



Your State House Concord, New Hampshire



June 30, 2023

To my constituents in Allenstown, Dunbarton, Epsom, & Hooksett,

This week, the House met to finalize the position on 18 bills. Twelve, including all the ones from my committee, were approved on voice votes without debate. SB 61, on setbacks from landfills to surface waters, was heatedly debated on procedural issues, the ability of the department of environmental services to determine proper rules for landfill siting, the ability of activists to influence the rulemaking process, and even the \$200,000 appropriation for a technical study. It failed, 134-238, non-partisan as far as I could tell. I voted for it, but then I'm enough of an engineer to strongly doubt (as one speaker claimed) that a day's public hearing would provide, for free, the technical data needed to develop proper setback rules!

HB 281, which the Senate had amended to hold five different energy regulation bills, included partisan bills from both sides (allowing municipal net metering groups to cross town lines, eliminating a power generation plan – no longer necessary as the utilities buy power now – and repealing the energy efficiency board.) The debate was rather briefer than usual for utility bills, and concentrated on procedural changes to the site evaluation committee. It passed, 250-121.

HB 75, creating districts for the Strafford county commissioners, had a totally partisan debate. The Democrats appreciated that the current at large elections allowed Dover and Rochester (plus Durham, Rollinsford, and Somersworth) to consistently elect three Democrat commissioners, while the smaller towns, which are more Republican, were outvoted. I expect that with 40% of the county Republican, they've created one sure

Democrat seat, one likely Republican and one toss-up. The bill was not tabled, 185-186, and passed 186-185.

HB 275, on schools approved for tuition programs, was also a partisan debate. The bill allows a school district – one that does not offer all grades in its own schools – to approve agreements that don't cover the full cost of tuition at some schools, as long as at least one option exists that doesn't require payment. The opponents were upset that this would allow some parents to get taxpayer support for sending their children to expensive private schools! The bill passed, 187-185.

HB 315, ending the “gay panic” defense, had a rather heated debate showing a lot of confusion about what the bill would actually accomplish. I decided it was a feel good bill that wouldn't accomplish much, and we weren't sure exactly what that would be, and voted against it; I lost badly as the bill passed, 271-98.

HB 536, ensuring charter schools to negotiate with school districts to buy or lease unused school buildings, also had a partisan debate. The opposition seemed to have forgotten that charter schools are public schools, and allowing them to use surplus buildings was a public benefit! This bill passed, 186-185, after the Speaker broke a tie.

Ten other bills were not resolved in committee of conference, including two from my committee. HB 461, on penalizing municipalities that converted full time leadership positions to “part time” so that they could hire retirees (saving the pension contributions, if nothing else,) had been changed to a study committee by the Senate. The House was opposed to the idea of formally studying this topic, so the committee agreed to disagree.



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HB 532, on regulation of music therapists, had actually reached agreement on the fairly minor changes and additions made by the Senate. However, I was on the conference, and I decided not to sign off because I didn't want to create a brand new license (and governing board, and rules...) for the thirty odd music therapists working in the state. If nothing else, the governor would be likely to veto the bill since he was trying to eliminate licenses, not add new ones. In any case, I didn't sign it off, and was not replaced on the committee.

I also met on one of our retained bills, HB 274, on the administrative rulemaking procedure. Unfortunately, the sponsor was unable to attend the meeting, so we didn't really learn the intent of the bill, beyond the obvious desire to have the legislature more involved. I'd already taken from the bill, and added to HB 358, notification of rulemaking actions and formal response to public comments. These were two changes that I thought were important and easy to implement, but I'm not sure what's left in HB 274.



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