

League of Women Voters NH **Legislative Alert for Feb. 12-14**, with peeks ahead for several major bills in the following weeks. If you have trouble reading this in your email, you may download the pdf from the League's website: http://lwvnh.org/files/legislative_alert_feb.12-14.pdf

For those new to the legislative process, my note this week is about caucuses, at the end of this email.

The House and Senate will meet in Joint Session on Thursday, **February 14**, 2019, at 10:00 a.m. to hear **Governor Sununu's budget address**. Following the budget address, the House and Senate will each meet in regular voting session. (The Governor's speech will be covered on NHPR and will be live-streamed from the state house.)

The House will also meet in session Wed. Feb. 27, possibly 28 if they don't finish all their bills.

Below are some interesting or priority bills on the HOUSE agenda for Feb. 14. The committee's recommendation is given, and a short explanation in quotation marks taken from the "blurb" written by the committee. Here is the full list of bills, with explanations by the committees: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/calendars/2019/HC_11.pdf

HB 170, requiring a **civics examination** as a high school requirement.

INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE committee Vote 18-1. NH "already requires a course in high school civics. Requiring a particular civics examination limits local school districts' ability to develop assessments that fit their curriculum." *League supports ITL for the reason given by the committee.*

HB 297, requires that any **political advertisements** made on behalf of PACs or political advocacy organizations contain the same name and address on the ads as the entity registered with the Secretary of State. OUGHT TO PASS. Vote 19-0.

HB 429, establishing a committee to study ways to improve **civic engagement** in NH. OUGHT TO PASS. Vote 19-0 *League is happy with these unanimous Election Law committee recommendations.*

HB 176-FN-A, grants for **school building aid** and making an appropriation therefor.

OUGHT TO PASS. unanimous committee recommendation. "This bill amends the current maximum expenditures for school building aid grants from a maximum of \$50 million per year, including debt service payments, to a minimum expenditure of no less than \$50 million per year. During the past decade... the state building aid program has been in a moratorium....The building aid program provides 30% to 60% of local construction costs, and without state assistance, many municipalities are left with old, inefficient, and costly schools to operate...."

HB 497-FN-A-LOCAL, increasing payment by the state of a portion of **retirement system**

contributions of political subdivision employers [teachers, police, firefighters, etc.]. MAJORITY: OUGHT TO PASS. Vote 15-5 MINORITY: OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT. *League did not hear this bill in committee and takes no position. Those concerned by the burden on local property taxes by earlier state decisions that reduced the state's share of retirement costs should read the descriptions on p. 15 of the House Calendar.*

HB 185-FN-A-LOCAL, **reducing the rate of the interest and dividends tax** and repealing the tax in 5 years. MAJORITY: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE. Vote 11-8 MINORITY: OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT. Explanation on p. 20 of the calendar. Majority concern is that "...the bill provides no offsetting revenue sources to fund government with the phased in reductions to the I&D tax, a major source of state revenue."

Below are a few of the bills to be voted on by the SENATE on Feb. 14: complete list and more explanation of each can be found in the Senate calendar for this week:

http://gencourt.state.nh.us/Senate/calendars_journals/calendars/2019/sc%2010.pdf

SB 268-FN, providing in-state tuition rates at any university system of NH institution for any person registered to vote in this state. Recommended INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE, Vote 5-0. "The fiscal impact to the University System would be a loss of \$140 million dollars. The committee found that this impact could not be absorbed by the University System without a negative impact on the current residents of NH." *Well duh, this is what League thought upon reading this bill last week.*

SB 153 establishing state holidays for biennial state primary elections and quadrennial presidential primary elections. Inexpedient to Legislate, Vote 4-0.

[SB 1-FN](#), relative to **family and medical leave**. Ought to Pass with Amendment, Vote 4-2.

Scheduled House and Senate public hearings on bills:

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12-- Lots of work sessions and executive sessions today.

HOUSE ELECTION LAW, Room 308, LOB

10:00 a.m. Subcommittee work session on HB 531, relative to the delivery of absentee ballots cast by elderly or disabled citizens. *League supports this bill.*

11:00 a.m. **Executive session on several League priority bills:**

HB 105-FN, relative to domicile residency, voter registration, and investigation of voter verification letters [would overturn SB3 from 2017] *League supports HB 105!!*

HB 106, relative to the terms "resident," "inhabitant," "residence," and "residency." [would overturn HB1264 from last session] *League supports HB 106!!*

HB 535-FN-L, early voting for persons aged 60 or older;

HB 541, allocating electoral college electors based on the National Popular Vote. *League supports*

HB 554, relative to the duty of the moderator to verify the device count;

HB 556, allowing municipalities to process absentee ballots prior to election day;

HB 651, allowing the use of campaign funds for child care expenses;

HB 452, establishing a commission on the first-in-the-nation presidential primary;

HB 345, relative to certification of devices for the electronic counting of ballots.

2:00 p.m. or immediately following the close of the executive session. Subcommittee work session on HB 408-L, postponement of town meetings and local elections.

HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, LOB 204,

10:00 a.m. Full committee work session on HB 481-FN-A-L, **legalization & regulation of marijuana** (public hearing was last week)

1:30 p.m. HB 726-FN, the **secure psychiatric unit** and making an appropriation therefor.

HOUSE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND ELDERLY AFFAIRS, Room 104, LOB

10:00 a.m. Subcommittee work session on HB 610-FN, treatment **alternatives to opioids**;

HB 638, requiring health care providers to provide an **opioid disclosure form** to patients for whom an opioid is prescribed.

1 pm in LOB 205. Executive session on above and some other bills

HOUSE RESOURCES, RECREATION AND DEVELOPMENT, Room 305, LOB

10:00 a.m. [HB 261](#), requiring the commissioner of the dept of environmental services to revise rules relative to arsenic contamination in **drinking water**

HOUSE COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Room 302, LOB

10:00 a.m. Subcommittee work session on a number of healthcare bills, including [HB 604](#), establishing a commission to assess benefits and costs of a “**health care for all**” program for NH. Exec session scheduled for 2 pm today.

SENATE EDUCATION LOB LOB rm 103 **Education funding**

9:55 a.m. [SB 266-FN](#), funds kindergarten pupils same as other grades, puts keno revenues in the Education Trust Fund, and restores the school building aid program.

SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES Room 103, State House

9:00 a.m. [SB 76](#), prohibition of **offshore oil and natural gas exploration**.

10:00 a.m. SB 287-FN, requiring the commissioner of the dept of environmental services to revise rules relative to perfluorinated chemical contamination in **drinking water**.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

SENATE ELECTION LAW LOB 102

9:30 [SB 304](#) “establishes a fund to provide campaign financing for eligible candidates for governor and executive councilor and makes an appropriation to the fund. Candidates qualify for financing by collecting a requisite number of qualifying contributions, limiting the size of private contributions, and complying with other provisions of the public financing law. The bill also establishes a voter-owned elections commission to administer the fund.” This is a major **campaign finance reform bill**. Lots of details involved, but this would be a first step to reduce the influence of big money in state elections. *League supports!*

HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, Rooms 210-211, LOB **Firearms violence prevention**

1:00 p.m. [HB 109-FN](#), requiring **background checks** for commercial firearms sales. “requires commercial firearms sales or transfers in this state to be subject to a criminal background check and provides a criminal penalty for a violation. The bill excludes private, noncommercial sales or transfers between individuals, provided neither individual is prohibited from owning or possessing a firearm”

2:30 p.m. [HB 514-FN](#), imposing a **waiting period** (7 business days) between the purchase and delivery of a firearm. *League’s national position supports sensible gun laws like these to reduce firearms violence.*

HOUSE EDUCATION, Rooms 210-211, LOB

9:00 a.m. [HB 101](#), allows a **school district**, school administrative unit, or chartered public school to adopt and **enforce a policy regulating firearms**, firearms components, ammunition, firearms supplies, or knives within its jurisdiction.

10:00 a.m. [HB 564](#), relative to **possession of firearms in safe school zones**.

1:00 p.m. Room 207, LOB Subcommittee work session on four **state funding of education** bills.

HOUSE ELECTION LAW, Room 308, LOB

11:00 a.m. Executive session on a number of important bills including **NPV, absentee voting, state primary date change, and ranked choice voting**.

HOUSE LABOR, INDUSTRIAL AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES, Room 307, LOB
1:30 p.m. Executive session on HB 712-FN, **family and medical leave insurance** program

HOUSE LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATION, Room 303, LOB
12:30 p.m. Executive session on several bills including HB 457-FN, requiring meetings and sessions of committees of the house of representatives to be recorded and made available on the Internet;
HB 504, relative to election-related amendments to the United States Constitution;
HB 519, relative to selection of delegates to an Article V convention;
HCR 1, rescinding all requests by the New Hampshire legislature for a federal **[Article V] constitutional convention** *League testified in support of rescinding NH's 2012 call.*

HOUSE RESOURCES, RECREATION AND DEVELOPMENT, Room 305, LOB
10:00 a.m. Executive session on a number of bills including HB 727-FN-A, boat ramp and parking improvements at **Mount Sunapee state park beach** and making an appropriation therefor.

HOUSE STATE-FEDERAL RELATIONS AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, Room 206, LOB
10:00 a.m. Executive session on
HCR 6, applying to Congress to propose a congressional **term limits constitutional amendment**;
HCR 7, urging the President and Congress to adopt a policy **renouncing the first use of nuclear weapons**;
HJR 2, recommending and requesting the president of the United States and the United States Congress to **exclude NH from offshore oil and gas drilling** and exploration. *League testified in support*

Looking ahead to the next few weeks—some key bills that are making news already scheduled.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, Representatives Hall, State House
10:00 a.m. [HB 455-FN](#), **abolishing the death penalty for capital murder**. (*Executive session on this bill is Wed., Feb. 20, at 10 am, LOB 204.*) (*League's national position opposes the death penalty so League supports this bill to abolish it in NH.*)

HOUSE COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Room 302, LOB
10:00 a.m. Public hearings on a number of bills about **prescription drug pricing**: HB 656, HB 657, HB 658-FN, HB 659, HB 670-FN, HB 671-FN, HB 703-FN Text of these bills can be found via the general court's website: http://gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_Status/

SENATE EDUCATION LOB rm 103

11:00 a.m. [SB 280-FN-L](#), This bill “Changes the formula for determining the education tax rate [and] permits school boards to contract with **religious affiliated schools** to provide education for children who live in the school district.” Another **school funding** bill but with a twist.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

SENATE ELECTION LAW LOB 102

(no time set yet) [SB8](#), the third of the **independent redistricting commission bills**. *League will testify in support.*

This week's little instructional note, for those new to the procedures in the state house, is about caucuses. “Caucus” is a noun and a verb. Generally before the full House meets to vote on bills, each party will caucus in a designated room. Unlike just about everything else in the state house, these are

closed sessions. The public may not enter. The caucus is an opportunity for the party leadership to explain why certain bills should be voted up or down. No actual threats are made—as far as we know, the leadership can't take away legislators' parking privileges if they don't vote the party line. In times past (in 2012, for example) at least one party leader exercised great power in these caucuses. But I can't say more because I've never been in a caucus.

Caucuses may also occur during or just before a committee holds an Executive Session (see last week's alert for explanation of that term). If so, the public is asked to leave the committee room, or one party will leave the room and find another place to discuss how they want to proceed on a bill. These committee party caucuses are closed to the public (and to the other party). If you see a sign on a door reading "Caucus" don't go in. Sometimes no sign is posted, but if you enter the committee room and get glares, likely someone will tell you "we're in caucus." Just say "sorry" and leave, closing the door behind you.

Think of a caucus as mom and dad going into another room to discuss just how long junior should be grounded this time before issuing their decision.