

# OPINIONS

## Recent Bills Demonstrate Need for Voters to Pay Attention

Mary Anne Broshek, Andover

There are two bills that were recently voted on in the New Hampshire House of Representatives that demonstrate why voters who care about public education and the growing influence in New Hampshire politics of the Free State Movement need to pay attention.

**HB 1671:** In February, New Hampshire Education Commissioner Frank Edelblut introduced HB 1671. The bill changed the core academic requirements for an adequate education by removing art, health, and physical education, engineering, computer science, digital literacy, and world languages. It also changed the reporting and accountability requirements for public schools and hurt the state's college-and-career readiness effort, the "Drive to 65 Act."

Due to significant public opposition, on March 8 the House Education Committee removed the Edelblut changes and added personal finance literacy and logic/rhetoric. HB 1671 came from the Commissioner of Education who was nominated by Chris Sununu and approved by our Executive Councilor Joe Kinney. If you care about good public education, remember this in the November elections and vote them out.

**CACR 32:** On March 10, the House defeated, by a vote of 323 to 13, a proposed constitutional amendment to "peacefully declare" the state's independence from the United States and establish itself as a sovereign nation. The debate over sovereignty was the

first in a state legislative body in this country since before the civil war.

This constitutional amendment was heard in committee in January. New Hampshire Public Radio reported that Committee Chairman Rep. Al Baldassaro, a Republican from Londonderry, asked how many members of the public who came to testify were members of the Free State Project – about two-thirds raised their hands.

While CACR 32 was an extreme piece of legislation, many other bills that change the New Hampshire way of life are being proposed and passed. Voters need to pay attention and learn how their Representatives and Senators are voting.

Free Staters and Libertarians who run as Republicans have won 90 seats in the legislature, and Free Stater Jason Osborne was made New Hampshire House Majority Leader. The legislative system in New Hampshire is set up so each bill is heard before a committee where people from all sides provide testimony and Legislators can ask questions to better understand the proposed legislation.

The New Hampshire Liberty Alliance reviews bills and gives them a rating of either "pro liberty" or "anti liberty" and provides these ratings to Legislators before a vote. The 2021 ratings show the following for Andover's legislators: Louise Andrus: 100%; Natalie Wells: 93.8%; and Harold French: 75%, according to NHLiberty.org/liberty-ratings.



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.

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## Lack of Knowledge About Teachers Leads to Misinformation

New Hampshire teachers rank sixth in survey

Ken Wells, Andover

Nearly everyone in Andover with personal knowledge of our Andover Elementary/Middle School gushes about what a great place it has been for their children and how fabulous the teachers have been for their kids. Yet public schools and teachers in our town, and all across our state are under fire today. Why?

New Hampshire has the sixth highest ranking in the United States for its public schools, as reported in a WalletHub study published in Forbes magazine.

I recently spoke in Andover with a fellow who said he was passing through from Bradford. (I'll just call him "Brad.") He claimed that "teachers only work part-time, nine months of the year, quitting time at 3 PM, they get all those teacher in-service days off to go skiing, so they should only get paid for part-time work, but they're making, like \$65,000 dollars a year. Teachers get paid too much!"

Wow! As a public school graduate and retired teacher who worked in residential high schools for 37 years, I know this could hardly be farther from the truth! I know only too well how many 14-hour days we teachers worked; sometimes one long day followed another, and another.

We'd start our day in the classroom, followed by coaching in the afternoon, then participating in evening duties or meetings, finally sitting down to grade that day's student work and prepare the next day's lessons at around 10 PM. The cycle started again the next day with an 8 AM class. Some years, I was lucky to have only 25 advanced students; other years there were more than 60.

On top of the daily face-to-face work with students comes a relentless need for detailed student reports and evaluations to be written, along with thoughtful college recommendations for juniors and seniors.

Teachers must attend professional development seminars, or mandatory training sessions required by various safety, health, and insurance authorities. Teachers learn things like CPR, how to address bullying, how to identify and respond to sexual harassment, how to respond to an active shooter in the building, etc.

If you doubt any part of what I'm

saying, find a teacher and ask them about all the things they do, and then really listen to their answer.

A web search shows teachers' average starting salary in New Hampshire is just under \$39,000 per year; that's barely over half the \$75,000 median income in Andover. (The state-wide median income is even higher, at \$79,000.) In spite of the high academic results our schools and teachers achieve, New Hampshire teacher salaries are lower than teachers earn in half the other states of the US. Who thinks this is fair?

In New Hampshire, we are in an ever-deepening labor shortage for qualified teachers. This is only partly due to the strains the pandemic has imposed on teachers, health care workers, and others who play essential face-to-face roles. If a teacher unexpectedly misses a day, colleagues pick up extra work without compensation.

Many teachers have decided to retire early or seek other work. And why not? A teacher with four, six, or more years of expensive post-secondary education and strong professional "people-skills" is almost certainly qualified to do much more lucrative work than being a classroom teacher, and do it with less risk to their health and well-being.

I understand that for some, leaving the classroom is a melancholy but timely decision. For those that stay on, I applaud them for their unselfish dedication to making our future world a better place!

It seems that people like Brad don't actually know what teachers really do, yet they keep spreading this harmful rubbish. It is strange and suspicious to me that I have heard Brad's same story repeated almost verbatim in political circles over the past several years.

These people insist on telling the fable that our public schools are failing, that they are no good. They describe that teachers are only at work when "lecturing" in front of a class of mostly disengaged kids.

If that was the limit of Brad's educational experience, I'm sorry for him. In my experience, the most effective teachers rarely lecture, but involve their students in carefully designed interactive lessons, changing them up so the activities will be engaging and uniquely different from day to day.

But why would anyone want to tell such untruthful stories about our public schools and dedicated teachers? Perhaps the answer lies in the

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