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now, but they are all still alive and will be heard by the Senate next. The sixth bill is “on the table” which is like being on the bench on a sports team; it could theoretically be brought back into the game by majority vote.

Then in February the full House began to take up the bills that were out of committee. It took several weeks to churn through them all. The bills on Consent are passed dozens at a time in a voice vote, which takes only about 30 seconds. The more contentious bills are debated, with the Minority view presented first, followed by a speech by the Majority view.

Since I wrote a number of my committee’s Majority Reports last year, I have had the opportunity to deliver my short speeches “at the well,” as the pulpit-like podium is known. Now that the novelty has worn off, I’ve become a lot more confident and discovered that it’s not too different from speaking to one of my classes when I was a teacher. (Except my students were more attentive and better behaved!)

Then, the political shenanigans start-

ed: About this time last year, the Speaker of the House announced that all State House legislators and staff would be required to attend a training session on sexual harassment in the workplace.

Fine idea. In my former job as a teacher, all school employees were required to do similar training, to protect both themselves, their co-workers and the reputation of the institution. I don’t recall that anyone in school objected very much to that, expecting they would certainly lose their jobs if they did not comply.

Representatives had a whole year to complete the training and those that didn’t go to the first two well-attended one-hour lectures were reminded in increasingly demanding ways to attend. (If you have any experience with bill collectors, you have a good idea of the escalation I’m describing.) In spite of that, nine members refused to attend the sexual harassment training sessions for a whole year.

So, the Speaker issued reprimands to each of these people, to be voted on by the full House after they had a chance to explain themselves. One had a plausible excuse the House accepted. (He had certified completion of such a training at his other job.) Another accepted responsibility without complaint. But the others were loudly and insultingly defiant. The House voted to reprimand them.

The following full House session was just two days before the deadline: any bills not passed by the end of the March 12 session would be dead. Many of those bills contain essential legislation, vital to somebody or everybody in the state. Those reprimanded, aided by their allies, began to employ delaying tactics, much like filibustering in the United States Congress.

We started at 9 AM on both days, but after a day and a half of session, at noon of March 12 only 35 bills had been voted on, including the bills on the

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OPINION

The Virus Doesn’t Discriminate; We Are All in This Together

Dan Feltes
NH State Senate and
2020 candidate for governor

All of us, from the President of the United States to everyday citizens, have a job to do to combat the virus, COVID-19. We are not going to contain this overnight and it’s going to get worse before it gets better. But we’re all in this together. This virus doesn’t care who you love, where you live, or what you do for work. In the past week, we’ve seen it spread exponentially across the United States and around the world.

We should all thank our state employees, especially those at the Department of Health and Human Services, and our medical professionals, who are on the front lines of this fight to keep Granite Staters healthy. Our federal delegation worked with members of both parties to secure \$5 million in federal funds to help offset costs associated with the COVID-19 response. Commissioner Nicolopoulos announced an order to prohibit state-regulated insurance plans from charging out-of-pocket costs for all COVID-19 testing, which is a critical step to ensure that cost is not a deterrent for individuals seeking the treatment they need. We have asked the Department of Health and Human Services for any specific requests they may have for the Legislature to better enable them to do their jobs.

The most important step we can take is to make smart decisions to stay healthy and prevent the spread of the virus. But, Granite Staters need to know they can keep themselves healthy without fear of losing their job or taking on debt. That’s why, on Thursday, the Senate announced our plans to introduce legislation to allow Granite Staters who are quarantined to receive unemployment insurance so those living paycheck to paycheck can pay their bills even if they can’t go to work. The legislation also included job protections

for Granite Staters who are quarantined to ensure you can’t lose your job if you need to stay home. We cannot penalize people who do the right thing to stay healthy. We also require the Department of Health and Human Services to request a waiver from the federal government to cover the costs of testing and treatment for uninsured Granite Staters.

At the local level, our public health departments, first responders, and local officials are setting their preparedness plans in motion. This virus is going to test our ability to work together, communicate effectively, and look out for one another. As schools close and our workforce struggles with child care, we’ll need to look out for one another more than ever. And, yes, we need to hold each other accountable, just like any successful team.

Our most vulnerable populations, our grandparents and people of all ages with underlying health conditions, will need our help and need those who are potentially infected to make smart decisions and not put others at risk. Our prisoners, our nursing home residents, and Granite Staters in the developmental disability community who rely upon a healthy workforce will need special attention.

It’s no secret that Governor Sununu and I don’t agree on much, but I’m glad there is agreement on many of these concepts and I look forward to working together. We are all on the same team on this one. There will be a time and a place for healthy debate and discussion, but today and in the weeks and months to come those of us in the legislature will continue to do our job helping to take this virus on.

We’re all in this together. We all have a role to play. And in order to move New Hampshire forward and through this, we cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

Andover Community Church

On the hill, beside the road in East Andover
(Corner of Chase Hill Rd. and Rte. 11)

All members, ministers

Rev Bill Blomquist, Interim Pastor

603-735-5160 - AndoverChurch@tds.net

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