

March 20, 2008

It has been a politically active month - between school district meetings, voting day, and annual town meetings. Budgets passed in Plainfield, Cornish and Grantham, while SB 2 was rejected in both Plainfield and Grantham (it was not on the ballot in Cornish). And the Fair Tax Coalition continues to gather towns in its effort to encourage state politicians to reject the "Pledge" and have a dialogue about revenue sources, including (but not advocating for) a broad based tax such as an income or sales tax. In the Statehouse, today was the "Crossover" deadline - the date by which all bills that originated in the House of Representatives had to be sent to the Senate. As a result, there have been some long days in Concord. With almost 200 bills sent to the Senate, let me give you a few of the recent highlights:

CACR 24, which would have enshrined in the New Hampshire Constitution that no tax on personal income could be adopted in the State, was rejected in the House by a wide margin. Principally, the House did not want to limit options available to future legislators.

HB 1356, which was in my committee (Commerce), would have prohibited the use of certain information (occupation and level of educational attainment) in motor vehicle insurance underwriting and rating. The committee received studies that arrived at different conclusions: one indicating the use of such factors has a potentially discriminatory result, and another suggesting their use was justified since a demonstrated correlation exists between those factors and loss ratios. However, since there was evidence presented that a change in one of these factors - when all other factors are constant - can result in significant rate disparities, the committee wanted to study the issue at greater length.

HB 1281, which would prohibit public schools within the university and community college system from requiring health insurance as a condition of enrollment, passed the House. However, I disagreed with the majority. One year ago, UNH set a policy requiring its students get insurance - either through the University or elsewhere. This was after many years of study and constituent polling (including the student body and student government). In addition to wanting to expand insurance coverage, advocates of the bill's defeat felt that the New Hampshire House should not micro-manage or second guess the decisions of the USNH Board of Trustees.

CACR 28, which would have increased the compensation of members of the legislature from \$100 per year to \$100 per week, failed. Frankly, I would support an increase in compensation; as I said many times while campaigning, the New Hampshire House is not a representative body - not because it doesn't have enough members, but because it doesn't have enough members that fully reflect our communities' composition. The lack of money contributes to that problem because of the challenges posed for people who work full time. However, replacing one number in the Constitution for another doesn't seem to be the right fix.

As usual, I'm happy to talk about these or any other bills you would like to discuss. And before closing, I would like to take a moment to extend my congratulations to Chief Gillens, who received the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award (awarded by the US Marshall Service), and the entire Plainfield police force, for their work in connection with the peaceful resolution of the Brown situation. Thank you.

Regards,

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