



June 25, 2021

# *Your State House* Concord, New Hampshire



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

This week, the House and Senate met for the last scheduled session for this year (a veto session is possible.) With minimal debate and voice votes, we passed 30 bills, including three from my committee. The real action was on the budget, of course. HB 1, the actual dollar allotments, had lengthy debate before passing, 208-172. This was party line, with one member of each crossing over. It was interesting that the opponents seemed convinced that the state tax cuts -business, rooms & meals, and interest & dividends – would only benefit “the rich” and out of state businesses. Well, yes, they get the biggest dollar amounts because they pay the most, but a 20% cut in interest & dividends benefits every retiree living off their savings. And the cut to the statewide property tax will show up on everyone's property tax bills.

HB 2, the budget trailer bill, generated even more debate (21 speakers!) because it included a number of controversial policy positions. I was pleased that Epsom will get full funding for its kindergarten program, and that school building aid (Allenstown is high on the list) is included; wastewater and water treatment programs are also funded. The issues debated were tax cuts, education freedom accounts, a ban on late term abortions, banning teaching critical race theory, changes to the governor's emergency powers, and a family and medical leave program for state employees. I support all but the last; the emergency powers reform was fine but incomplete (my committee has a retained bill to work on improvements.) I don't like the family & medical leave program, but it's not as bad as some versions (no income tax!) since it's voluntary for everyone except state employees (they get it for free.) The budget passed, 198-181,

with nine Republicans (none from this district) joining all Democrats in opposition.

The only other bill that generated messages from constituents was SB 154, a ban on enforcing federal gun laws; it was tabled, 354-19, because the language was unclear and it also might affect other police operations in current law. I expect a cleaner bill to be ready in January.

HB 98, which moved the state primary election to the first Tuesday in August, passed 192-183, with no real debate. HB 326, clarifying the duty of town and city clerks to provide lists of absentee ballot applicants to candidates on request, passed 208-166 with no debate. HB 334, allowing carrying a loaded firearm on an OHRV or snowmobile, was debated on the Senate addition, which deleted the state gun line. This supported the House position on SB 141, and also eliminated the funding for the gun line employees. It passed, 212-159.

HB 542, on the protection of religious liberty, was debated on the grounds that some religious organizations are not “real” religions! It passed, 205-158, with James Allard and two other Republicans joining all but six Democrats. HB 566, on minutes of non-public sessions, clarified that the vote to seal minutes of a non-public session must take place in a public session. After a brief debate where the opponents claimed it was unnecessary, it passed 219-158.

We also took up the governor's veto of HB 184. This bill had passed the House and Senate without attention, so many of us had not noticed it. HB 184 forbids the use of personal watercraft (jet skis) in some areas of Rye harbor and the New Castle back channel, and the governor vetoed it as a barrier to public access in an area that does not see heavy use by these watercraft. The speaker in support of the bill was a very entitled local who assumed that the



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votes indicated unanimous support and everyone was opposed to indiscriminate use of personal watercraft. The veto was not overridden, 173-182, with 2/3 required.

All committee work is now suspended for summer vacation – except statutory committees (like JLCAR) – and the redistricting committee. We are meeting next week to discuss ground rules – I hope to convince them that going beyond +/- 5% is acceptable for House districts. We have a constitutional provision that requires each town, as far as possible, have its own representative; it's the limit on deviation for the floterial that drove Epsom and Pittsfield into the same base district. Similar results elsewhere in the state have caused a lot of discontent with the current district plan, so I think we should reconsider that limit.



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