revenue in FY 2019 and each year thereafter."

[This is a good example of the unrealistic time frame of some Senate hearings. No way can the complexity and unintended consequences of this bill be heard and discussed in 10 minutes.]

9:20 a.m. **HB 1819-FN**, relative to administration of the education tax credit. (this bill makes some technical changes for payments to parents re the above scholarships, which can also be used for some home education expenses)

House EDUCATION, Room 207, LOB 10:00 a.m.

[possible amendment re **gun violence prevention**]

SB 357, relative to safe school zones and relative to syringe service programs. *[We do not know whether Sen. Hennessey's earlier amendment, defeated by the Senate, to allow school districts to declare their campuses as gun-free school zones will be proposed by House members at this hearing.]*

House JUDICIARY, Room 208, LOB 11:00 a.m. **[right to know]**
Executive session on **SB 555-FN-A**, establishing a citizens' right-to-know appeals commission and a right-to-know law ombudsman and making an appropriation therefor.

House RESOURCES, RECREATION AND DEVELOPMENT, LOB 305-307. **[environment]**
10:00 a.m. Presentation: Drinking Water Standards in New Hampshire: Regulation of Perfluorinated Compounds. Dartmouth Policy Research Shop students present findings and policy guidance based on review of the literature, federal regulations, and responses of other states dealing with PFC contamination.
11:30 a.m. Full committee work session on **SB 309-FN**, standards for perfluorochemicals in drinking water, ambient groundwater, and surface water.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4

House CRIMINAL JUSTICE, LOB 204, 10 am. **[death penalty repeal]**
SB593, the bill to repeal the death penalty. *[League supports abolishing the death penalty.]*

House FINANCE - DIVISION II, Room 209, LOB 10:00 a.m. **[the school voucher bill]**
Division work session on **SB 193-FN**, *[League will, of course, be in attendance. We opposed the use of public funds for private schools.]*

THURSDAY, APRIL 5

Senate FINANCE, Room 103, State House **[family & medical leave program]**
2:30 p.m. or immediately following the end of the Senate session.
HB 628-FN, relative to a family and medical leave insurance program. *[This bill was seriously amended by the House, squeaked by 171-162.]* To read the amended version of the bill, try this link:
http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billtext.aspx?sy=2018&txtFormat=amend&id=2018-1111H

looking ahead a week: TUESDAY, APRIL 10

Senate ELECTION LAW AND INTERNAL AFFAIRS, Room 102, LOB **[voting]**
HB 1264, relative to construction of the terms "resident," "inhabitant," "residence," and "residency." *[This innocuous sounding bill is yet one more student voter suppression bill, in the opinion of the League of Women Voters. We oppose.]*

Reminder that you can find out more about bills—the text, past action, upcoming hearings—on the General Court's website: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/quick_search.html