



December 4, 2020

Your State House

Concord, New Hampshire



To my constituents in [Allenstown](#), [Epsom](#), & [Pittsfield](#):

This week, I was sworn in for my seventh term in the State House. We met outside, to have enough room for social distancing, at UNH rather than in Concord. Over 100 members chose not to attend, believing that those measures were not enough to protect them. Three or four members had been reported to have Covid – fewer than one would expect, based on current positivity numbers – and they also stayed away (perfectly appropriately!) So 270 of us were signed in, including all from the district; we elected Republican Dick Hinch as Speaker, Paul Smith of Epsom as House Clerk, and JB Cullen as Sergeant at arms. With the new Senate, we re-elected Bill Gardner as secretary of state and Monica Mezzapelle as treasurer. All these elections were un-contested; even the Democrat leader was not nominated for Speaker, probably because he wasn't present.

I was in the “freedom” (unmasked) section again, along with about a third of the Republicans. Being outside *and* socially distanced made masks totally redundant, except as sanitation theater.

The only controversy was over adopting the House rules. Normally we adopt last year's rules and work out any amendments before mid-January. This time, the 2017-18 rules were adopted – going back to the last Republican majority and backing out the controversial changes adopted this session (banning guns in the House chamber, mandating in person sexual harassment training, and so forth.) This change was debated but passed on a 183-60 vote. A suggested amendment to require the Speaker to implement remote committee and House meetings was debated and failed, 56-182. After adopting the rules and four more routine

resolutions by voice votes, a motion to end the state of emergency failed, 95-137. We will meet January 6, also at UNH (I hope inside!) to swear in the governor and council and introduce all the bills submitted.

I was appointed chair of Executive Departments & Administration (ED&A), the committee I've been assigned to for all but one term. I'm recruiting, because it's not a very glamorous committee, but we'll be getting a lot of important bills this year. For one, all the suggested changes to the emergency powers laws! And the usual changes to licensing laws, the state pension system, the rulemaking procedures, and whatever else the Speaker chooses to assign.



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