

AFT-NH Legislative Bulletin

2018-02



AFT-NH, AFT, AFL-CIO “Union of Professionals”

January 8, 2018
Bow, NH

The NH Legislature managed to meet one day this past week, but Thursday’s snowstorm and the bitter cold led to the cancellation of Thursday’s scheduled House session. Instead, the House will convene this Tuesday, January 9, to continue working through the remaining retained bills from 2017. Although an additional session day on Thursday, January 11 is possible, most expect the House to finish retained bills on the 9th and then commence committee hearings on 2018 bills.

SB 193 The big news this past week was House passage of [Senate Bill 193 as amended](#), the bill establishing so-called “education freedom savings accounts.” In simple terms, the bill takes funds normally distributed by the State to local school districts and places the money into accounts that can be used by parents who home-school or choose to send their children to private (including religious) schools. The NH Constitution explicitly prohibits expending public funds in support of religious schools, so the “education freedom savings accounts” are an attempt to bypass that prohibition. As one House member noted in debate, these accounts will act as a pass-through system, or in more direct language, as a “money-laundering” system to render public revenues into non-public money and thereby circumvent the state’s Constitution.

Funding for SB 193 will come directly from the state’s Education Trust Fund, thereby reducing the funds made available to local districts. The consequence will be less money to many districts, with estimates ranging well into the hundreds of thousands of dollars for districts such as Manchester and Nashua (look here for conservative cost estimates put forward by [Reaching Higher NH Analysis, December 6, 2017](#)). Local taxpayers will have to pick up the tab, meaning SB 193 will *increase local property taxes*, all to subsidize those who choose to home-school or opt for private schools. Moreover, the entire program, its assessment and accountability of how

funds are spent will NOT be handled by the State but by a private organization based in New York. Given that the organization's "take" will increase in direct proportion to the number of parents using these "Education freedom savings accounts," one can only wonder at the potential conflicts-of-interest when this same organization is charged with monitoring expenditures and assessing effectiveness.

SB 193 now goes to the House Finance Committee where a hearing has been scheduled for *Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at 1:30pm*. Ultimately, SB193 will come to the House floor for at least one more vote, this time to consider any amendments and the recommendation of the Finance Committee. So stay tuned for breaking news and action requests. You are encouraged to contact the members of the House Finance committee by sending a quick email by clicking this link [House Finance Committee](#) and let them know your concerns about SB 193 and ask them to recommend Inexpedient to Legislate.

Red Alert HB 438 Paycheck Deception There are two bills of great concern to AFT-NH coming to the floor for votes on Tuesday, January 9. The most important is [HB 438](#), which would prohibit public employers from withholding union dues, which is standard practice across the public sector. Withholding dues imposes no costs on public employers and is no different than withholding money on behalf of charitable organizations such as the United Way. The bill came before the Labor Committee in Spring 2017 but no testimony was offered in favor of the bill and the committee ultimately voted unanimously and in a bipartisan manner to recommend that the House kill the bill (Inexpedient to Legislate). It has been taken from the Consent calendar where it would have been expeditiously dealt with last week and will come up for debate and a vote this Tuesday. It is vitally important that you contact your legislator and urge a 'yes' vote to sustain the Labor Committee's unanimous and bipartisan recommendation. The bill performs no useful public service and is simply designed to punish public sector labor unions representing law enforcement officials, teachers, town, county and state employees. Again, please urge your representatives to sustain the Labor Committee's recommendation on HB 438 by taking this [One-Click Action](#).

HB 413 State Retirement Obligation Finally, [HB 413](#) will come to a vote on Tuesday in the House. As previously noted, this bill would require the State to begin meeting its promise to help contribute to the retirement system on behalf of municipal, town and school district employees. The NH House on February 15, 2017 voted Ought to Pass by an overwhelming vote of 267-83 and referred it on to the House Finance Committee. Funding for this did not occur in the state budget. When towns, counties and school districts joined the NH Retirement System, the State promised to pay 40% of the cost of contributions, but for the past six years, the State has paid 0% of the costs. Yes, nothing. HB 513 would have the State pay 15% to local communities which would be a great relief to local property taxpayers. The House Finance Committee has recommended Inexpedient to Legislate by a 17-9 vote. Yet this is the same Legislature that is somehow going to find money to make up the losses in local school districts stemming from SB 193? We hope HB 413 passes on Tuesday, but the bigger lesson is to not trust promises of any future payments by the Legislature, because it is a record of repeated broken promises. Perhaps a note to your legislators asking them to do their job and represent their local communities and provide some necessary property tax relief by supporting this bill

might be helpful. To email your representative, you can click [Contact Your Representative](#), find your town and send an email to your representative.

Stay warm and let's all enjoy the higher temperatures predicted for the end of the week. Our January thaw is on the way!

In Solidarity,

Douglas Ley
AFT-NH, President
dley@aft-nh.org
603 831 3661 (cell)
603 223 0747

For breaking news and other legislative information, please be sure to like us on Facebook at [AFT New Hampshire](#) or follow us on Twitter [@AFTNewHampshire](#) to receive the latest news.