



January 9, 2025

# Your State House

## Concord, New Hampshire



To my constituents in Allenstown, Dunbarton, Epsom, & Hooksett,

In November, I was reelected to represent the people of Allenstown, Dunbarton, Epsom, and Hooksett for another two years – thank you for your vote! I was also re-appointed chair of the Executive Departments and administration (ED&A) committee, dealing with professional licensing, the state pension system, the state building code, administrative rules, and the organization of the state government. So far, it looks like a light year for us.

This week, the House began the 2025 session. We met, with the Senate, to certify the election of the Governor and Executive Council – just like Congress, but with much less drama. We also introduced a few hundred bills and voted on 22 suggested changes to House Rules. The first, adjusting deadlines to this year's calendar, passed without comment. It does look as though we'll have a bit more time to work on House bills (almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all bills) since crossover is April 10.

Then we debated a change to the House subpoena power, which would require any committee chair to get approval of the Rules committee before going to the full House. I agreed with the opponents, as adding this extra step seems silly. The process to issue a subpoena is detailed in Mason's manual of legislative procedures, and they are so rare that specific House rules are a waste of effort. This change was defeated, 150-229.

A rule that "proper business attire" was required in the House chamber and in committees, was tabled before discussion. A change to correct a reference to bill distribution passed without comment. The

next proposed change was to allow committees to table a bill without a public hearing, which has raised a lot of commentary about suppressing the public input. It was also tabled before debate.

A floor amendment requiring proper business attire in session was debated and failed, 183-196. I voted to oppose because there was no way to enforce it other than issuing a reprimand to a member, which is extreme. I do think it's a good idea, and if I see a representative on my committee or in my district, I'll remind him of the importance of looking professional.

Another rule change would allow committees to vote on bills throughout the day, rather than just the bills being heard today or those explicitly noticed. This will streamline committee work, at least for committees that have time between hearings, and it passed, 199-181. Another convenience rule change was to allow any bill that came to the House with no recommendation (when the committee had a tie vote) to start with the chair's preferred motion, rather than an arbitrary ought to pass. It passed on a voice vote.

The next proposal was to require *deliberate* flashing a firearm to trigger disciplinary action. This was debated (mostly by those opposed to carrying in the chamber) and passed, 216-164, as many of us have seen flashes of guns when a jacket shifted. Going from 3/5 to a simple majority to special order a bill out of its normal place in the calendar was debated, with the opposition talking about the memorial and naming bills that get special ordered to the beginning of the day for the convenience of the honoree and family – but those are always unanimous, or nearly so. The other cases of special order are for a member with timing problems, and those are also commonly approved by a massive voice vote. The unvoiced concern was with the political bills, where the Republicans



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want to avoid losing something important when many Republicans leave early. The change passed, 211-170.

A representative moved to allow sponsors to withdraw bills prior to committee action, longer than the current limit of assignment to committee. This was debated and passed on a voice vote. The next proposal would limit bills in the second year of the biennium to one per representative, unless six House cosponsors signed on to it. This was debated and failed, 83-295. The “problem” of 800 bills actually averages two per person, with many senior representatives (Guilty!) filing 8-10 and most others only one or none. Then there are the perpetual gadflies, filing 30+ bills with little or no chance to pass any of them...

The next proposal defined the subpoena power as a function of the committee and the House Clerk. Again, I and others thought it unnecessary, and it failed 83-299. Then it was moved to forbid weapons in the chamber, concealed or not. After a short debate, this failed, 154-227. Then three rule amendments by one of our gadflies, all of which failed after the sponsor spoke on them. A rule ensuring time limits (if imposed at a public hearing) are equitably applied failed 177-205. A change from “prayer” to “reflection” by the Chaplain failed 160-222. And requiring 10 days notice (up from 3, which allows next week to be completely scheduled in each calendar) for a public hearing went down 73-308.

Then another representative moved to require each committee (after members were assigned by the Speaker) to elect its own Chair and Vice Chair. After some debate – the opposition focused on the impracticality of this process – it failed on a voice vote. Our gadfly had three more suggested rule changes, all failing. Reducing the number of seconds to remove a bill from the consent calendar

from ten to three (it used to be one) made a lot of sense to me, since it is a consent calendar and all representatives are assumed to consent to dealing with them at once. I voted for it, but the count was 182-202. Replacing “chairman” with “chair” throughout House rules failed, 175-208. Requiring committee reports to be printed as written, without editing by the staff, the committee chair, or the Speaker, failed 173-208. (I use “chair” but don’t make a big deal about it.)

Finally Dan and another representative moved to require a committee, not just the chair, agree to decline a referral to a second committee. Again, this is a procedure to simplify the process – if a policy committee has amended out the fiscal impact of a bill, it needn’t go to Finance. It can also move a politically sensitive bill that narrowly passed the House directly to the Senate, which is why it was debated. Again, the opposition focused on the impracticality of the procedure, and the motion failed, 186-193.

My husband Dan was also reelected, and is serving on two committees. He’s vice-chair of Finance, chair of its Division 1 (which deals with all the odds and ends that ED&A also deals with,) and a member of the new Education Funding committee. I’ve made an appointment to see him in mid-April, after the budget passes...



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