

OF PROCESS AND SUBSTANCE: THE HOUSE'S LAST SESSION

While the last House session is still fresh in everyone's mind, I want to take the opportunity to give my perspective on both the process and substance of HB1, HB2 and HB282. When I ran for Speaker this term, I attempted to keep the issues internally and within our caucus rather than putting it out into the public while keeping the race as "clean" as possible. My goal was to restore "Trust and Integrity" back into our Republican House caucus and eliminate the bad policy/process/procedural decisions I had witnessed during my previous four terms, especially during my time as Senior Advisor in the Majority Office. Going forward, I intend to illuminate any negative actions of leadership as examples of why I ran. Never forget, the process and procedure at times is as, if not more, important for attaining the substance.

Let's begin with the amendment for **HB282** and I will only speak to the process piece, not policy as that is a very lengthy conversation in itself. We were given a multiple page, and very detailed, last second amendment that was meant to change the Group II retirement benefits. Receiving an amendment of such length, detail and importance on the House floor, and for members to be expected to support it without adequate time to review is "operating on the fly", one of the worst policies we should engage in. Proof is the first draft was wrong and had to be corrected! It was so detailed, those in Finance who should be the experts on the subject didn't even know what the amendment contained and had difficulty explaining the contents to our members. We were then promised by the Majority Leader that "the governor and Senate say its fine, so its good". Yet, they had just sent over a technically incorrect draft moments earlier. And do most of us know and understand what was in that amendment when we voted? This is no way to operate.

HB1 raised our spending by over 7% and \$1 billion dollars. Leadership used a typical tactic, as has been the case more often than not, to mute that number by removing federal dollars when calculating the increase. Our budget was significantly inflated during covid, and to get us back on a budget based on population and inflation increases, this budget needed to be reduced by approximately 5%. The difference is nearly \$2 billion dollars. As will be noted later, it does not even anticipate the budget to be balanced.

HB2 is a 179 page omnibus bill with nearly 400 sections and hundreds of policy changes that I assume very few legislators have actually read, and based on reports, a few of those involved in the COC did not either. Having read every page and highlighted problematic parts, I found several extremely bad policy changes including several that at best can only be described as "socialist". Others and I were going to highlight them in floor speeches during debate. These negatives were conspicuously missing from the Majority Office's "White Sheet" (recommendation paper to House members). The White Sheet's intentional deceptions and omissions have been one of my major concerns since last term. The Majority Office did not want you and our caucus to hear about these "negatives", so Rep Sweeny motioned to eliminate all debate. The bad policy issues contained in HB2 are:

- **CENTRAL PLANNING AGENCY/PARTNERS IN HOUSING** - Sections 31-33 Establishes a completely new Central Planning Agency with a primary focus of encouraging "Smart Growth". In tandem, sections 212-214 creates a "Partners In Housing" database which will empower the agency to direct where housing gets built in New Hampshire, using town-owned land and taxpayer-funded subsidies all while pushing "workforce housing". Select developers will then receive grants or loans. If you like how Massachusetts and California have handled their zoning, you'll love this piece of HB2.

Definition: **Smart growth** is an urban planning approach that promotes **"sustainable, efficient and equitable" development by focusing on compact, walkable communities and reducing urban sprawl by concentrating development into existing urban areas.** If you see this "Central Planning Agency" as an extension of the slew of zoning bills we saw this past year in an attempt to implement a top-down, central planning zoning structure while removing local control, you'd be correct. The ideologues and special interest groups are continuing their push to eliminate NH's zoning.

- **UNLIMITED CHILDCARE PAID AT TAXPAYER EXPENSE** - Section 71 gives unlimited childcare scholarships using taxpayer general funds, and another section permits the raiding of TANF reserve funds to avoid a waitlist for childcare. This is simply government funded babysitting, and Section 427 allows childcare scholarship payments prospectively while allowing eligibility for anyone to get free childcare. “Childcare Scholarships” – Isn’t that a crafty way to disguise the fact that this is taxpayer funded childcare? Another section allows \$7.5 Million to be raided from the TANF reserve funds to pay for childcare employer recruitment and retention bonuses and benefit grants. This is unlimited childcare subsidies that reward dependency, while taxpayers pay the bill for a few while we in Concord hand out freebies to individuals for their childcare expense and private childcare businesses get taxpayer dollars for bonuses and benefits for their employees.
- **FAKE IDs and DIGITAL IDs** - Section 102 would allow the Director of the Dept of Safety to make, sell, possess, and present fake IDs without any guardrails, oversight, and most importantly – without any justification. What could possibly go wrong? More licenses to illegal immigrants would be just one obvious example.

Section 386 would create digital State IDs. If you believe in privacy, then creating a system of databases of private citizen data attached to ID, such as REAL ID or vaccine passports, this should concern you as much personal privacy is eliminated..

Most if not all of you are unaware that Senate bill SB70 which contained these provisions, was tabled by the Senate and the bill never had hearings in the House. Yet here it is inserted into HB2. Beyond the policy questions that this change poses, the estimated costs of implementation were \$3.7 million for just the first three years.

- **OTHER BAD POLICIES in HB2** – The “balanced budget” you were presented with is anything but. Proof given is the section that anticipates raiding the State’s savings rainy day fund by the end of 2025.

There is a socialist mandate that all insurers cover the costs for a small segment of our population resulting in raised insurance premiums on everyone. Another is a socialist policy forcing employers to mandate time off for some employees which should have been properly vetted in the Labor Committee first.

There are gigantic increases in opportunities for the gambling industry by raising gambling bets to unlimited amounts, increasing the allowable hours of operation and allowing slot machines (VLTs) for the first time. Almost ironically (and comically), there’s the addition of social programs for “problem gamblers”. You can’t make this stuff up.

Finally, I want to address leadership’s FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt) campaign regarding these bills.

- We had no less than four in leadership combine to state: “If we fail, government will be shut down”, yet you will recall we later passed a CR (continuing resolution) that would have kept our bureaucracy funded at 90%, quite the win for conservative Republicans wanting lesser spending.
- They also stated that “If we fail, these bills will be worse later”. I spent 7 years in various negotiator and other national roles for our pilot’s union during my 41 years at American Airlines. I can think of no time where initially turning down “the last, final offer” by management did we ever end up with a worse agreement. It appeared leadership simply wished to avoid spending time on further negotiations, and as is frequently the case, the desire to avoid further conflict overrode the possibility for a better, more conservative agreement.
- And the other very common mantra “There is good and bad in the deal, but if we don’t pass it, we’ll lose the majority in the next election”. How many times, as our Republican voters demand solid conservative

progress on conservative policies, are we going to concede on socialist issues just so we can maintain a majority to then concede again on conservative issues? With solid Republican control of the Senate, House, Executive Council and the Governor's office, we should not be passing any policies that are of the democratic and socialistic nature.

Representative Len Turcotte – Barrington, NH

If you have taken the time to read this after-action report, thank you. If you have any questions, I can be reached by email or phone at: LenTurcotte@Metrocast.net or 603-969-1026.