

AFT-NH Legislative Bulletin

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The wheels turn slowly in Concord, as we grind towards the inevitable mid-June end of the 2017 legislative session. The House did not meet in session this week due to a lack of bills coming to the floor for action, so everything will be condensed into sessions at the end of May. The House meets in session on May 18th to vote on an emergency supplemental appropriation to fund the Department of Health and Human Services until the end of the fiscal year. There will be no consideration of committee reports at this session.

Senate Action The Senate did meet in session this week. The Senate’s proposed budget is yet to be unveiled. Committees did meet, however, and legislation continues to be refined and revenues continue to be sought for funding of various proposals. [HB 356-FN](#), the bill with the attempted power grab by Education Commissioner Edelblut, was voted on by the Senate and for now, the power grab has been held at bay. The final amended bill as passed by the Senate creates a committee to study education funding and the cost of an opportunity for an adequate education, the original intent of the bill, and “establishes a committee to study the organizational structure of the department of education and the duties and responsibilities of the commissioner of the department of education”. The report of this committee is due out on November 1, 2017. The bill as amended also “authorizes the commissioner of the department of education, with the advice of the state board of education and after consultation with the deputy director and affected division directors, to transfer or assign functions, programs, or services within or between any division. Vigilance will be necessary to monitor the work of this committee and recommendations for the session in January.

Voter Suppression The House Election Law committee met earlier this week to once again consider [SB 3](#), the voter suppression bill. A lengthy amendment was presented to the committee by Republican members, but while it redrafted many sections of the bill, most of the changes were technical and related to issues raised by groups such as the NH Municipal Association. One interesting proposal was to change who might come to your door to follow up and check on your domicile. Rather than election officials or local law enforcement, the proposed change had county officials doing this work, that is until it was pointed out that county sheriffs and their employees would likely be tasked with this duty. So, back to the drawing board. Given that there are virtually no reported instances of voter fraud in New Hampshire, the idea of having law enforcement

confirm the domicile you listed when registering seems just a bit sinister. But to hear some House members and Senators speak, bringing law enforcement into the voter registration process and creating lengthy and confusing forms for new voters to fill out is all just normal, not an attempt to dissuade people from voting. According to the docket, the House Election Law Committee has this scheduled for Executive Session on May 16th at 10:20am at the Legislative Office Building, Room 308.

Funding for Full Day Kindergarten In other news, the House Finance Committee held hearings this week on funding of full-day kindergarten across New Hampshire. No one can accuse New Hampshire of rushing into new and innovative ideas, since 76% of kindergarten students in 2012 were already in full-day sessions. Whether the Finance Committee will recommend financing this initiative or ask the House to reject it, it will be a difficult vote to defeat this initiative, given that it passed as a policy measure by nearly a 2 to 1 margin in the House just a couple of weeks ago. The public hearing was held last week and the Finance Committee (Division II) has scheduled an executive session for SB 191-FN, funding for full day kindergarten on *Tuesday, May 16th at 11:00am at the Legislative Office Building, Room 209*. The Finance Committee is also investigating the financing of [SB 247](#), which will mandate early childhood testing for lead poisoning and require it as a prerequisite for public school enrollment. Everyone concedes that lead poisoning has very serious developmental consequences for young children, consequences that last a lifetime. Where the battle-lines are being drawn in the House is over the proposal to establish a fund to aid landlords in remediating for lead in properties they own. So there are costs associated with this initiative, costs that must then be counter-balanced by the public health benefits, especially in regards to young children who are not responsible for the environment in which they live. It is a public health issue, but also one with serious educational and social welfare ramifications, so it will prove interesting to see how this plays out at the end of the session.

New Hampshire Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Ceremony *On Friday, May 19th at 9:45 am* in front of the Legislative Office Building at the memorial site, the annual service to honor our fallen NH law enforcement heroes will be held. If you can attend, please do make the effort. Next week is National Policer Officers Week to honor the work of law enforcement. We gather on May 19th to honor and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice keeping us all safe and every day we should appreciate and support the work of our law enforcement officers.

Finally, the House Committee on Legislative Administration held its public hearings on Republican Robert Fisher, accused of misogynistic commentary and running/contributing to a web platform with postings favorable to rape as well as claiming women lose value once past the age of thirty. Fisher defended himself in his hearing, admitting to some comments, denying others, but showing little in the way of remorse or contrition. As for Democrat Sherry Frost, the committee is investigating uncivil language used by her in a series of tweets a number of months ago, for which she already apologized. As noted last week, the political balancing act here is quite clear even if the allegations are not remotely equivalent, but this is life under the golden dome of the State House. The committee will issue its report and recommendations next week, and it will be interesting to see if the committee goes beyond a reprimand. That leaves it to the voters in Laconia (Fisher) and Dover (Frost). However, when the front page of NH's leading newspaper features headlines on Fisher's hearing and then the sentencing of former Republican representative Kyle Tasker on drug charges and using the Internet to solicit sex with a minor, well it just wasn't a good day. Of course, if Tasker were proposing marriage to the 14-year old, that would be fine—remember, the House refused to raise the age for marriage for girls from 13 to 18 years old. It has been that kind of year.

In Solidarity,

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