

AFSC-NH State House Watch, June 14

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Budget Negotiators Named

Now that the House and Senate have each passed their versions of a state budget, the next phase of negotiations begins with the formation of the committee of conference. This week, House Speaker Terie Norelli and Senate President Peter Bragdon named the following members for the committee of conference for [HB 1](#) (the main budget bill) and [HB 2](#) (the budget trailer bill): Representatives Cindy Rosenwald, Susan Almy, Dan Eaton, and Neal Kurk, and Senators Chuck Morse, Bob Odell, Jeanie Forrester, and Lou D'Allesandro. Representative Mary Jane Wallner will chair the committee.

Expressing her hopes for this next part of the process, Speaker Norelli said, "As we move into the committee of conference phase of the budget, we are fortunate to have a great team of legislators working to ensure we restore investments in our state and communities."

The folks at the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute have put together a helpful, brief [analysis of the Senate budget](#) that also explains the differences between the House and Senate budgets. From their summary:

Of course, while the House and Senate may arrive at destinations that are fairly close to one another, the paths they follow to get there are quite different. The House would generate close to \$50 million over the next two years by setting the cigarette tax rate at \$1.98 per pack and by suspending several business tax cuts. The Senate would forego those options and instead carve out a new exemption for tipped wages under the Business Enterprise Tax. Moreover, while both budgets rely on a variety of one-time sources of revenue, the Senate goes beyond the House and uses \$41 million of anticipated FY 2013 surplus to balance the budget for FY 2014-15. The Senate exceeds the House as well in its employment of "back of the budget" appropriations reductions, including one such provision that would force state agencies to cut personnel costs by \$20 million over the biennium, a mandate that would likely result in the loss of at least several hundred positions across state government.

These differences – plus the two chambers' opposing positions on accepting federal funds to extend the state's Medicaid program – mean that the members of the Conference Committee will be quite busy in the days ahead.

Expanded Medicaid would bring \$2.5 billion to New Hampshire over the next seven years. It would certainly be enough money to prevent those job losses, but also to create more jobs and insure thousands of NH residents.

The committee's first work session took place on June 14. A group of clergy organized by Reverend Gail Kinney conducted a prayer vigil outside the room, praying that our legislators will enact a humane budget that meets the needs of the residents of our state.

The House and Senate must come to agreement on a budget for the next biennium. The fiscal year ends on June 30, and the deadline for all of the committees of conference to complete their work is June 20, in order for these outcomes to be voted on at the next House session on June 26.

The committee of conference for [HB 25](#) (the capital budget) is comprised of Representatives John Cloutier, Virginia Irwin, Gene Chandler and John Graham, as well as Senators David Boutin, Jim Rausch and Sylvia Larsen. Representative David Campbell will chair the committee. They met on Thursday, June 13 and [both sides](#) seem confident that they will be able to reach a compromise. There is no disagreement on the \$38 million proposed by Governor Hassan to build a new women's prison, as the current facility in Goffstown is overcrowded and in terrible condition. This committee will be back at work on Monday, June 17.

Medicaid Expansion Still an Option

The Senate may have voted to kill the Medicaid expansion but it isn't dead yet. This will undoubtedly be one of the issues on the table during the budget negotiations. One of the objections raised by the Senate was their doubt that the state would be allowed to opt out of the program. As a response to this erroneous claim, the director of the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services sent Governor Hassan a letter assuring her that the state could opt out at any time [without penalty](#). On Monday, June 17, NH Citizens Alliance, Granite State Progress and NARAL will hold a rally outside the State House and then go inside to present the budget negotiators with a petition signed by over 1,500 NH residents in support of expanded Medicaid. For more information call Jillian DuBois at 603-724-4047.

Other Committees of Conference Meeting NEXT WEEK:

[HB 595](#) , relative to photo ID, will be discussed on June 17 at 9:30 am in Room 308 of the LOB. As amended by the Senate, this bill eliminates student ID as an accepted form of voter ID, and changes the required date for putting cameras and scanners in polling locations, from September 2013 to September 2015.

[HB 472](#) , relative to residential units in rooming houses, will be considered on June 18, at 1 pm in Room 302 of the LOB.

[HB 357](#), the bill to prevent employers from using credit history in employment decisions, will be taken up on June 18 at 9:45 am in Room 307 of the LOB. This bill was amended

by the Senate to include the entire text of [SB 100](#), a bill that failed to clear the House. It authorizes the use of electronic payroll cards instead of paper checks.

[HB 414](#), the bill to prevent employers from requiring employees or prospective employees to give them their social media passwords, will be considered on June 18 at 10:15 in Room 307 of the LOB. This bill was amended by the Senate to include the entirety of [SB 153](#), another bill that failed in the House. It would give the legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee veto authority over monetary aspects of collective bargaining agreements with state workers.

[HB 573](#), relative to the use of cannabis for therapeutic purposes, will be taken up on June 18 at 9:00 am in Room 205 of the LOB.

A list of all of the committees of conference can be found at the [General Court](#) website.

House Committee Work THIS WEEK:

This week, a House Commerce subcommittee had a work session on [HB 562](#), a bill that would cap the interest rate on car title loans at 36%. Sarah Mattson of NH Legal Assistance, Leah Torrey from the United Valley Interfaith Project, and AFSC's Maggie Fogarty were on hand to provide information to the subcommittee that was by all accounts, well received. The subcommittee has a number of proposed amendments to discuss when they meet again on Tuesday, June 25 at 10:00 am in Room 302 of the LOB.

This week in Maine

This week, Maine's Senate approved Medicaid expansion, which their House of Representatives had already passed. The bill now heads to the desk of Governor LePage, who is expected to veto it. There is some question as to whether there are enough votes in both chambers to override the governor's veto. Some 70,000 Mainers would benefit from this program if it is allowed to become law.

In other Maine news, the Maine Senate also passed a [GMO labeling](#) bill, with a unanimous vote. The bill passed the House the day before. It contains a provision that the labeling won't go into effect until five other contiguous states pass similar measures. NH is the only state that borders Maine, and so the labeling requirement in ME depends on what happens in NH. [HB 660](#), the NH version of the bill, is still in committee where it has been retained and scheduled for a mid-August work session.

Upcoming Events

The national **No More Names** drive to reduce gun violence will be coming to Concord on Tuesday, June 18 for a vigil in front of the State House from 5 pm to 7 pm. Join Newtown, CT family members and local gun safety advocates in remembrance of the

thousands of gun deaths that have occurred in the months since the Sandy Hook tragedy. This is in conjunction with Project for Safer Communities NH. RSVP at the event's [Facebook page](#).

World Refugee Day is June 20. Communities around the world will celebrate the courage of individuals and families who had to flee persecution, conflict, and violence in other countries, and who have made a new home in a new land. The New Hampshire festivities will take place that day on the State House lawn, from 3 pm to 7 pm. There will be music, games, food, fashion and all manner of family fun as we celebrate with those who came so far to make New Hampshire their home. For more information, contact Kerstin Ahlgren Breidenthal at (603)410-3109, or kahlgren@lssne.org.

If you're in Concord on Wednesday, June 26 at 5:30 pm, you can ***Walk in Their Shoes*** to support the Concord Homeless Resource Center. This second annual walk is designed to raise both funds and awareness about how far homeless people have to walk in Concord in order to access basic services and move forward out of homelessness. For more information, contact homeless.resource@gmail.com. You can download the flyer and sponsor form [here](#).

Join us on June 24--28 for ***"Not One More,"*** a week of action to draw attention to the horrible impact of immigrant detention and deportation on New Hampshire families. Vigils, fasting, storytelling and discussions are planned in Nashua, Dover, Durham, Manchester, Concord and also a regional event in Burlington, MA. For more information, contact [Maggie Fogarty](#), and download a flyer and schedule of events [here](#). This special event is sponsored by AFSC and our partners at the NH Alliance for Immigrants and Refugees, NH Citizens Alliance, the UCC Immigration Working Group and the Granite State Organizing Project.

Coming up on "State House Watch Radio"

Diana Lacey, president of the State Employees Association, will join us next week on "State House Watch" radio to discuss the potential impact of budget negotiations on state employees, as well as other labor issues still "in play" in various committees of conference.

"State House Watch" airs each Monday from 5 to 6 pm, with a re-broadcast on Tuesday at 7 am. If you are close to Concord, you can tune in at 94.7 FM. If you are further away, you can [listen live](#) over the internet or [download podcasts](#) at your convenience.

Have you listened to the "State House Watch" radio show? If you have, we'd love to get your opinion about it. Click [here](#) to complete a short survey.

"Like" us on Facebook. Search for "American Friends Service Committee-NH" to "like" us. After all, we are your Friends.

AFSC's New Hampshire State House Watch newsletter is published to bring you information about matters being discussed in Concord including housing, the death

penalty, immigration, and labor rights. We also follow the state budget and tax system, voting rights, corrections policy, and more. The AFSC is a Quaker organization supported by people of many faiths who care about peace, social justice, humanitarian service, and nonviolent change. Arnie Alpert and Maggie Fogarty staff the New Hampshire Program, publish the newsletter, and co-host the "State House Watch" radio show. Susan Bruce helps with legislative research. Fred Portnoy produces the radio show.

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