



David Campbell, chair of the Public Works and Highways committee; Governor Maggie Hassan; and Maureen Mann, Mario Ratzki, and Karen Ebel, members of the Public Works and Highways committee, pose at the ground-breaking for the new women's prison in Concord.

Mario Ratzki Reports from Concord: September 2014

Vote in the primary election on September 9

By Mario Ratzki
NH State Representative

Reporting from Rye State Park: The historical John Smith (in the person of Paul Strand) made an appearance on August 14 to inaugurate his new monument in Rye State Park to commemorate the 400th anniversary of his expedition and landing at the Isles of Shoal. The expedition marks the first time that the expression "New England" was used.

John Smith's map of New England was instrumental in leading the Puritans to Plymouth Rock. The Governor, my chairman David Campbell, and members of the Public Works and Highways committee (including yours truly) were there to witness the unveiling of the obelisk and the plaque replicating the map under clear blue skies, overlooking the ocean and the Isles of Shoal in the distance.

A ground breaking for the new women's prison in Concord took place on August 18. The state was under the threat of a costly court action against it for having failed to provide the same kind of facilities for women as it was providing to the male prison population.

Public Works and Highways committee members in charge of the capital budget and under the Governor's direction allocated \$38 million for the construction of the new prison in the back of the men's state prison on Route 3 in Concord. It is hoped that sharing some of the facilities will result in savings to the state while providing some work training to help facilitate female inmates' rehabilitation and reduce recidivism.

A little known fact that I did not know is that New Hampshire owns about 93% of the width of the Connecticut River. This may sound like a good thing, until one realizes that it means New Hampshire is responsible for all the bridges crossing the river to Vermont.

My Public Works and Highway subcommittee is about to study an offer from the State of Vermont to pay from 50% up to 100% of the cost to replace the Vilas bridge sooner rather than later. The town of Bellows Falls has been hurt economically by the closure of the Vilas bridge. But on the New Hampshire side, we have another bridge a couple of miles down.

Of course, if we went along with this offer, we would have to reimburse Vermont down the line, and we in the committee are loath to make any commitment, considering our budgetary constraints. To be continued ...

The primary election is upon us, taking place on Tuesday, September 9. Most of the action will take place in the Republican primary, especially at the top of the ticket for US Senator, Congressman, and New Hampshire Governor.

It has often been said that if you don't vote, you can't complain. I would urge everyone to go and make their vote count, even if your candidate (like me) does not have an opponent in the primary. It is good exercise for the big one in November.

We go back to Concord on Wednesday, September 17, to vote to affirm or overturn the Governor's vetoes. I am always available at 735-5440 and at MarioRatzki@gmail.com.

David Kerrick Looks Back on 2014 Legislative Session

NH House finished work on June 4

By David Kerrick
NH State Representative

The New Hampshire House finished its work for the current biennium on June 4. The Legislature can be proud of what it accomplished, including a bipartisan budget restoring many of the draconian cuts to education and social services, making healthcare insurance possible for many working families, providing funding to fix roads and bridges, protecting women, children, and pets from violence, and enabling men and women to earn an equal paycheck for equal work.

The Ways and Means Committee, where I serve, met in June and August to look at State Revenues for the next few months. Committee members are concerned that some revenues, especially those from the Interest and Dividends Tax and the Business Taxes, are not meeting earlier projections.

In healthcare, a workable compromise on Medicaid expansion, Senate Bill (SB) 413, reached by the Senate and House is one of the major accomplishments for our less fortunate citizens. The November 2013 Special Session ended without an agreement to expand Medicaid, but in March, a bipartisan

plan using federal Medicaid funds to help needy adults purchase private health plans was passed. This will help about 50,000 low-income adults obtain health care coverage. Coverage could expire in three years unless extended by the Legislature.

Everyone was concerned when the state's Supreme Court ruled against the Medicaid Enhancement Tax, meaning the state would have to find about \$200 million to balance the next budget. Fortunately, SB 369, passed by both Houses, implements Governor Hassan's agreement with 25 New Hampshire hospitals, reducing the state's liability to under \$100 million and ensuring continued healthcare services to New Hampshire citizens.

The Legislature also passed the following bills related to healthcare:

House Bill (HB) 597 requires healthcare providers to have procedures in place to prevent substance abuse or diversion of drugs by employees.

SB 235 requires the state to open a 10-bed psychiatric crisis unit by July 1, 2015. This is only a small step toward bringing mental health services back up to the excellent standards of several years ago.

The Legislature passed the following bills dealing with domestic violence

See Look Back on page 10

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