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OVERVIEW: HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN NEW HAMPSHIRE AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Below is a high-level summary of the legislative process in New Hampshire with the objective of providing HRAGC members information and resources sufficient to be able to participate. For a more detailed synopsis of the legislative process, please see the State of New Hampshire’s website: [Link to New Hampshire Almanac](#).

Step 1: Proposing Legislation

The first step in formulating legislation is the creation of submission of a Legislative Services Request (“LSR”). A member of the legislative body may submit a LSR for a proposed bill to the Office of Legislative Services to have a bill drafted. It is then assigned a bill docket number.

Step 2: Processing the Draft Bill

The drafted Senate Bill (“SB”) or House Bill (“HB”) is given to the Senate Clerk’s Office or the House Clerk’s Office, depending on the body to which the sponsor belongs. The President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House assigns the bill to a standing committee. Every bill introduced and referred to a committee must have a public hearing unless the rules are suspended by two thirds of the members present. It is at public hearings that individuals may listen and/or participate to provide further information to legislators who are considering the bill.

Step 3: Committee Hearings – Opportunity for the Public to Participate

House and Senate committee hearings are held at the Legislative Office Building (“LOB”) located at 33 North State Street in Concord. The purpose of a public hearing is to provide an opportunity to individuals to give relevant information to the committee members. You can attend a committee hearing in person or remotely, and you can listen or participate in the hearing. The General Court of New Hampshire webpage provides information regarding current bills, session information, House and Senate calendars, and meeting resources that include links for remote participation: [Link to General Court Website](#).

Attending in person: If you attend a committee hearing in person and wish to speak in support of or in opposition to a bill, you must leave your name on a card located on a table in the hearing room with the Committee Clerk. During committee hearings, multiple bills are heard and so you must listen for the Committee Chair to announce the bill number and title that you wish to speak on. While the word “testify” is used to describe public comments, you do not provide statements under oath as is required in court. When it is your turn to speak, you should approach the table in front of the committee members, state your name, address and, if appearing as a lobbyist, state that to the Clerk. The Chair will control the subject

matter and length of time that an individual speaks. If you cannot attend a hearing in person, you may submit a written statement to the Clerk of the committee.

Attending virtually: If you would like to listen to the committee hearing, you can do so via the House and Senate’s live committee streaming on YouTube: [NH House of Representatives Committee Streaming](#); [NH Senate Livestream](#). If you would like to register support or opposition to a bill whether you view the committee hearing remotely or not, you must use the sign in form here, under Meeting Resources: [Link to Meeting Resources](#). Please note that testimony is accepted through the end of the day (11:59 pm) of each bill’s public hearing.

Step 4: Committee Decisions

Committee deliberations and decisions are conducted in executive session which the public may observe only. A majority of the committee members must be present in order to vote on the bill. The committee votes on the bill and submits a report to the Clerk of the House or Senate as follows:

- Ought to Pass (“OTP”) – indicating that the committee supports the bill,
- Ought to Pass with Amendment (“OTPA”) – indicating that the committee supports the bill with amendment(s),
- Inexpedient to Legislate (“ITL”) – indicating that the committee is against the bill,
- Re-Refer to Committee – a committee report only in the first-year session, or
- Refer to Interim Study – a committee report only in the second-year session.

Step 5: Signing a Bill into Law

Once a bill “passes” one legislative body, it must go through the same process in the other legislative body. Therefore, there are opportunities for you to participate in the legislative process in both House and Senate committee hearings regarding a bill.

If both the House and the Senate pass a bill, then it is sent to the Governor. The Governor could sign the bill, veto the bill or allow it to pass without signature. If a bill becomes law, it will become effective on the date specified in the language of the bill.