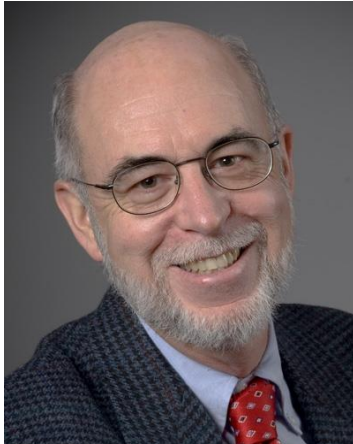


Senator David H. Watters

Representing Senate District 4: Barrington, Dover, Rollinsford, Somersworth

July 19, 2013



Senator David Watters Budget Wrap-up Newsletter

Dear Constituent,

The New Hampshire budget for the next two years marks a return to New Hampshire values and funding priorities. It increases key investments in education, economic development, and health and human services without any new taxes. When I ran for the state senate, I pledged to work on a budget that would not include a sales or income tax and that would use conservative revenue estimates so we could sustain our economic recovery. I also pledged to work on a bipartisan basis with civility to produce reasonable solutions. Thanks to Governor Hassan's leadership and the bipartisan spirit of leaders in the House and Senate, we dramatically changed the conversation and the priorities in Concord.

As an educator, I heard from constituents and the business community that the drastic cuts to education in the last budget had hurt New Hampshire's economy, since we need graduates with the skills for today's jobs. I argued for fully restored funding for the Community College System of New Hampshire and for substantial restoration of funding for the University System of New Hampshire. In response to the budget, both systems voted to freeze tuition for two years, thus reducing the escalating debt for New Hampshire's middle class families. The recent opening of the new training center for Albany/Safran in Rochester is ample demonstration of the kind of partnership of education and manufacturing that restored funding will make possible.

The budget helps public schools by increasing funding under the adequacy formula for communities like Barrington, Dover, and Rollinsford that had not received their fair share. This was my top budget priority, and Senate budget writers and the Governor agreed. It means substantial additional funding, without an increase in taxes, to help District 4 schools. This is an example of the bipartisan work possible in the Senate, and it shows, in contrast to the last session, a renewed commitment to public education.

Policy Committee Assignments:

Transportation

Executive Departments &
Administration

Statutory & Study Committee Assignments:

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

State Suggestion & Extraordinary
Service Award Evaluation
Committee

County-State Finance
Commission

NH Conservation Number Plate
Advisory Committee

Administrative Rules (JLCAR)

Joint Legislative Historical
Committee

Board of Claims

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My Legislation:

SB 1 increasing the research and development tax credit against the business profits tax.

SB 41 revising the New Hampshire business corporations act, RSA 293-A.

SB 124-FN establishing an integrated land development permit.

SB 82 establishing a commission to identify strategies needed for developing and implementing a competency-based public education system.

SB 163 establishing a commission to recommend legislation to prepare for projected sea level rise and other coastal hazards.

SB 164 authorizing coastal management provisions in master plans.

SB 110 directing the department of environmental services to adopt rules relative to its 2009 numeric nutrient criteria for the Great Bay Estuary.

SB 122 establishing a commercial shrimp license.

SB 80 relative to expanding the community revitalization tax relief program to provide incentives for rehabilitating historic structures.

SB 119 establishing a state house flag restoration commission and making an appropriation therefor.

Perhaps the most important accomplishment in the budget is the change in priorities for funding health and human services. In Strafford County, we all saw the terrible effects of cutting funding for the developmentally disabled and individuals with acquired brain disorders, for Children in Need of Services, for drug and alcohol prevention programs, for domestic violence programs, and for uncompensated care at our hospitals. With \$24 million in new funding, there will be neither treatment waitlists nor people in crisis warehoused in hospital emergency rooms. We can move forward with the state's 10-year mental health plan, and we can be sure our local service providers, such as Community Partners, have the resources needed. I advocated for the Senate budget provision for more funding for nursing homes, and this prevailed, protecting Strafford County taxpayers from an increase in the County tax rate.

Medicaid expansion for 58,000 people, funded by some \$2.5 billion in federal funds with little or no cost to New Hampshire general funds, was not included in the budget, but there is a commission meeting now with an October 15 deadline to map a way forward. This is the right thing to do, financially and morally, for New Hampshire's citizens, and I will work hard this fall to support Medicaid expansion.

The budget has many, many provisions and programs, but I do want to highlight a few items that were my priorities in running for the Senate. The Senate insisted on fully funding the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program. This reverses the attacks on this important program made in the last legislature. There is funding to put more state troopers on the roads and to maintain drug task force teams. Local taxpayers will see a reversal of some of the downshifting in the last budget, with increased rooms and meals distribution in 2015, a greater share of vital records fees, and full funding for deferred water and sewer projects.

The budget failed to provide new funds for bridges and roads, so these costs will continue to fall heavily on local taxpayers. Next year, I will work with Republicans and Democrats to seek funding for our transportation system which is vital for jobs and economic development.

This is a good, bipartisan budget. Hard choices had to be made, including cuts to personnel and programs, but that frugality, efficiency, and low taxes are what I pledged to support in the Senate. It is the New Hampshire way.