

May 19, 2008

Greetings,

I wanted to talk about two things in this month's letter: (1) my decision to run for state senate, and (2) the proposed amendment to the state constitution regarding education funding.

First, as many readers likely already know, Senator Peter Burling has decided not to seek re-election to the New Hampshire Senate at the end of this year. I have decided to run to succeed him in District 5, and I am proud to have his endorsement for my campaign. Peter cannot be replaced, but I will work hard to represent the principles he has always championed: independence and honesty, a commitment to our communities, and a passionate belief that public service can make a real difference for good in people's lives. It is out of that sense of service that I ran for the House in 2006 and am running for the Senate this year. I am committed to working to preserve the best of what we have while continuing to advocate for changes that will make our lives better.

To me, that means working to ensure that all our children have access to health care and a world-class education, no matter where they live or what their family's status. It means assuring that working families and our senior citizens can afford to live here. It means providing economic opportunity that will allow our children to remain and thrive here. I am proud of what we have accomplished in the last two years at the State House in Concord. To cite just a few examples:

- . The House Commerce Committee, on which I serve, recommended passage of several bills that expanded access to health care, including requiring coverage for dependent children up to the age of 26 and providing early childhood intervention therapy services.
- . We increased the minimum wage for the first time in 10 years.
- . We took steps to protect and preserve our quality of life by finally providing funding for the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, banning the burning of toxic construction and demolition debris, and requiring the state to rely on renewable energy sources for at least a quarter of its energy needs by 2025.
- . We capped interest rates on payday and title loans at 36% APR.

Still, New Hampshire continues to face challenges. We are not immune from the national economic downturn, although I believe we are well positioned to weather this storm and rebound quickly. Tougher economic times also make it clear that our increasing reliance on property taxes has become more onerous for more families. This is an issue that must be addressed. I am asking for your support in

this campaign for the Senate, where I believe I can continue to advocate on behalf of the citizens in Senate District 5 and the concerns that we share.

Second, I would like to discuss one of those shared concerns in more detail, which is the proposed amendment to the state Constitution concerning education: On May 14, the House voted down the latest amendment (140 for and 222 against). I voted in favor of it, and I want to take a minute to explain why. As you may recall, I voted against an amendment dealing with the same subject matter before - not because I was opposed to targeting aid, but rather because of the potential for a diminished role for the courts in reviewing legislative action with respect to education. With this amendment, I believe the role of the courts was secure, as was the fundamental status of education. What this amendment did do was put a basic choice up for discussion: Assuming we have a fixed pot of money, should the state allocate those funds on a per pupil basis regardless of need (what we do now), or should the state target the amount we have without first satisfying adequacy on a per pupil basis (while making sure every town still gets a "meaningful" amount)? As the Valley News editorial of May 18 pointed out, the Legislature can currently target aid to alleviate disparities in educational opportunity, but only after adequacy is fully funded.

I voted for the amendment because I question whether children in property poor towns receive an equal educational opportunity when they receive the same amount of state funds that children in property wealthy towns do. And while I acknowledge that this amendment would not have addressed intra-town inequities (e.g., the low income family living in a middle or upper income town whose property tax could have gone up to make up for the reduced aid from the state), I think it could have done some good things to address inter-town inequities. But the choice to distribute state funds on a per pupil basis was confirmed, and I respect that position and outcome.

I think the Legislature has done a terrific job of moving the ball forward (defining and costing an adequate education), and the absence of a constitutional amendment to target aid does not diminish that. As the Valley News editorial also pointed out, the state is just going to have a challenging time finding funds to target aid above adequacy.

As always, I hope that you feel free to call me directly at 504-2744 or email me at matthewhoude@yahoo.com. I would appreciate your support. Thank you.

Warm regards,

Matthew Houde