

Greetings - It has been an eventful month of March - not just in the full House sessions and in the House Commerce Committee, but also in town meetings in Sullivan 1 towns. In Plainfield, for example, two articles of interest passed. One (Article 18) that encouraged state elected officials to reject the "Pledge" (the Pledge is typically sought from candidates for Governor, but all elected officials are asked by a particular group to sign onto this commitment not to vote for any type of broad based tax). I have not signed onto this because I don't believe it makes sense to stifle the conversation of potential revenue sources. Article 19 had to do with encouraging Concord to allow towns to address funding alternatives (for example, providing relief from the property tax for certain qualifying individuals within the town). No specific proposal was endorsed - rather a recommendation was made that the State pass enabling legislation to allow towns to address intra-town inequities in general. I believe Representative Benn of Hanover continues to work on preparing such a bill; I'm looking forward to reviewing his bill - if it addresses the major components, I would see about signing on.

In the House Commerce Committee, bills address a range of topics, but several cluster around the areas of health care insurance, the liquor commission (and rules for establishments that serve alcohol), and banking (for example, capping interest rates for certain loans, including "payday" loans). The general intent of these bills is to protect the consumer while encouraging business growth, and to figure out ways to improve access to health care for all New Hampshire residents.

Bills of note that have been discussed and passed in the House (and that you may hear more about as they move through the Senate) include HB 868-FN, which places a surcharge on the recording of documents (deeds, mortgages, etc) with Registrars of Deeds (\$40 per document) to fund the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program ("LCHIP"). This would provide a dedicated source of revenue for LCHIP. While the Governor has proposed \$12 million over 2 years, it has been significantly reduced in the past two terms as other priorities took precedence. Another bill of interest, HB 628-FN-A, which establishes the New Hampshire Prescription Advantage Program, also passed the House. This bill would make drugs more affordable for those who are low income or uninsured. It is an attempt to deal with one aspect of health care - prescriptions - by providing a prescription discount card, and directs the Department of Health and Human Services to enter into rebate agreements with pharmaceutical companies who participate in the Medicaid program.

New Hampshire is one of only two states (Vermont being the other) that has a 2-year term for governor. The Legislature will be considering a bill, CACR 11, relating to the term of office for the governor. It provides that beginning with the 2010 general election, there shall be a 4-year term for governor. If approved by the necessary majorities, it will go to voters in the form of a constitutional amendment on the ballot in 2008. One argument in support of the amendment is that it would allow more time for the chief executive to govern (as opposed to running for re-election). Others believe the voters should be heard every two years on who should fill this important position.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments. I look forward to talking with you.

Regards.

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