

# How to Pass a Warrant Article at Town Meeting

In New Hampshire, your community's annual Town Meeting provides a great opportunity to educate your neighbors and take a stand by petitioning to place resolutions on the agenda or ballot. In recent years, resolutions, in the form of "warrant articles," have been adopted on matters such as nuclear weapons abolition, getting big money out of politics, cutting military spending, reforming NH's tax structure, and taking action on climate change. Since every voter can speak and vote, this is the essence of democracy!

Here is information on how to propose and pass a warrant article in your town.

## Verify Your Town's Status

Call your town clerk to verify the date and type of your town meeting. There are three types:

- 144 towns hold traditional town meetings, usually in March but sometimes in April or May. Voters can petition to add articles to the warrant, as provided by [RSA 39:3](#).
- 70 towns hold "SB2" town meetings, where all votes are by ballot. As with traditional town meetings, voters can petition to add articles to the warrant, as provided by [RSA 40:13](#).
- 7 towns, in addition to 13 cities, have councils instead of town meetings. So you can't pass a warrant article at town meeting. You can, however, ask your city or town council to pass a resolution (not covered in this info sheet).

## Write Your Warrant Article

- 1) Form a small committee to sponsor the resolution. This can be a short-term, informal group or part of an ongoing community organization. Three people is enough to get started.
- 2) Write your resolution. Sample resolutions may be available from advocacy groups.
- 3) Put your resolution on a petition form to be signed by voters in your town. The wording of the resolution must appear at the top of each page. The wording may not be changed once you begin collecting signatures.
- 4) Before getting signatures, check with your town clerk to find out whether the language and format meet the town's requirements. (The clerk may need to check with the Select Board.)
- 5) Confirm the number of signatures needed. 25 signatures is typical, but fewer may be needed for small towns.
- 6) For towns with traditional town meetings, the deadline for petitions is the 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday before election day for town officials (February 5, 2019 in most towns, where town elections are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of March). For SB2 towns, the second Tuesday of January is generally the deadline. Ask your town clerk to confirm the deadline by which petitions must be submitted. Plan to submit a few days ahead of time in case there are glitches.

## **Collect Signatures!**

- 1) In most of our communities, grocery stores, hardware, transfer stations, outside community meetings, and in front of town hall are all great places to talk to voters and collect signatures. Bring clipboards and pens. If you can, put up a table with a sign. Ask permission if it's private property. Public buildings may have a designated area where local authorities could ask you to use.
- 2) Signers must be registered voters, so be sure to check while presenting your petition.
- 3) Use signature-gathering to educate the community. You can distribute educational materials. If you find people who are excited about the proposal, invite them to join your committee. Even if people aren't voters, aren't town residents, or don't agree with you (yet), seize the chance to have a discussion.
- 4) Try to collect extra signatures in case any signature is disqualified and to show everyone how much support the resolution has.
- 5) Submit your signatures to the town clerk. Try to be early in case there are problems.

## **Before Town Meeting**

Congratulations! You've successfully placed your article on the warrant. A couple more easy steps and you'll improve your chances of winning the vote.

- 1) Write a letter to the editor of your local paper, and ask your friends to do the same.
- 2) Schedule an educational event at your local library to inform people about the issue.
- 3) Use social media to let the community know about the article.
- 4) Create flyers for bulletin boards or signs to post around town.
- 5) Call or email everyone who signed your petition to remind them to attend town meeting.

## **At Town Meeting**

- 1) Hand out information to voters at town meeting, the polls, or at the hearing in SB 2 towns.
- 2) Speak briefly in support of your article at town meeting. Get a few others to speak in support, too, and to respond to those who may disagree. Read up on the issue to get ready.

## **Good Luck!**

*(These instructions are based on a guide from the NH Rebellion. Many thanks to the successor organization, NH Open Democracy [www.opendemocracynh.org](http://www.opendemocracynh.org), for allowing us to adapt it.)*