

NH House Votes to Expand Medicaid; Senate Kills Bill

Ratzki expresses "disappointment and dismay"

By Mario Ratzki, NH Representative

Medicaid expansion is dead. While the House voted for Medicaid expansion, the Senate could not agree on its own bill and killed the House bill by a vote of 13 to 11 on a partisan basis. One can probably blame the ACA rollout for the failure of this bill. That the rollout was poorly managed is obviously an understatement.

As a supporter of affordable health care for all, I cannot hide my disappointment and dismay. That said, Medicaid expansion's intent is still valid. Imagine for a moment a mother of two working full time as a waitress, making ends meet on a \$16,000 yearly income. How in the world would she be able to get health care coverage without a federal subsidy? Or a family of five on an income of \$24,000 a year?

I have received e-mails urging me to vote against Medicaid expansion, calling it another program for the poor where abuse would be rampant and where people who could work would choose not to do so. I understand the argument, and I have no doubt that some people do abuse these programs and develop a lifelong addiction to dependency on the state or the federal government. The damage that these people do to these government programs cannot

be measured just in terms of financial costs, but also to the people themselves who do deserve our help, like the families of three and five described above.

Medicaid expansion will make a comeback next year, and it is possible that a compromise can be reached to ensure that 50,000 of our fellow citizens get health insurance. But just to be clear, the fact that we have 50,000 uninsured does not mean that there is no cost to the state. When an uninsured person goes to the emergency room for treatment, someone has to pay for it, and that "someone" is all of us through our taxes to the state, which turns around and pays hospitals \$20 million every year in uncompensated care payments. Hospitals are suing the state for another \$157 million of Medicaid funds, which the state used to balance the budget in 2011-2012.

Also, when I ran for office, I promised to be unrelenting in my pursuit of federal money for our state. We pay income tax to the federal government, and we should try to get as much of it back as possible. How can one, in good conscience, pass up \$2.5 billion of federal money, an amount that would create as many as 5,000 new jobs, bring in about \$400 million in economic activity, almost eliminate our uncompensated care payments to hospitals, while insuring our 50,000 uninsured friends, neighbors, and families?

Are we to say to the feds, "Go ahead, we are doing so well here in New Hampshire that you can take our money and give it to California, or New Jersey, or Connecticut for their Medicaid expansion"?

One must keep in mind that we only get approximately 77 cents back of every dollar we send to Washington. So the question is: Is it okay to subsidize other states with 23 cents of dollars, but not subsidize our state? To be continued ...

In other news: My wife Caroline and I were privileged to attend the unveiling of the Ray Burton scenic overlook at Mount Washington Hotel. Councillor Burton rode in in his convertible, and the rumors that the clouds parted and the sun came out at that moment are all true.

Ray Burton was a well-known figure throughout district one, which includes both Andover and Danbury. Many people remembered him fondly here in Andover, where he was both a teacher and a principal at Andover Elementary School in the 1960s.

We extend our sympathies to his family and friends. While I did not know him for very long, I could recognize him for what he was: a true gentleman and a great civil servant. Ray Burton For Certain.

While I did not introduce any bills myself for 2014, I was asked to co-sponsor a number of them. One was a paint recycling bill which a Danbury Transfer Station manager supports, introduced by Representative Burns of Franklin. Another was a flood control repayment bill for 2011-2012 which was never paid to the flood control towns, introduced by Senator Sanborn. This bill would make sure that when (or if) Massachusetts pays its arrear bills, the towns would be made good. This is important for Salisbury, one of the towns.

I am glad to report that Danbury was one of three towns chosen to be eligible for help in broadband expansion through the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service. While it is not a given that Danbury will be the ultimate recipient, it is through the effort of Charlotte McIver, Ruby Hill, and Mannie Pellegrino that Danbury got so far already. I congratulate them.

The House session is over for the year. There will be a few committee meetings to attend, one dealing with the ten-year transportation plan.

I wish everyone Happy Holidays and a wonderful New Year. I am always available at 735-5440 or MarioRatzki@gmail.com.



Wanted: Candidates For Town Boards & Committees

By Dennis Fenton

Andover Board of Selectmen (retired)

Dennis Fenton, a long-time member of the Board of Selectmen, wrote these words in 2009 when he decided to retire from the Board. With his permission, we're re-running this to encourage people to consider becoming a candidate.

First, the fact that you are busy is not a legitimate excuse! Everyone can use that one, but it's the town's well-being that is at stake, so we all have to find time to do the things that are really important to us.

What background should you have to run for a Town office? There's no one right answer to that question. George Upton, for example, took an appointment to fill a vacancy on the Board of Selectman before the moving van was completely unloaded when he came to Andover. He went on to win re-election. George only had on-the-job training, which is the hard way.

Other Town officers have taken different paths. All these folks had one thing in common as a part of the community – they wanted to give something back to Andover.

A Good Candidate

What makes a good candidate? The first item on any candidate's agenda should be what is good for the majority. When a new problem arises, the solution is not the easy way out, but what serves our town the best.

As a member of a Town board or

committee, you are one of the overseers of our town whose job it is to manage the town's resources and problems. When a vote is taken, be supportive even if you might like something a little different.

Your main charge is to have needed services provided to the town at a reasonable cost. An important tool available to you in pursuit of that goal is the Budget Committee. Their job is to review all budgets in town and present the budget to be voted on at Town Meeting, School District Meeting, and the meetings of the various precincts.

The Budget Committee takes the prejudice out of an individual budget as they look at the big picture. It is important that we all, boards and citizens, listen very closely to the story they tell each year as they attempt to keep our tax rate at a manageable level.

Share Your Talents

To all you good folks out there: You are not too busy to make a commitment to share your many talents. Being a member of a Town board or committee is not a thankless job. People appreciate your willingness to serve, and you will be surprised how many times you are told this.

I don't know who will sign up, but you are out there. This is for your town. It is all worthwhile. Good luck!

The filing dates for candidates to file with the Town Clerk are Wednesday, January 22, through Friday, January 31.



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