

LETTERS

Support Redistricting Commission

I ask your support for HB 1665 to establish an advisory independent redistricting commission. The measure passed the New Hampshire House with

Your opinion matters! Please send a letter to the *Beacon* expressing your thoughts on any local matters. Our readers want and need to hear your voice!

a bipartisan vote just before the coronavirus crisis set in. It will be before the Senate when it is back in session, hopefully in the first week of May.

Please join me in writing our Senator, Harold French, at PO Box 11, Warner NH 03278 and asking him to vote in favor of the bill. He voted for the HB 706 version for an independent redistricting commission, and, with a nudge from his constituents, he is likely to vote for HB 1665.

When I took American history in high school in Lenox, Massachusetts in 1953 and 1954, I learned about gerrymandering. So interesting! In 1812, as Wikipedia reminds me of specifics I had forgotten, Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry created a new voting district around Boston. On a map, the shape of the new voting district resembled a salamander.

The new district was meant to favor his party; the map (with claws, wings,

and fangs added) was published in the *Boston Weekly Messenger* with the title "The Gerry-Mander." It became the object of derision in text books and taught me the lesson that such manipulation was inappropriate for the Republic.

What is best for New Hampshire? A manipulated map, with the attendant shortcomings of Governor Gerry's creation? Or a transparency and structure that should eliminate the current gerrymandering and curtail future manipulation by either party – voting district maps that can be the pride of New Hampshire, with fairness to both parties and all voters?

Kent Hackmann

Absentee Voting

While the governor has taken a first step by broadening his interpretation of the absentee voter laws to allow people who "feel more comfortable voting absentee because of the outbreak," it is not up to any governor to grant or allow us to cast our vote under any circumstances. That is our constitutional

right, and governors have the responsibility to see that any and all barriers to that right are removed.

On the one hand, Governor Sununu is willing to "allow" us to vote absentee during a pandemic; on the other hand, he stated recently on MSNBC and CNN that he would still veto the bill implementing no-excuse absentee voting in New Hampshire for the long haul. In my opinion, this is a very serious abuse of power.

Voters should not have to explain themselves when requesting an absentee ballot. There could be several circumstances, beyond the four reasons that are currently approved, some of which may be very personal. I trust that if someone is mature enough to vote, they are also mature enough to make a decision as to whether they can physically go to a polling place on election day. Leaving it to the judgment of the voter would be a sign of respect.

I urge Governor Sununu to drop his objection to expanding voting by absentee ballot for all elections.

Judith Ackerson



The mission of *The Andover Beacon* is to serve and strengthen the Andover community. To that end, we welcome (by the 15th!) civil, reasoned letters addressing specifically local issues, events, and developments. Submissions must not be critical of another's religion; blasphemous; obscene; hateful; legally objectionable; or commercial in nature. The *Beacon* reserves the right to edit or not publish submissions it deems inappropriate for any reason.

S&P AUTO

720 Main Street • Andover

Scott Palmer 526-9528 nights: 927-4629 Phil LeBrecht

Affordable living for Seniors of all Incomes!
Current Openings – No Admission Fee!



A not-for-profit private pay organization caring for seniors since 1942

- Enjoy home cooked meals
- 24 Hour Licensed Nursing Staff
- Housekeeping services
- Music & Memory Program
- Pet Therapy
- Daily Social activities
- Peabody Bus Transport for outings, restaurants & shopping



Assisted Living, Nursing & Memory Care
Respite & Elder Day Care

Call for a tour or to learn more about Peabody Home

24 Peabody Place, Franklin, NH
(603) 934-3718 • www.peabodyhome.org

OPINION

How Do We Govern the State Without Holding Meetings?

GOFERR is not in the people's best interests

Ken Wells
NH State Representative

The customary title of this column, *Report from Concord*, seems peculiar to me now, since I've been unable to go to Concord for the past month. Just days after the all-night House session I described in the previous issue of the *Beacon*, the Governor locked down the State House and all the related government offices due to the rising pandemic. Roughly a week later, the Governor issued his stay-at-home order for the rest of New Hampshire citizens – a wise and necessary measure to quell the exponential rise in COVID-19 cases across the state.

But what does closing the State House mean? It is not merely a building that has been shut down. Because the Senate and the House are unable to meet, there can be no quorum, so no votes, and their standing committees cannot hold any public hearings to advance legislation. The Executive Council, a powerful and unique state entity

which approves or rejects every major purchase or contract with the State, is also barred from meeting in the State House, so no new state contracts can legally be entered into.

Many are raising serious concerns about whether our representative democracy will be able to function under these emergency conditions, especially since the COVID-19 emergency will likely continue much longer than any of us would like. As long as the emergency ban on meetings is in effect, and until virtual government meetings by teleconferences can be recognized as legally acceptable, a serious obstacle exists to the constitutional functioning of our state government.

Unfortunately, we have not quite figured out how our representative system can work during the current pandemic, which rightly demands physical distancing, because the legislative bodies cannot meet to discuss and modify their own rules to respond to the crisis, nor can they update existing laws.

History tells us repeatedly that times of crisis are times when autocrats have

See Govern on page 13

This page is sponsored by the Highland Lake Protective Association

See us on Facebook: The Highland Lake Protective Association

E-mail us at hlpanhgmail.com