



# Your State House

## Concord, New Hampshire



April 1, 2022

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

This week my committee continued with Senate bills. SB 53, making assessor certification and discipline records open to the public; SB 220, a study committee on mental health professional licensing; and SB 221, updating the names of some positions in the department of corrections, were all presented without opposition, discussed, and recommended to pass. SB 218, declaring October 13 as metastatic breast cancer day, and SB 219, declaring September as kinship care awareness month, each had no support other than the sponsor, but generated a fury of debate. We finally voted to kill them, 12-5 and 11-6!

SB 274, prohibiting project labor agreements in state construction contracts, brought out the interested parties - the room was full and testimony, some in favor but mostly opposed, took over two hours. SB 382, on licensure for telehealth services, has generated a flood of emails in opposition but no one appeared at the hearing. The supporters claim it merely clarifies existing law, but we'll have to think about it. SB 333, licensure of case management service providers, brought out a massive case of miscommunication between the case management agencies that provide community support for Medicaid patients that qualify for a nursing home, but would rather stay out; case management agencies for the developmentally disabled; and the department of health & human services. The hearing lasted over an hour and devolved into reports of rumors and assumptions as to what each other intended. Unfortunately our deadline for all Senate bills is next week, so we'll have to think fast!

SB 225, on the other hand, simply repeals the

requirement that licensed auctioneers post a \$25,000 bond. This requirement has been in statute for decades, but a bond has never been used to settle a dispute. SB 226, having the department of personnel set up a recruitment and retention program for state employees, was strongly supported by the department of corrections, which has a major problem hiring and keeping people – and the manpower shortages end up forcing overtime, so more employees get burnt out and leave. This bill has the fiscal committee approve any appropriations, and terminates the program at the start of the next budget, so it's more of a pilot program.

We also heard a non-germane amendment to SB 330, which added an OPLC oversight committee.

We met in session to vote on all Senate bills going to a second committee. The session started at 9 am to allow time for the bagpipes to celebrate “tartan day” which commemorates our Scottish heritage – and for our hearing to recover!

SB 458, closing the Sununu youth center and building a secure 6-bed juvenile facility, was debated on the committee amendment, which added language from a previous bill, banning youth incarceration for property crimes. It passed, 182-150; I was on the losing side as were Representatives Allard and Klose. A floor amendment cleaning up some language failed, 160-171, and the bill passed, 244-88.

SB 291, creating a study committee on unmarried cohabitants, was debated and killed, 179-143. SB 306, increasing the penalties for various vehicle violations, if a mobile phone was in use, had a short debate before passing, 201-132. I was in the minority since I believe distracted driving is distracted driving, regardless of the source of the distraction.



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SB 401 has three separate sections: local highway aid, funds for local police to buy body cams, and dash cams for DOT vehicles. The debate was about the dash cams, and their intrusion into privacy; I wasn't convinced that a dash cam recording vehicles on a public road was a severe invasion of privacy, and being able to identify the car that cut off the snowplow would be useful...It passed, 241-93. SB 381, establishing a law enforcement conduct review committee, was tabled before debate.

SB 381, establishing an advocate for special education, passed without comment. SB 420, an extraordinary need grant program, provides additional funding for property-poor towns. It also passed, 261-71, without comment.

At this point, a member moved to take HB 172, creating a state climate action plan, off the table. This was fairly futile since it would take a 2/3 vote to do anything with it – deadlines have passed. The motion failed, 152-181. Another minority member moved to take HB 1506, creating a “clean energy accelerator fund,” off the table, which failed 147-184. Both votes were essentially party line, with the same dissenters.

SB 242, changing some election officials' duties at the polls when they were on the ballot, had a very dull debate before passing, 176-151. I voted for it largely because I knew the two speakers and trusted one more than the other! SB 365, on absentee ballot outer envelopes, had just a few remarks before being killed, 184-146. SB 418, on verification of voter affidavits, had some debate since it requires same day registration voters who have no identification to use a “challenge” ballot that is held for a week for them to produce their identification. Most same day registrants are legitimate, but being able to walk in, register, and

vote with no identification is an invitation to fraud. This process will at least make it more difficult to vote fraudulently! The bill passed, 180-154.

SB 425, creating an \$11+ million election information portal, was killed without comment. SB 427, allowing people to get absentee ballots when they can't vote in person due to “illness or other medical condition” had only a few comments before being killed, 183-151.

SB 267, establishing the upland invasive species program and funding a staff coordinator, passed without comment. From my committee, SB 438, making “buy American” steel a state policy, was debated before passing, 170-151. I voted against it, as did Representatives Allard and Pitaro; Representative Klose was in favor.

SB 403, creating a special Women, Infants and Children program in farmer's markets, was debated and tabled, 168-158. It seemed that the total benefit was at most \$30/year, which isn't enough to change people's behavior. SB 407, expanding Medicaid to cover mother and child for a year after birth (current coverage is 60 days) was amended to sunset when the federal subsidy runs out, 179-148. It then passed 212-117; I was the only representative in the district to vote against accepting that “free money.”

SB 416, on behavioral health treatment for children placed out of their homes, had no recommendation from the committee, and no debate, but it passed on a voice vote. HB 430, a massive rewrite of the laws governing the department of health and human services, was amended without discussion (mostly to delete sections.) The debate that followed seemed to concentrate on the size and complexity of the bill; it was largely minor clean up to existing laws. It passed, 233-90. SB 444, on prevention and treatment of childhood adverse



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events, passed without comment.

SB 459, on violence prevention in health care settings, had a floor amendment to delete the expansion of warrantless arrest power, since the definitions were overly broad and the committee wasn't able to evaluate them properly. After some debate, this amendment passed, 182-146, and the bill passed, 264-64. I supported the amendment, and, after some reassurance from the speakers, the bill.

SB 278, using some extra funds from the Rye Harbor project to complete the Piscataqua River Turning basin, passed with out discussion. SB 346, a study for a pier on Hampton Beach, had a floor amendment to make the effective date "on passage:" that passed on a voice vote as did the bill.

SB 240, state senate districts, was not tabled, 143-170, then debated. I spoke in favor, and the bill passed 172-149; as expected, all Democrats were opposed, as were three Republicans. (they didn't like their new Senate districts, in one case because it was the same as the current one...) SB 241 was the executive council districts; a Democratic amendment was debated and rejected, 145-175, then the bill passed, 174-146.

SB 442, allowing suspension of vehicle registration for unpaid tolls (including from other states) was debated and passed, 218-94. I was opposed since the methods employed seemed an invasion of privacy.

Friday, the Redistricting Committee met on SB 200, village districts in Haverhill. The sponsor introduced it, then confirmed that the problem had been settled in a different bill, so we could use it as a Congressional map. The committee chair presented the governor's map, without enthusiasm;

she said it could be improved. All but one of the people testifying said it was better than the House map, but "it could be better." The deviation was over 1200 people, but several people pointed out that it could be brought down to an acceptable level simply by swapping Epsom and Loudon. The testifiers continued with their concerns about splitting counties and economic areas; most were also concerned about "competitive districts" but nobody had a clear definition of competitive.

As I've mentioned before, your determination of "competitive" depends on which elections you are considering: both the year and the office can give varying results. In 2020, for example, President Biden won the state by 7% or so, but Governor Sununu was re-elected with about 65% of the vote. Both Democratic congressional candidates were re-elected, but the Executive Council went 4-1 Republican, and we got the majority in both the House and the Senate. You'll get very different classifications if you use the Congressional or Gubernatorial positions!



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