

The New Hampshire House of Representatives saw a flurry of activity toward the end of March and into early April. Over 420 bills were voted on, many on the consent calendar (once they left the committee responsible for the hearings and discussions). However, many others received significant debate on the floor of the House, including:

HB 607, relative to the death penalty (bill to abolish the death penalty failed);
SB 36, eliminating straight ticket voting (passed);
HB 774, relative to the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes (failed);
HB 437, permitting same gender couples to enter civil unions and have the same rights, responsibilities, and obligations as married couples (passed);
HB 514, increasing the minimum wage for hourly employees (passed);
HB 685, prohibiting New Hampshire from participating in a national identification card system (passed);
HB 802, requiring the use of passenger restraints (passed);
HB 407, relative to assistance for milk producers (passed);
HB 1, making appropriations for state expenses (passed); and
HB 2, relative to revenues for state expenses (passed).

Another controversial measure taken up by the House was House Resolution 10, opposing President Bush's Iraq policy and expressing support for our troops. After lengthy debate, the resolution passed 183-90. While I believe the Democrats took majorities on both the Federal and state levels as a result, in part, of voter dissatisfaction with the war, this was not an easy vote for me. Having an older brother who served in the United States Marine Corps in the first Gulf War, and another who served as a physician in the Air Force, I wanted to be sure we were not sending the wrong message to our troops. However, this resolution unmistakably supports our troops while disapproving of President Bush's Iraq policy. It is completely consistent, in my opinion, to hold both of these views at the same time; being critical of the Administration's foreign policy does not mean we don't support the men and women carrying it out.

My votes on these bills, as on all bills, are public record. And while I don't expect everyone to agree with my positions, I believe the House has passed not only progressive but also necessary bills. From here, the bills passed by the House move on to the Senate and then, if passed there, on to the Governor. I approach each bill with an open mind, in committee as well as in the House, and, as always, welcome your input.

Regards,

Matthew Houde
PO Box 66
Meriden, NH 03770