

Senator David H. Watters

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

May 22, 2013



Memorial Day Message

As Americans gather to honor and remember departed loved ones, let us remember the origins of Memorial Day in the Decoration Day ceremonies for the Civil War dead. My grandmother recalled veterans of that great and terrible war leading the procession to the Hopedale Cemetery in the 1890s. Honor is forged in the fire of battle, but remembrance smolders in embers on home-front hearths. Given the conflicts of our troubled world, each generation renews honor and remembrance by placing flags on the graves of those who died in freedom's cause. Over 100 of New Hampshire's National Guard are now serving in Afghanistan, so let's take time this Memorial Day to keep them in our hearts and prayers.

Making Progress on the Environment:

Sen. Watters Legislative Record

As the legislature completes its work on policy bills, I want to report on the progress of environmental legislation I introduced this session. District 4 features extraordinary natural resources, centered on the unique Great Bay Estuary, and its preservation is essential to our quality of life and to economic development.

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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

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.

Senate Bills 163 and 164

Sen. Bill 163 establishes a Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission to bring together state agencies, municipal officials, environmental organizations, researchers, and representatives of businesses and the insurance industry to assess risks and vulnerabilities to the natural environment, infrastructure, and properties due to projected sea level rise and other coastal and coastal watershed hazards such as storms, increased river flooding, an storm water runoff. The Commission will review the range of projections of coastal storm inundation, flood risk, and sea level rise in order to assess risks, and it will make recommendations concerning legislation, rules, and other actions. http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/Results.aspx?q=1&txtsessionyear=2013

Senate Bill 164 is enabling legislation to permit local municipalities to include in master planning, under RSA 674:2, III, "A coastal management section which may address planning needs resulting from projected coastal property or habitat loss due to increased frequency of storm surge, flooding, and inundation." This important tool will let communities act now to prevent future loss.

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Sustaining Fisheries Through Shared Management

Fisheries are an important economic and cultural resource for New Hampshire, and as one of the four "saltwater senators," I have taken the lead in fisheries management in the legislature. Senate Bill 122 establishes a commercial shrimp license. This important fishery needs a new management tool to prevent overfishing. The license protects current shrimpers in New Hampshire by allowing, through licensing, a limitation of new entrants to the fishery. The past two years have seen a failure of recruitment of new shrimp, possibly caused by warmer waters, and fishing limits have also been exceeded. This is important proactive legislation supported by the fishermen.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

This week, serving as New Hampshire's legislative commissioner, I am attending the meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and visiting our congressional offices to advocate for sustainable fisheries. In New Hampshire, commercial and recreational fishing supports over 2,400 jobs and creates \$80 million in economic activity. There is success to report with increased runs of herring and eels in our coastal rivers, but the shrimp stocks appear to be collapsing, and there is a decline in striped bass. Careful management supported by expert scientific study is essential to preserving our fisheries. Warming Atlantic waters may be our greatest future challenge.

Please contact me with your advice and ideas about how we can work together to protect the environment.

Climate Adaptation and Sea Level Rise

From the Mother's Day storm to Hurricane Sandy and winter storm Nemo, extreme weather events have threatened communities' safety, economy, and environment. Most people will agree that we need to plan for a changing New Hampshire climate.

Environment New Hampshire recently reported the latest science around our changing climate: The contiguous United States experienced the hottest month and hottest year in recorded history in 2012, Hurricane Sandy brought the lowest barometric pressure ever recorded along the Northeast U.S. coast, and the rainiest 1 percent of all storms in New Hampshire delivered 33 percent more rain on average at the end of the 20th century than at the beginning. Sea level have rise nearly a foot in the past century, and the rate recorded at the Boston tidal gauge is increasing.

Higher mean sea levels increase the frequency, magnitude, and duration of flooding associated with a given storm. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers circular of October 2011 on civil works planning identifies a three-foot sea level rise by 2100 as the most likely scenario.

Common sense dictates that communities plan for adaptation to a changing climate. Given the increased severity and frequency of storms, and new awareness of sea level rise, communities are taking action by joining the Coastal Adaptation Workshop. Dover was selected as the only community in New Hampshire to participate over the next two years in the New England Adaptation Project with MIT. Similar efforts are underway in Portsmouth, Exeter, Seabrook, and Hampton.

Protecting the Great Bay Estuary: Common Sense on Nitrogen and Nutrients

I strongly support District 4 communities in the efforts to reduce wastewater and other sources of nitrogen causing deterioration of water quality in the Great Bay. There has been a dispute over the level of nitrogen and its sources, especially since Environmental Protection Agency permits for treatment plants could cost taxpayers tens of millions more for uncertain results. I introduced Senate Bill 110 to require a reexamination of scientific studies in the hope that it would encourage the Department of Environmental Services and the Great Bay Coalition of Communities to reach an agreement on new, site specific testing. I applaud the extraordinary work of Commissioner Burack and Dover officials for reaching an agreement on April 29, 2013.

Under the agreement, the parties will agree on reviewers and the review process over the next few months. There will also be an effort to develop alternate models of testing to produce new data, particularly for the Piscataqua River where Dover discharges its treated wastewater.

In light of this agreement, I called on the Environmental Protection Agency to delay issuing the Dover wastewater treatment permit until the review process, and possible new data can be taken into consideration, and EPA recently announced the permit would be delayed until the end of the year. When local officials, the legislature, state agencies, and the Federal government work together as a team, we can get the job done to protect the Great Bay without huge new burdens on property taxes. The next challenge will be the new MS4 Storm Water nitrogen controls.