



March 12, 2021

Your State House

Concord, New Hampshire



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

This week, my committee heard HB 141, which requires the department of environmental services to track, in a publicly-accessible database, all uses of class B fire-fighting foam – used on flaming liquids, very effective but contains PFAS chemicals that have contaminated some water supplies. The biggest issue was that the bill would require all fire departments that have used these foams at any time report when, where and how much. The experienced fire-fighters on the committee knew that this would require digging through 60+ years of reports that might or might not have this data, and were paper, if anything. The bill mentioned that the department might need additional staff to set up and maintain the database – but was silent on the effort the fire departments would need to gather the data, in 120 days, no less! Current law already requires reporting use of these foams. After some discussion, the committee agreed that we couldn't support the bill. I met my fire chief at the polls Tuesday, and he confirmed that these foams are rarely used nowadays, and that digging up records of previous usage would be difficult to impossible.

We also finished the hearing on HB 457, on the legislative youth advisory council; the sponsor and the legislative member of the council both asked us to retain it, so we did. After some debate, we also voted to retain HB 84, on Ona Judge. The committee was skeptical about placing another day on the calendar, but interested in learning more about her and willing to consider naming the terminal at Pease after her (using her preferred name) – or some other New Hampshire celebrity!

HB 405, on out of state applicants for occupational licenses, was unanimously voted to kill. I love the idea, but this bill was retained last year, then came back without changes. The committee thinks a profession by profession approach makes more sense than the broad brush approach of HB 405.

HB 218, deleting the state license for itinerant vendors, had been amended to also delete that for hawkers & peddlers (from HB 217.) **Local** licenses are still an option – for instance, Laconia licenses the booths at Bike Week. We debated it, then voted on party lines to pass it. The deciding factor for one cautious Republican was that the secretary of state asks applicants about criminal history, but grants the license with or without a criminal record!

We also voted on party lines to kill HB 209, licensing music therapists. Besides the issue of creating another license just so that yet another tiny, self-defined profession could collect Medicaid payments, the bill was lacking any penalties for violating its provisions, any method of disciplining errant music therapists, and even any rulemaking authority.

The special committee on redistricting met for the first time this week, and we learned that the census numbers to actually do the redistricting will not be available until September. We talked about the process, and I pointed out the problem with our districts: the New Hampshire constitution requires every town large enough to merit a representative have one of its own, but the federal constitution requires every vote to count equally. So because Epsom was just enough larger than Pittsfield, the two towns were combined into one district, plus the floterial. It's a balancing act between the two mandates, and we need to agree on how to apply them. This committee will be starting process



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discussions in April, and actual redistricting in the fall.

Friday, all the representatives in Merrimack county (well, we were all invited; 33 of the 45 showed up, including myself and Representative Allard from Pittsfield) met to review and approve the budget. First we discussed a new contract with the International Chemical Workers, which represents the workers at the county nursing home. This had a slight revision to the step structure, a 1% cost of living increase this year and a flat payment next year; minor changes to insurance and health benefits, and, importantly, an end to “free healthcare for life,” that is medical coverage for retirees. Although current employees are grandfathered, new hires will not receive this increasingly expensive and risky benefit. It was approved, 31-1.



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We unanimously authorized the county to refinance some bonds; lower interest rates can save us almost \$500,000/year. The budget was discussed briefly; last year the county had recruiting problems and was unable to fill all positions, so there was a substantial underrun. This was used to minimize the amount raised by taxes, resulting in a 1% decrease! With that and the increased property values, we can anticipate a small decrease in the county tax rate this year.