



NH Legislation: How to engage in the process and influence change

Susan Paschell, The Dupont Group

March 23, 2019

Who are our policymakers?

- 424 members of the NH General Court – 400 in the House, 24 in the Senate – 3rd largest legislative body in the English-speaking world
- Two-year terms for all elected officials in NH, except for US Senate
- One third of the Legislature or about 135 members are new every two years
- This is a citizen legislature: members receive mileage and \$100 per year – so historically most were retired or owned their own small business
- Many House members elected in 2018 are younger and more diverse than in past years – and a lot of them have IDEAS!

How do you track legislation?

- There are between 900 and 1000 bills proposed each year – this year, there are more than 1100 (hence the reference to new members having ideas)
- The General Court website allows you to track LSRs (the titles of bills before they are drafted into bill form), individual bills, committee hearings, work sessions and floor action: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/>
- NHDES, other state agencies and many advocacy organizations follow specific issue areas and allow you to sign up for their legislative updates
- See the next page for a sample bill docket

Docket of HB44

Bill Title: (New Title) designating segments of the Oyster River as a protected river and exempting certain portions of the Oyster River from the provisions of the comprehensive shoreland protection act.

Official Docket of HB44.:

| Date | Body | Description |
|------------|------|--|
| 12/22/2010 | H | Introduced 1/5/2011 and Referred to Resources, Recreation and Development; 8 , PG.128 |
| 1/4/2011 | H | Public Hearing: 1/13/2011 11:00 AM LOB 305 |
| 1/5/2011 | H | ==CANCELLED== Executive Session: 1/20/2011 1:00 PM LOB 305 |
| 1/26/2011 | H | Subcommittee Work Session: 2/1/2011 3:00 PM LOB 305 |
| 2/1/2011 | H | Subcommittee Work Session: 2/8/2011 3:15 PM LOB 305 |
| 2/15/2011 | H | Executive Session: 1/15/2011 LOB 305 3:00 PM or Following House Session |
| 2/16/2011 | H | Committee Report: Ought to Pass with Amendment #0120h(NT) for Feb 23 16-0; CC); HC 15 , PG.272 |
| 2/16/2011 | H | Proposed Committee Amendment #2011-0120h (New Title); HC 15 , PG.2 |
| 2/23/2011 | H | Amendment #0120h (New Title) Adopted, VV; HJ 21 , PG.462-463 |
| 2/23/2011 | H | Ought to Pass with Amendment #0120h(NT): MA VV; HJ 21 , PG.462-463 |
| 3/16/2011 | S | Introduced and Referred to Energy and Natural Resources; SJ 10 , Pg.169 |
| 3/31/2011 | S | Hearing: 4/7/11, Room 102, LOB, 9:10 a.m.; SC18 |
| 4/28/2011 | S | Committee Report: Ought to Pass, 5/4/11; SC22 |
| 5/4/2011 | S | Ought to Pass, MA, VV; OT3rdg; SJ 15 , Pg.300 |
| 5/4/2011 | S | Passed by Third Reading Resolution; SJ 15 , Pg.311 |
| 5/18/2011 | S | Enrolled Bill Amendment #1804e Adopted; SJ 18 , Pg.361 |
| 5/18/2011 | H | Enrolled Bill Amendment #2011-1804e Adopted; HJ 44 , PG.1565-1566 |
| 5/25/2011 | S | Enrolled; SJ 19 , Pg.395 |
| 5/25/2011 | H | Enrolled; HJ 46 , PG.1609 |
| 6/8/2011 | H | Signed by Governor 06/02/2011; Effective 06/02/2011; Chapter 0118 |

How do you propose a bill?

- To proactively submit legislation or propose an amendment, you need to first find a sponsor: all bills and amendments must have a House or Senate member as sponsor – even the Governor must find a legislator to put in his bills for him
- Decide strategically whether bringing a bill in through the House or Senate makes the most sense – that will determine your sponsor
- Research any precedence for your subject through legislative history and find out what our neighboring states do, if possible
- Work with your sponsor to refine language - State agency staff or legislative staff may be able to work with you, with the sponsor's permission
- It can take 10 years to pass a new and significant law – don't lose faith!

How do you move a piece of legislation forward?

- Assess legislative leaders' and Governor's support first – if there is going to be a roadblock or veto that can't be overcome, you need to know that up front
- Identify groups and individuals who are likely to support or oppose the proposal
- Ask those likely to support to meet and collaborate
- Develop a communications plan – op eds, LTES, social media, etc.
- Develop a plan for speakers/attendees for committee hearings and subcommittee work
- Develop talking points and testimony

Where is the action?

- There are 21 standing committees in the House and 12 in the Senate
- Every bill introduced is referred to a committee and has a public hearing, unlike other states
- Most committees hold work sessions or assign subcommittees to work on bills that are complex and/or about which questions are raised at the hearing
- When committees can't agree, a split report may go to the floor and the committee majority and minority will present their recommendations
- That said, majority committee reports are not often overturned on the floor

How are committees influenced?

- Your bill sponsor may not serve on the committee the bill will go to – so identify champions on the committee and provide them with talking points/background on the bill for the public hearing
- Prepare written and oral testimony and line up speakers for the hearing - keep both concise
- Bring in speakers who are real people who can state the impact of legislation on them, their community, their business, etc.
- Make sure speakers don't read written testimony aloud to committee: best tactic is paraphrasing it, handing in enough copies for all members and answering questions
- Connect with other stakeholders who share your organization's position and work with them

Who are the players?

- Lobbyists registered under RSA 15:
 - Contract lobbyists
 - Association lobbyists
 - In-house lobbyists at large businesses and employers
 - Non-profit lobbyists
 - Out of state lobbyists
- State agency staff
- Citizen volunteers

Example of a recent stakeholder process

- In June 2018, advocates for the community mental health centers and the community health centers identified the health care workforce shortage as their priority for the 2019 session
- The 2018 session had seen over 50 bills on the workforce issue but no cohesive approach and therefore few successes
- To avoid a Survivor Island scenario at the end of the 2019 budget deliberations, where organizations compete for scarce State funding, an omnibus bill was developed
- As the group grew from 2 organizations to 2 dozen, bi-weekly meetings were held from August – December to develop SB 308, sponsored by Sen. Cindy Rosenwald

Recent stakeholder process, continued

- The primary purpose of the bill is to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for health care providers across the board
- A letter describing the need and the sections of the bill was finalized in January - 48 organizations have now signed on
- The theory is that a rising tide will lift all boats
- While some members of the group will advocate for separate legislation and additional rate increases, the intent is to keep as much of SB 308 intact as possible through the budget process
- Stay tuned to find out how we do!