

# New Hampshire School Boards Association Legislative Bulletin March 23, 2007

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## *A Quick Summary of NH Legislative Happenings*

Listed below is a brief summary of key bills impacting local school districts. Please note that the first bill, HB 653, is important for addressing issues with the NH Retirement System and **we urge your support and immediate action** to make a legislative difference for our schools.

### *Current House Bills (HB) or Senate Bills (SB) you need to know:*

#### **HB 653 – The NH Retirement System**

This bill proposes the recommendations of the employee/employer working group regarding solutions to the NHRS pension fund. A public hearing was held 3/19/07 and the retirement subcommittee made recommendations. The proposal includes: retaining the defined benefit plan, changing to the entry age normal methodology, eliminating the siphoning of funds from the pension fund to the special account, repealing the 5-year buyback provision, capping a member's benefit at 100% of the highest year of earnable compensation, and making a floor for employer contributions equal to the employee rate. Automatic Cost Of Living Adjustments, as well as increases in employee rates, were not included.

**ACTION ITEM: The House will consider HB 653 next week. Urge your local Representatives to PASS this bill. In the Senate, issues to be argued for include a change in employee rates, an increase in number of years for computing the average final compensation, and linking the cap on earnings to base salary. The bottom line is there needs to be more compromise and sharing of costs by employees.**

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#### **HB 927 – Specific criteria and educational programs defining an adequate education**

The Governor's bill is used by House Education to propose specific criteria and educational programs that deliver the opportunity for an adequate education. This specifically includes educational programs contained in the school approval standards (English/language arts and reading, mathematics, science, social studies, art, world languages, health, physical education and technology). The standards shall cover half-day kindergarten through twelfth grade and shall clearly set forth the opportunities to acquire skills, competencies, and knowledge expected to be possessed by students at the various grade level, including the credit requirements necessary to earn a high school diploma. The bill also contains requirements for maintaining, updating, improving and refining curriculum frameworks for each area of education identified in the approval standards. In addition, the bill acknowledges that students' educational needs, and the resources required to provide the opportunity to meet those needs, varies from student to student and school to school: the resources needed to provide an adequate education will also vary, requiring more resources in districts with greater challenges.

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#### **HBs 677, 678, 679, 765 and 766 – Special Education Bills**

These bills contain significant changes to the special education statutes, RSA 186-C. Proposed changes included school district payment of expert witness fees, and district provision of FAPE for non-resident students. Extreme monitoring and corrective action procedures were also included, such as taking over school board functions and decertification of school administrators. The House

Education Committee concluded more time was needed to resolve differences of opinion. The bills were retained in committee and will be worked on by the entire committee over the next few months.

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**HB 164 – Required policy prohibiting recommendations on psychotropic medications**

This bill requires each school board to adopt and implement a policy prohibiting school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic medications for any child. This bill passed the House and now moves to the Senate for further consideration.

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**HB 152 – Public access to minutes of meetings**

The bill changes the current 144-hour deadline to “not more than 5 business days” and defines business day as the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding national and state holidays. This bill passed the House and now moves to the Senate for further consideration.

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**HBs 178, 639 and 914 – Cooperative School Districts**

These three bills addressed issues dealing with cooperative school districts, especially the issue of withdrawal. The House Education Committee amended 914 to recommend creating a joint House-Senate study committee. HBs 178 and 639 were recommended Inexpedient to Legislate. The full House will vote on the recommendations next week.

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**Please review the ACTION ITEMS above and contact your local representatives, senators, and committee members TODAY to voice your concerns. Remember that you, through NHSBA, are the only locally elected officials that “speak” exclusively for public education in NH.**

For the complete text of any bill, go to

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/ns/billstatus/quickbill.html> and enter the bill number, e.g. HB678, or SB78 (no spaces!), and make sure the Session Year is 2007.

For more information on specific legislation, please call Dean Michener, NHSBA Director of Governmental Affairs at 603-228-2061, or email: [deanm@nhsba.org](mailto:deanm@nhsba.org).