

Report from the Delegation to the State Legislature

During the 2015 legislative session, your delegation worked together to support legislation important to the people who live in Hopkinton and throughout the district. For example, with declining statewide K-12 enrollment, we supported a bill to rework the education funding formula in a reasonable and balanced way. SB 228, a bipartisan bill, sought to treat full-day kindergarten the same as other grades. In reworking the education funding formula, the bill also sought to hold harmless school districts with greater than the statewide average of students receiving free and reduced lunch.

We pursued efforts to close tax loopholes, including the offshore business tax haven loophole (HB 551) and the individual capital gains loophole (HB 634). These initiatives will help the state to restore revenue sharing and provide property tax relief. We are all concerned about the property tax stress on seniors with fixed incomes. HB 348 focused on property tax relief for elderly citizens and would provide a property tax credit for elderly homeowners such that their property tax would not exceed 10% of their income.

Almost every day we lose a Granite Stater to an opioid-related overdose death. New Hampshire's opioid public health epidemic is devastating to our families, our communities, and our economy. There has been and will continue to be a significant amount of bipartisan work on this bipartisan problem. In November, the Governor and Executive Council called for a special legislative session to address the crisis. Hearings held by a joint legislative task force resulted in several pieces of fast-track legislation to be taken up by the House and Senate in early January.

The year concluded with the approval of a two-year state budget that funds state operations from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017. The budget supports most state programs, including the University System of New Hampshire and the Community College System, at levels comparable to those of the prior year. The budget did not include support to continue the New Hampshire Health Protection Program (also known as Medicaid expansion) which is scheduled to sunset at the end of 2016. This and the recommendations from the opioid crisis task force will certainly be front and center during the 2016 legislative session.

In the good news category, we are glad to report that the budget restores funds to pay Hopkinton and other communities for use of lands under the Merrimack Flood Control Compact. We are grateful that we did not have to resort to our friend Stretch Kennedy's idea to "blow the dam and flood Massachusetts!"

We look forward to serving the people of Hopkinton and Contoocook in 2016 and please feel free to contact us with your questions and thoughts on how to improve our state.

Respectfully submitted,

Sen. Dan Feltes
Rep. Mary Jane Wallner
Rep. Mel Myler
Rep. David Luneau