



# STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

## Executive Council

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### Annual Report from

### District Three Executive Councilor Janet Stevens – January 2023

It is an honor to serve as the Executive Councilor for District Three and to represent 266,000 New Hampshire citizens residing in 32 towns and cities. Unique to our nation, the five-member Executive Council has a myriad of responsibilities including approving receipts and expenditures of state funds over \$10,000, vetting gubernatorial nominees to serve in state government, serving on the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intramodal Transportation, conducting hearings for judicial nominees, overseeing federal relief funds allocated to New Hampshire, and confirming hundreds of volunteers to serve on the state's 300 plus State Boards and Commissions.

The Executive Council met for 23 scheduled meetings with the Governor to carry out the duties of confirming appointments and passing state contracts. This past year, the **Executive Council reviewed and approved 2,229 contracts** and passed several billion dollars of state contracts, including more than \$1.37 billion dollars for New Hampshire's Medicaid Care Management program. **As part of this process, more than 388 contracts worth \$430.4 million dollars, were approved and awarded to local government, non-profit organizations, and businesses in District Three.**

**Housing availability, affordability and stability** limitations in New Hampshire have intensified during the pandemic for both owner occupied and rental housing. Severe constraints on supply resulted in a 17% increase in median home sales costs and the statewide rental unit vacancy rate of 0.3-.0.5% drove up rents by 24%. The Executive Council approved 100% of housing support and stability funds which included **InVest NH, Emergency Rental Assistance, and Homeowners Assistance Fund.**

- **The \$100 million dollar InVest NH** program will assist and accelerate the construction of multiunit workforce housing and provide funding for municipalities to create zoning and other regulations that promote workforce housing. For 2022, 30 statewide projects were approved which will create **1,500 units of new workforce housing upon completion.** I was the sole Executive Councilor to consistently support the InVest NH program.
- **Emergency Rental Assistance** has provided financial support since March 2021 for New Hampshire residents who have experienced financial hardship due to COVID, are at risk of homelessness, or have a household income below 80% average median income. To date, the program has kept close to **30,000 New Hampshire residents in their homes.** Since the start of the Public Health Emergency **\$297 million has been disbursed to renters and/or landlords in the state. Of the \$133.3 million disbursed statewide in 2022, District Three received \$35,208,495.**
- **NH Homeowners Assistance Fund** provides homeowners who have been affected by a reduction in income or increase in expenses due to COVID, with funding for mortgage assistance, property charges and utilities. The Executive Council approved the initial funding amount of **\$40 million dollars of which \$34.9 million remains** (February 2023). I support the proposed maximum benefit increase per household from \$20,000 to \$40,000. Information and applications can be found at [www.nhhfa.org/haf](http://www.nhhfa.org/haf).

**Utility rates** in New Hampshire reached historic highs in 2022. Three of the state's electric utility companies, which rely on liquid natural gas (LNG) for 25% of electricity generated, increased rates from 70% to 160% during the year. These rate spikes are attributed to global volatility, inflation, increased LNG costs, and energy demands as the economy recovered from pandemic. Home heating fuel reached a record high of \$6 per gallon in New Hampshire. To support New Hampshire residents state-wide, **\$71 million dollars in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** funds were approved for acceptance and expenditure by the Executive Council. In addition, **\$35 million** in state General Funds, were used for the **State Emergency Fuel Assistance Program and State Supplemental Electric Benefit Program in 2022 of which \$15 million was earmarked to District Three.**

**The Security Action for Education (SAFE)** grant program, funded through the School Infrastructure Fund, provided two rounds of funding for school security improvement projects for public and private schools in three distinct categories – surveillance, access control and emergency alerting. **District Three received \$2.7 million dollars in funding for school security improvements at 76 unique schools in thirty one of the thirty-two municipalities in the district.** When the balance of the \$30 million dollar School Infrastructure fund dropped to \$3 million dollars, I petitioned the Governor and the Commissioners of Education and Public Safety to prioritize school safety and requested a follow up. On June 7, 2022, Governor Sununu allocated an additional \$10 million to the School Infrastructure Fund.

**District Three received more than \$67.8 million dollars** in grants and low interest loans to ensure residents have access to clean reliable drinking water, fund wastewater infrastructure projects and other water pollution control projects and assess coastal resiliency. Use of the state's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF), Drinking Water Ground Water Trust Fund (DWGWTF), Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) for Stormwater and Wastewater projects were blended with American Rescue Plan Act funds (ARPA) to expand capacity and maximize return on investments for public and private entities. Funded projects included MS4 compliance (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems), wastewater treatment facility improvements, PFAS remediation (public water systems, schools, and modular home parks), replacement of waterlines and mains, municipal water storage tank replacements, stormwater and coastal resiliency, cybersecurity systems.

**The Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT)** comprised of the five Executive Councilors and the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, is charged with updating New Hampshire's Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP) every two years. District Three has 63 separate road, bridge, active transportation, and airport improvement projects in the TYP which are fully funded at \$655 million dollars, which includes the approval of \$418 million dollars by the Executive Council on December 8, 2021. The TYP includes \$121 million dollars in debt service for the benefits of the I-93 expansion projects which brings the total project funding to \$776 million dollars. **For federal fiscal year 2022, nine major infrastructure projects in District Three were advertised for construction. An additional thirty-eight projects have active preliminary engineering and sixteen of these projects will be advertised for construction in 2023** (federal fiscal year).

The council also met on **12 separate occasions to conduct hearings for 10 gubernatorial nominees to serve as judges and justices within the Circuit and Superior Court, as well as commissioners of state agencies.** The Executive Council approved thirteen new judges to serve in the Circuit court system and three justices to serve in the Superior court. Filling these vacancies was essential to addressing the month-long backlogs in hearings and jury trials exacerbated by the COVID -19 pandemic.

Please contact my office at any time I can be of assistance to you. Sincerely, Executive Councilor Janet Stevens