

Legislative alert for June 19-23 from League of Women Voters NH

Both the NH House and the NH Senate will meet in full session on **Thursday, June 22**, to vote on the state's budget. The budget has been in the hands of a Committee of Conference, which has agreed on a budget. News reports indicate less than universal support among legislators for the compromise budget, so its passage is not a done deal. **Now is the time to call your representatives and senator about budget items of concern to you.**

You have several opportunities to learn more about the operating budget, HB144 and HB157:

#1 Today (Friday, June 16) at 2 pm the NH Fiscal Policy Institute will present a webinar on the budget. Sign up at this link to get a log-in: <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/-Webinar--NH-Senate-Proposal-and-Committee-of-Conference-Changes--June-16.html?soid=1103350944678&aid=YiuuGBgQ-w8>

#2 On Tuesday, June 20, beginning at 10 am in Representatives Hall in the State House, there will be a "joint information presentation on amended budget bills" **HB144 and HB157**. Staff from the Office of Legislative Budget Assistance will clarify specific details and answer legislators' questions. The public is allowed to sit in the gallery, and the presentation will also be live-streamed on the General Court's website.

#3 Read the committee of conference materials for yourself if you can't listen to the above presentations. They are on the General Court's website in red: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/>

The capital budget was also revised in a committee of conference and will be voted on June 22. As described in the House Calendar: **HB 25-FN-A**, making appropriations for capital improvements. The 2017 version of the state's capital budget represents a variety of capital projects over a spectrum of state agencies from new court facilities; information technology projects; state park improvements; and state prison upgrades. The committee tried to take advantage of federal and other matching funds to develop a proposal which will provide much needed projects, improvements and jobs throughout New Hampshire. It is imperative that we maintain our state owned buildings, and this proposed capital budget continues the commitment of the Public Works and Highways Committee to do just that. The Senate acceded to the House position on restoring funding for the painting and repairs of the Representatives Hall ceiling for \$655,000; State Archives addition for \$4,850,000; and the design for state police specialty vehicle storage for \$300,000. The Senate amount for the affordable housing fund was reduced to \$2,500,000. [League emphasis added] To fund the aforementioned projects, the renovation of the Rochester CTE center appropriation was reduced by \$4 million with a footnote added that the remaining funding will receive priority in the next capital budget. The less significant adjustments were made to the Department of Environmental Services, DRED, Information Technology, Rail and Public Transit to keep the final appropriation at \$125,094,355 as passed by the House on April 5, 2017. Full text of the compromise bill to be voted on Thursday is http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billtext.aspx?sy=2017&txtFormat=amend&id=2017-2368C

Other bills to be voted on include the following high-profile bills (as listed in the House calendar for the coming week—lots of details there:

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/calendars/2017/HC_29.pdf):

(Healthcare--Medicaid) SB155 delaying implementation of Medicaid managed care care program step two until July 2019 (because of uncertainty about a federal healthcare bill).

(Education—Common Core standards) SB 44, (New Title) prohibiting the state from requiring implementation of common core standards and relative to the amendment or approval of academic standards. The Senate concurs with the House position prohibiting the state from requiring implementation of common core standards and relative to approval of academic standards. If the local school board elects not to implement the common core standards or the common core state standards

adopted by the state board pursuant to RSA 541-A, the local school board shall determine, approve and implement alternative academic standards. The bill further provides that the state board shall not amend any existing standards and shall not approve any new standards without prior review and recommendation of the legislative oversight committee.

(Education—kindergarten funding) SB 191-FN, (Second New Title) establishing keno [League note: Keno is an electronic gambling activity that would be played in bars and other entertainment venues that elect to do so with local town meeting approval] and relative to funding for kindergarten. The agreement reached by the conferees on this bill includes an additional \$1100 per kindergarten student in FY 19. All of the money from Keno will go to the education trust fund. A district which has or implements full-day kindergarten will receive this grant. The grant applies to both the public schools and the public charter schools. In the first year that a school district starts full-day kindergarten, the superintendent will certify at the beginning of the school year the enrollment in full-day kindergarten, and will be provided the grant. In subsequent years average daily membership (ADM), which is the current way we fund K-12 for public schools, will be used to determine the grant amount. At their parent's option, students shall be permitted to attend kindergarten for a half day. In FY 20 and beyond, the amount of revenue raised by Keno will be the source of funds for full-day kindergarten. If Keno revenues provide sufficient dollars for full adequacy payments for kindergarten, it will be dispersed. If Keno revenue falls short of providing for full adequacy payments then the grant to the school districts shall be prorated proportionally. The prorated portion shall not be less than \$1100. [Another League note: news reports indicate dissatisfaction on both sides about the funding because it is still not equal to the state aid for other grades and unhappiness to rely on gambling, essentially a regressive source of money, to fund state government.]

(Judiciary-the fetal homicide bill) SB 66 – House Speaker Jasper explains in the Calendar why the bill needs another vote after a necessary amendment. Quoting Speaking Jasper: “SB66 had a drafting error that did not express the intent of the General Court when both bodies passed the bill, and as such (and as is proper) an enrolled bills amendment to clarify the intent has been drafted. Because of the rather political nature of this bill (SB 66, including a fetus in the definition of “another” for purposes of certain criminal offenses), I have decided that the full House will take up the amendment in session this coming week. The amendment will be taken up after the amendment to House Rules.” The Senate will also vote on the amended bill. Newspaper articles this past week covered the inadvertent consequences of the originally-worded bill.

Apparently only 5 bills that went to Committees of Conference died in committee when the House and Senate members couldn't reach a compromise. None are League priority. Their bill numbers are SB74, HB84, HB228, HB463, HB527.

Just one **committee meeting** of particular interest to League coming up:

Tuesday, June 20 EDUCATION JOINT HOUSE AND SENATE EDUCATION, Room 207, LOB 1:00 p.m. Presentation by the New Hampshire Department of Education to hear and discuss the Draft Consolidated State Plan for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Most committees will not be meeting in July, but certain statutory commissions will meet. The House and Senate calendars both list those meetings, which are public meetings.

The League expresses thanks to all our legislators who worked hard on over 800 bills in the past six months, especially to those legislators who responded to their constituents' questions and concerns. For \$100 per year, why would any of them want this job? But they conducted committee meetings in a civil manner (with only rare exceptions), listened to testimony that often they disagreed with, and showed that participatory democracy is alive and well in NH. Thank you for your service.