



A Citizen Voice for the
Aging Experience

February 2021
Volume 15, #2

**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

*Richard Crocker
Meredith, NH*

*Carol Currier
Concord, NH*

*Peg Leighton
Hillsborough, NH*

*Jean Lewandowski
Nashua, NH*

*Cindy Robertson
Hooksett, NH*

*Barbara Salvatore
Bedford, NH*

*Maida Sengupta
Nashua, NH*

*Roger Vachon
Concord, NH*

EngAGING NH
9 Gleneagle Drive
Bedford, NH
engagingnh@gmail.com
www.engagingnh.org

ENGAGING NH NEWS

Guest Opinion

How to Have a Conversation with Someone You Disagree With

Recent events in the United States underscore a deep trend towards polarization that is spreading throughout the country. As current events bring up strong emotions, we have 11 tips for talking to someone you disagree with. Even if you don't share the same opinion, these strategies can help you approach every conversation with respect and integrity and even perhaps reach a compromise.

1. Tell people they matter. Before launching into any talking points, it can be very helpful to reinforce to the other person that you value them and recognize their importance as a fellow human being. A simple, "before we begin, I just want to tell you that I care about you and respect your perspective" will do.

2. Don't let frustration get the best of you. When having a discussion with someone you disagree with, frustration can be one of the first emotions that come up. Rather than getting angry, channel this frustration into expressing your opinion in a collected and organized manner. If you can't do this, it's always okay to say, "I'm feeling

The vast majority of people are good & want unity, rather than division.

frustrated, so I am going to take a moment to cool off before we continue."

3. Acknowledge underlying fears. So much of our interpersonal conflict is based on fear, so laying these uncertainties out on the table can be very beneficial. Acknowledge your own fears and ask the other person about theirs to better understand how these concerns influence your different points of view. This practice also helps

In this Issue

NH Updates	page 2
Your Voice	6
NH Comm on Aging	7
Focus on Community	7
News You Can Use	8
Health & Wellness	11
Tech Tips	13
Dollars & Sense	14
Laugh & Live Longer	16
Purposeful Living	17
Board Notes	18
NH Legislative Contacts	20

build empathy between participants.

4. Don't assume the worst. The vast majority of people are good and want unity, rather than division. Seek to understand their perspective and assume they have good intentions unless you have direct evidence to the contrary.

5. Share your sources. There's a lot of misleading information floating around our world. Discuss not only your opinions but also the facts and sources that inform your opinions.

6. Use respectful language. Swearing, name-calling, blanket statements, and personal attacks will get you nowhere in a respectful discussion. Speak to your partner with kindness and professionalism no matter how upset you may be.

7. Show you understand (even if you don't agree). You don't have to agree to everything someone says, but you do have to make an effort to understand why they feel a certain way. Listen carefully and seek clarification on issues you are confused about.

8. Don't defer to sarcasm. We frequently turn to sarcasm in an attempt to lighten the mood, but this can all too often be misconstrued or misunderstood. Try to avoid sarcasm in favor of language that doesn't leave room for misinterpretation.

9. Don't be condescending. Oftentimes we use condescending language in conversations as a tool for control, but this will only leave your partner feeling patronized. Instead, seek to understand your partner's knowledge level on a topic before launching into an explanation about it.

WHO ARE WE?

EngAGING NH is an all-volunteer not-for-profit organization registered with the State of NH. We work to support and promote activities, policies, planning and values that respect and include ALL older adults.

10. Teach and be taught. Ultimately, difficult conversations with people who do not share our opinions allow us to develop more empathy and find a compromise by sharing an understanding of the issue at hand. Be open to receiving novel information you may not know and share new facts with compassion.

11. Thank them for their opinion. At the end of any conversation, no matter the outcome, thank your partner for the diverse perspective they brought to the table. Even if you still disagree, their words opened up your viewpoint and added nuance to your argument.

The Optimist Daily

NH Updates

NH LAW CHANGES EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1

- The definition of sexual assault is expanded to include any sexual contact between school employees and students between ages 13 and 18.
- Health insurance plans in New Hampshire are now required to cover epinephrine auto-injectors, often known by the leading brand "Epi-Pen"
- Police officers in New Hampshire must report instances of misconduct they observe by their fellow officers

- The Legislature has ratcheted up legal penalties for commercial truck drivers that drive while intoxicated. Now, if they're caught, they'll get jail time.
- House Bill 1182 states that any person who is driving a vehicle that weighs 10,001 pounds or more, and who is found with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08 or more, automatically must be charged with an aggravated DWI. Source: Concord Monitor

AN EXPANSION OF HOME HEALTH CARE FOR MEDICAID NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

For years, Medicaid recipients in New Hampshire who wanted to get health care at home rather than in a county nursing home faced tall barriers. That's because the county nursing homes were directly capped in how much they could spend on home health care.

In total, counties could only spend up to 50% of the total they spent on nursing home care toward home health care. And individuals who wanted to use home health care could only get 80% of the cost of care they would have received in the nursing home; any more and they

We Want You to Know . . .

EngAGING NH promotes citizen leadership and the active involvement of New Hampshire's older adults in the development of communities and public policies that support all individuals as we age. We are a COMPLETELY VOLUNTEER organization with no paid staff, and a limited budget.

We actively partner & work with other NH advocates.

Formal Partnerships

- NH State Independent Living Council
- Disabilities Rights Center—NH
- NH Cares
- UNH Center for Aging and Community Living
- Oral Health Care Expansion, Children's Alliance of NH
- Self Advocacy Leadership Team (SALT)
- Mid-State Regional Coordinating Council
- Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission

Active Collaborations & Groups:

- Elder Rights Coalition

Other Groups we work with:

- AARP
- NH Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- NH State Committee on Aging
- NAMI
- NH Alliance for Retired Americans
- DD Council
- UNH Institute on Disabilities
- NASW-NH
- Area Committees on Aging
- NH Association of Senior Centers
- Endowment for Health, Alliance on Healthy Aging
- NH Legal Assistance
- Department of Health & Human Services
- ServiceLink

© 2017 EngAGING NH, All Rights Reserved

www.engagingnh.org

EngAGING NH Newsletter articles may be copied for personal use, but proper notice of copyright and credit to EngAGING NH must appear on all copies made. This permission does not apply to reproduction for advertising, promotion, sale or other commercial purposes.

would need a direct exemption from the state commissioner of the Department Health and Human Services.

A change in laws that takes effect this New Year eliminates those price caps on counties. Now, Medicaid recipients must be offered the choice to receive care in a "less restrictive setting if such services are available," and there are no limits on how much the county can spend on them.

The change could see a surge of lower income residents being accommodated in their homes. The new law also requires DHHS to submit an annual report to the Legislature on how many people are taking up this option, allowing lawmakers to keep tabs on how expensive it becomes.

OLLI REGISTRATION

Come for the classes, stay for the friends!

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Granite State College (GSC) is a 'learning for the fun of it', member-driven volunteer based educational program for lifelong learners age 50+ who are eager to explore ideas and interests in a safe and relaxed environment, with a community of peers.

Volunteer curriculum committees develop programs in response to member interests. Courses are non-credit. There are no tests, grades, or college prerequisites. Events, trips, social activities and volunteer opportunities enhance member benefits.

Registration begins February 8. OLLI at Granite State College

FUEL AND ELECTRICITY SAVINGS

"Our Town Energy Alliance is one of the largest heating fuel discount groups in NH. We also serve areas in ME, VT and MA. Our mission is to help our members save money on their fuel bills by offering lower energy costs on propane, oil and kerosene. Homeowners, small businesses, schools and towns are welcome to join. OTEA founder, the late Daniel M. Barraford III, believed in "working with people and for people". We work for you, not the fuel companies. Our twenty years of experience saves you both time and money."

<https://ourtownenergyalliance.com/>

LAWSUIT SEEKS PROTECTION FOR NH RESIDENTS FACING DANGEROUS INSTITUTIONAL PLACEMENTS IN NURSING FACILITIES

New Hampshire residents who depend on the state to provide them with Medicaid-funded long-term care are suing the state for its failure to properly administer its Choices for Independence ("CFI") Medicaid program.

The program is designed to provide vital assistance to those who qualify both medically and financially for long term care and who choose to continue living in their homes. This option avoids

FYI...

This newsletter is intended as a forum for you to share personal experiences, information and points of view.

In our media driven world of skillful marketing and political spin, we believe that diversity is critical to discernment and therefore the EngAGING NH Board of Directors welcomes all points of view, expressed with civility!

While the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Board members, our intent is to include material that assists you in forming your own opinions.

To send articles or to add your name to our newsletter mailing list, contact:

engagingnh@gmail.com

the need for costly and restrictive nursing facility placements.

New Hampshire Legal Assistance, Disability Rights Center – New Hampshire, AARP Foundation, and the Manchester office of Nixon Peabody LLP represent older adults and persons with disabilities enrolled in the CFI program filed a lawsuit in federal court on behalf of themselves and other CFI participants. They allege that New Hampshire’s failure to deliver CFI services places them at risk of unnecessary and dangerous institutionalization in nursing facilities.

“Some of our most vulnerable citizens are one crisis away from unnecessary institutionalization because they are not getting essential CFI services. Without these services, they linger for hours or days alone in bed or confined in their own homes, unable to attend to basic personal needs. The State has long been aware of these problems and we cannot wait any longer for a solution,” said Pamela Pheasant, DRC-NH’s litigation director.

The COVID-19 crisis has heightened the importance of preventing unnecessary institutionalization. In New Hampshire, 80% of all COVID-19 deaths have involved residents of these facilities – double the national average.

“When CFI participants are deprived of the community-based long-term care that the state concedes they need and are entitled to, they face grave health risks,” said AARP Foundation Senior Attorney M. Geron Gadd. “Failure to properly administer the CFI Waiver not only deprives

participants of their right to live as they choose, but also greatly increases their chances of exposure to COVID-19 in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.”

If you or someone you know has struggled to get the services you need under the CFI waiver, please email us at litigation@aarp.org.

UPDATES MADE TO NH COVID-19 VACCINATION PLAN

People 65 and older will be able to register for the vaccine shot on January 22nd. This is a change from the earlier plan to have

people over 75 able to receive a vaccine in the next phase. This new plan will include about 300,000 people in the revised Phase 1b who are able to start getting the first dose of the vaccine.

Medically vulnerable people of all ages who will also be eligible will need to get certification from their doctors that they have two or more medical conditions that qualify them for the vaccine during

Phase 1b.

Beginning January 22nd, those who are 65 and older can go to this link to register. New Hampshire receives an allotment of 17,000 doses a week so not everyone will receive a shot in the first weeks, and it could take some time to vaccinate this population.

Some additional links where you can find credible information on the COVID-19 Vaccine: [COVID vaccine Information](#), [Finding Credible Vaccine Information](#), [NH DHHS Vaccine Information](#), [Vaccines: COVID-19](#)



NEW LEGAL HELP FOR TENANTS FACING EVICTION

NH Legal Assistance and the Legal Advice and Referral Center have started a new online Eviction Clinic for tenants who are facing eviction or are confused about the eviction process. During the Clinic, lawyers and paralegals from both organizations will explain the eviction process and answer general questions. They will not be able to provide legal advice for specific cases.

Pre-registration is not required. The links for each week’s Clinic(s) will be on NHLA’s Facebook page and website.

Your Voice

2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

This is a budget session and perhaps never a more critical time for public monitoring and input. It’s also complicated by COVID-19. The House has only enough Zoom availability for 5 public hearings to be conducted at the same time. In a normal year, there might be over 20 hearings going on at the same time, so the House is planning to meet five days a week instead of the usual Tuesday through Thursday. Committees may hold an executive session on a bill on the same day that they hear the bill.

In the past each step of the process on a Bill becoming law included public input. But this new process may limit the available opportunity to advocate on a bill. It is expected that hearings will run much longer than pre-COVID-19 and bills with similar topics may be grouped together by subject matter in the same hearing.

Bills that do not require immediate action or that need more work may be retained and will come back in the 2022 session. Also, bills that would normally go to a sub-committee may be retained and acted on

in 2022. These retained bills could be acted on in the fall of 2021. We don’t know the criteria for any of these designations.

Further, what is not clear is how amendments to bills will be shared with the public or how written testimony and other documents that are part of a testimony will be shared with the public.

What can you do to be sure your voice is heard? Contact Martha McLeod, NH Alliance for Healthy Aging (NHAHA) Community Engagement Coordinator at mmcleod@new-futures.org and request to be placed on the weekly mailing list.

BECOME AN ADVOCATE

New Futures is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates, educates and collaborates to improve the health and wellness of all New Hampshire residents through policy change. New Futures envisions a State and local communities where public policies support efforts to improve the health and wellness of all Granite Staters.

Many bills that New Futures support or oppose are critical to the health and wellness of New Hampshire's citizens, but do not

WHO IS MY LEGISLATOR?

Use this quick link to find and contact your local State Rep and Senator:
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/members/wml.aspx>

Visit your town or city’s website to find contact information for your local elected officials.

Tell them your ideas, thoughts & concerns!

Commission on Aging Update

require large-scale, public facing campaigns to advance or defend positive policies. New Futures follows all of these

bills throughout the session and provides testimony, organizes partners, works with the media, and mobilizes advocates as necessary.

Pairing campaign and ongoing advocacy substantially increase the likelihood of achieving crucial, multi-issue policy objectives to keep New Hampshire healthy.

<https://new-futures.org/>

(The Commission is important. NH does not have an independent Agency on Aging to address the broad issues faced by people as they age. The Commission, formed in September of 2019, is taking up that role. Their meetings are open to the public as are their Task Force meetings. To learn more and be involved, <https://nhcoa.nh.gov/>. or contact Rebecca.Sky@nh.gov.)

Meetings are generally held on the third Monday of the month but for January and February, because of holidays, meetings are on the 4th Monday.

EngAGING NH is represented at all meetings and we continue to be encouraged and supportive of the approaches taken in defining the Commission’s role, identifying issues, and creating task forces to address those issues.

Focus on Community

RETHINKING HOUSING

The potential impact of COVID-19, from a housing perspective, is im-

mense. Because of the interdependency of our economy with health, well-being and housing security, we have yet to see the full extent of the effect on older adults.

When renters can't afford to pay bills, landlords cannot pay banks and banks report increasing non-performing loans, the problems ripple through the economy and society at large. Older adults

could be at risk, losing affordable housing options and facing increased likelihood of eviction and homelessness.

We need to address these issues by emphasizing the primacy of housing for all individuals as a central place to receive wraparound services, such as health care, food assistance and social supports. At the same time, we must reinforce programs that keep affordable housing options open as the needs and demands increase.

We have concrete examples of local government innovation. For instance, in Atlanta, property tax increases put older individuals who were aging in place with fixed incomes at risk of losing their homes. The former Mayor, Kasim Reed, instituted a city fund to financially support vulnerable, low-income older adults to cover those costs.

How to Contact NH Commission on Aging

Chair,
Polly Campion
 Pkc441@outlook.com

Vice Chair,
Carol Stamatakis
 cstamatakis@outlook.com

Clerk,
Roberta Berner
 bernerabel@aol.com

Executive Director,
Rebecca Sky
 Rebecca.L.Sky@das.nh.gov

Creative policies, including financial solutions that support affordable housing, will help us build robust communities that are inclusive of older adults.

One of the most important ways we can adapt and grow from this crisis is looking at how we define infrastructure in cities.

The traditional concept only encompasses roads, water and power and other basic utility programs. It's time to expand that definition to include social infrastructure.

We need to start looking at connections between housing, care and other services as part of supporting the health and well-being of all residents, especially older adults. This new future of infrastructure should encompass hospitals, schools, senior centers, libraries and other community facilities.

Henry Cisneros

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IS AGELESS

Five-year-old Aryana Chopra rang in the new year in the most productive, positive way possible: She designed and hand-made 200 cards to send to every resident at a senior living home in Vestal, NY. Aryana's father is a doctor on the front lines of the pandemic, so she knows how serious coronavirus is.

"I got an idea of making cards for the people in the nursing home who cannot go out and meet their friends and family," she says.

When her mother noticed Aryana hard at work making the cards, she called the local nursing home and asked how many residents were there. Two hundred is a tall order, but Aryana worked for almost two weeks to make them all, decorating each one with a unique combination of

rainbows, snowmen, kids holding gifts and special New Year's messages.

CNN The Good News

News You Can Use

2021 SENIOR DISCOUNTS ON FOOD DELIVERIES AND GROCERIES

New companies like DoorDash, Uber Eats, GrubHub and others have come into being to meet the growing demand for food delivery. Senior citizens look for discounts on food, and there are many senior discounts on food deliveries and grocery stores as well.

Since the beginning of 2020, many supermarkets have designated senior shopping hours on senior discount days to protect the most vulnerable from infection. Some have discounts for pick-up or deliveries. Others remain in-store discounts only.

For the complete list, see the link on our ENH website.

FREE PROGRAMS AND SITES

Well Connected is a free program for NH's older adults administered by EasterSeals NH. The program offers activities, education, support groups and friendly conversation 365 days per year. To participate or volunteer, contact Linda Howard at 603-335-1770.

ZinniaTV Gentle Paced videos and music that promote identity and connection. Videos are easy on the eyes and music easy on the ears. Topics include nature, interests, nostalgia, and fun and games. www.zinniaTV.com

EXERCISE

Free Exercise For Older Adults Exercise sessions include stretches, daily workouts, weight training, and strength training.

Your Local Resources

ServiceLink Aging & Disability Resource Center 866-634-9412 (servicelink.nh.gov);

211 NH is the connection for NH residents to the most up to date resources they need from specially trained Information and Referral Specialists.

211 NH is available 24 hours, 365 days a year. Multilingual assistance and TDD access are also available.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=free+exercise+sessions+for+older+adults&qv=free+exercise+sessions+for+older+adults&FORM=VDRE&adlt=strict> ;

YMCA -360 Silver Strength

YMCA 360, Silver Strength are exercises that work your muscles and keep you motivated. <https://ymca360.org/on-demand/category/14>.

HASfit Empower Your Heart and Soul: This is a low impact exercise session modified to meet all activity levels.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CE4ijWIQ18.

National Institute on Aging

A variety of fun ways for older adults to stay fit.

www.nia.nih.gov/health/fun-ways-older-adults-stay-physically-active?utm_source=nia-mailchimp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=healthyaging-20201214#dime.

SilverSneakers: (NOT FREE Asks for Insurance information)

On-line classes and workshops from the comfort of your home. There are multiple fitness sessions and wellness workshops.

<https://tools.silversneakers.com/Learn/Live>

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

NH/MASS Alzheimer's Association - FREE

Virtual Education: Knowledge is power. Attend the Alzheimer's Association free education programs and learn about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Understanding the challenges will help you take control. We can teach you strategies to manage day-to-day—as someone living with an Alzheimer's diagnosis or as a care partner.

www.alz.org/manh/helping_you/community_family_education.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Get the support you need. Meet safely and virtually with others for supportive, meaningful discussion led by a trained facilitator. Groups are available for caregivers or for people living with early memory loss.

www.alz.org/manh/helping_you/support_groups

WELLNESS

Concord VNA - Online Wellness Wednesday

Concord VNA offers monthly on-line Wellness topics for mind and spirit.

www.crvna.org/content/online-program-better-choices-better-health%E2%84%A2-0.

<https://www.crvna.org/content/online-program-aging-mastery-program%C2%AE-0>.

<https://www.crvna.org/content/online-program-powerful-tools-caregivers-0>.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health - online events - FREE:

The Dartmouth-Hitchcock Aging Resource Center provides older adults, families, and community members with information, education, and support to help them live healthier and more informed lives.

<https://events.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/organizer/aging-resource-center/>.

FACEBOOK PAGES

Engaging NH - FREE

<https://m.facebook.com/EngAGINGNH>.

Alzheimer's Foundation of America - FREE

https://m.facebook.com/pg/AlzheimersFoundationofAmerica/videos/?ref=page_internal&mt_nav=0

MOVE OVER LAWS

All 50 states have laws that require drivers to move over a lane or slow down when approaching emergency responders - including tow trucks - but fewer than 30% of Americans know about these laws according to studies based on 2019 data collected by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

HELP!

Do you need help with your Social Security or VA benefits? Do you have questions about the IRS or Medicare? If so, your NH Congressional Delegation can help!

Your two U.S. Senators and two Congresswomen all have staff equipped to help New Hampshire residents with issues, concerns or questions related to the federal government. The contact information for the NH Congressional Delegation is below. Please don't hesitate to reach out!

Senator Jeanne Shaheen
2 Wall Street, Suite 220
Manchester, NH 03101
603-647-7500
www.shaheen.senate.gov

Senator Maggie Hassan
1589 Elm Street, 3rd Floor
Manchester, NH 03101
603-622-2204
www.hassan.senate.gov

Rep. Chris Pappas
1st Congressional District
660 Central Ave., Unit 101
Dover, NH 03820
603-285-4300
www.shea-porter.house.gov

Rep. Annie Kuster
2nd Congressional District
18 North Main Street, 4th Floor
Concord, NH 03301
603-226-1002
www.kuster.house.gov

NURSING HOME COMPLAINTS

(While there has been a great deal of focus on COVID-19 in nursing homes, the need for such care remains. Following is some information to consider when selecting a facility.)

Residents of nursing homes and their family are generally happy with the care they receive, but not all. Here are the top complaints about nursing homes:

- Slow or Inadequate Response by Staff;
- Poor Quality Food;
- Social Isolation;
- Poor Sleep;
- Roommate Conflicts; and
- Lost or Stolen Personal Items

Complaints are one way they can express dissatisfaction with the move itself; however, when there are consistent complaints across many different individuals and many different long-term care facilities, the top complaints about nursing homes might be justified.

Nursing home residents have rights, including being free from abuse, being provided with nutritious food, and not having

to worry about stolen personal property. The first step is to discuss the situation with the staff and facility director by fill out a grievance report. If a nursing home violates the law, it should be reported to the local long-term care.

If the nursing home is part of the Medicare/Medicaid program, these programs also have complaint forms. Medicare provides a nursing home checklist for you to use to assess the quality of care you can expect from any nursing home you are considering.

Elder Guru

MEDICARE CHANGES

On December 23, Congress passed several key provisions of the Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification (BENES) Act (S. 1280/H.R. 2477) as part of a comprehensive legislative package. Signed into law days later, these policies will update Medicare enrollment rules for the first time in over 50 years to end lengthy waits for coverage, expand critical administrative flexibilities, and inform future policymaking on enrollment period alignment. The adopted BENES Act policies will modernize Medicare enrollment in several important ways:

The bill eliminates the up to seven month-long wait for coverage that people can experience when they sign up for Medicare during the General Enrollment Period (GEP) or in the later months of their Initial Enrollment Period (IEP). Beginning in 2023, Medicare coverage will begin the

HELP SPREAD THE WORD!

If you like this newsletter, please share it with your family, neighbors, friends and colleagues.

Enrollment Period (IEP). Beginning in 2023, Medicare coverage will begin the

month after enrollment.

It reduces barriers to care by expanding Medicare's authority to grant a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for "exceptional circumstances." A long-standing flexibility within Medicare Advantage and Part D, in 2023 this critical tool will be available to facilitate enrollments program-wide, enhancing beneficiary access and administrative consistency.

To further maximize coverage continuity and ease transitions to Medicare, the bill directs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to identify ways to align Medicare's annual enrollment periods. HHS is to present these findings in a report to Congress by January 1, 2023.

Medicare Rights Center

Health & Wellness

COPING WITH COVID STRESS

Older Adults Despite popular notions that older adults would have more negative reactions to forced social isolation, a recent national survey revealed that older adults – despite their awareness of increased risk – are generally not reporting more feelings of anxiety, anger or stress than younger age groups. They are actually expressing more positive emotions – feelings of calmness, interest and gratitude.

Indeed, other surveys suggest it's the youngest adults – ages 13 to 23 – who are experiencing the most stress. In the COVID-19 era, older adults see time differently and are doing better than younger people

theconversation.com

STRESS REDUCTION TIPS

One way to keep stress from piling up and hindering your ability to feel good is by

cultivating moments of peace throughout your day. Based on tips by the Chopra Center, here are four ways to cultivate peace throughout your day.

1. Just breathe: Intentional breathing can be a powerful way to restore a sense of calm. Try making it a part of your day by setting a calendar reminder for a breath break every hour. With each breath brake, inhale deeply and fully into your belly, and then exhale completely. Don't be afraid to exhale with an audible sigh of relief. Repeat this three times and feel the rush of oxygen calming your mind. In addition, make sure to keep your spine straight to increase oxygen inflow.

2. Let there be light: There are countless positive effects on our physiology when we are exposed to natural light. That's why you should make sure you open the blinds, and let the natural light flow in.

3. Stop and smell the roses: Our sense of smell is super-sensitive and can evoke powerful memories and emotions. If you choose candles or essential oils that remind you of joyous times, you can bring some added joy and peace to your day. For instance, a lavender-scented candle might remind you of your grandmother's garden. It might be useful to know that our olfactory receptors do become dull if we are constantly exposed to the same smells, so don't be afraid to switch it up.

4. It IS easy being green: Science tells us that being in the company of plants and flowers can increase energy levels, induce relaxed feelings, and even improve relationships. If natural light is an issue, you might want to consider Lucky Bamboo, which is low-maintenance and adaptable to low light.

MEDICARE REMINDER

A transition refill, also known as a transition fill, is typically a one-time, 30-day supply of a drug that you were taking:

- Before switching to a different Part D plan (either stand-alone or through a Medicare Advantage Plan)
- Or, before your current plan changed its coverage at the start of a new calendar year

Transition refills let you get temporary coverage for drugs that are not on your plan's formulary or that have certain coverage restrictions (such as prior authorization or step therapy).

Transition refills are not for new prescriptions. You can only get transition fills for drugs you were already taking before switching plans or before your existing plan changed its coverage.

The following situations describe when you can get a transition refill if you do not live in a nursing home (there are different rules for transition refills for those living in nursing homes):

1. Your current plan is changing how it covers a Medicare-covered drug you have been taking.

If your plan is taking your drug off its formulary or adding a coverage restriction for the next calendar year for reasons other than safety, the plan must either:

- Help you switch to a similar drug that is on your plan's formulary before January 1, of
- Help you file an exception request before January 1, or
- Give you a 30-day transition fill within the first 90 days of the new calendar year along with a notice about the new coverage policy.

2. Your new plan does not cover a Medicare-covered drug you have been taking.

- If a drug you have been taking is not on your new plan's formulary, this plan must give you a 30-day transition refill within the first 90 days of your enrollment. It must also give you a notice explaining that your transition refill is temporary and informing you of your appeal rights.
- If a drug you have been taking is on your new plan's formulary but with a coverage restriction, this plan must give you a 30-day transition refill free from any restriction within the first 90 days of your enrollment. It must also give you a notice explaining that your transition refill is temporary and informing you of your appeal rights.

In both of the above cases, if a drug you have been taking is not on your new plan's formulary, be sure to see whether there is a similar drug that is covered by your plan (check with your doctor about possible alternatives) and, if not, to file an exception request. (If your request is denied, you have the right to appeal.)

Note: If you file an exception request and your plan does not process it by the end of your 90-day transition refill period, your plan must provide additional temporary refills until the exception is completed.

Remember: All stand-alone Part D plans and Medicare Advantage Plans that offer drug coverage must provide transition fills in the above cases. When you use your transition fill, your plan must send you a written notice within three business days. The notice will tell you that the supply was temporary and that you should either change to a covered drug or file an exception request with the plan.

Medicare Rights Center

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER GETTING A COVID-19 VACCINE?

COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you from getting COVID-19. You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. These side effects may feel like flu and may even affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. You can find information on common side effects here.

Tech Tips

HOW ROBOTIC PETS CAN HELP ISOLATED SENIORS AVOID LONELINESS

There have been several studies that have shown that robotic pets — which are life-like interactive pets — can have a positive impact on many lonely, socially isolated seniors, especially those who have dementia.

The Richmond Times Dispatch, 12/20/20

STRENGTHENING PASSWORDS

Hackers can easily break into accounts with weak passwords by using brute force attacks. And after a data breach, it's common to find thousands of usernames and passwords up for sale on the dark web. That means a cybercriminal can grab a bunch of usernames and passwords and attempt credential recycling — trying to breach all your accounts once they get access to just one. For example, a hacker might check if your email password works on your online banking accounts.

That's why it's so important to have unique passwords for all your accounts. To get a really strong password, you can use a passphrase — a collection of words that you put together to make a long, strong password. A search will reveal several

options for sites offering passphrase generators.

Once you have a good password, don't stop there. To prevent credential recycling, you should create a unique password for each of your online accounts. If that sounds like too many passwords to keep track of password manager sites are also available such as try using a password manager.

AVG

Dollars & Sense

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS AND TAXES

Whether you'll be required to pay federal income tax on your Social Security benefits will depend on your income and filing status. About 35% of Social Security recipients have total incomes high enough to trigger federal income tax on their benefits.

To figure out if your benefits will be taxable, add up all of your "provisional income," which includes wages, taxable and nontaxable interest, dividends, pensions and taxable retirement-plan distributions, self-employment and other taxable income, plus half your annual Social Security benefits, minus certain deductions used in figuring your adjusted gross income.

How to calculate

To help you with the calculations, get a copy of IRS Publication 915 "Social Security and Equivalent Railroad Retirement Benefits," which provides detailed instructions and worksheets. You can download it at [IRS.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p915.pdf](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p915.pdf) or call the IRS at (800) 829-3676 and ask to have a free copy mailed to you. After you do the calculations, the IRS says that if you're single and your total income from all of the listed sources is:

- less than \$25,000, your Social Security will not be subject to federal income tax.
- between \$25,000 and \$34,000, up to 50% of your Social Security benefits will be taxed at your regular income tax rate.
- more than \$34,000, up to 85% of your benefits will be taxed.

If you're married and filing jointly and the total from all sources is:

- less than \$32,000, your Social Security won't be taxed.
- between \$32,000 and \$44,000, up to 50% of your Social Security benefits will be taxed.
- more than \$44,000, up to 85% of your benefits will be taxed.

If you're married and file a separate return, you probably will pay taxes on your benefits.

To limit potential taxes on your benefits, be cautious when taking distributions from retirement accounts or other sources. In addition to triggering ordinary income tax, a distribution that significantly raises your gross income can bump the proportion of your Social Security benefits subject to taxes.

How to file

If you find that part of your Social Security benefits will be taxable, you'll need to file using Form 1040 or Form 1040-SR. You also need to know that if you do owe taxes, you'll need to make quarterly estimated tax payments to the IRS, or you can choose to have it

RAISE YOUR VOICE!

Please let us know what's on your mind and what's important to you.
engagingnh@gmail.com

automatically withheld from your benefits.

To have it withheld, you'll need to complete IRS Form W-4V, Voluntary Withholding Request ([IRS.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4v.pdf](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4v.pdf)) and file it with your local Social Security office. You can choose to have 7%, 10%, 12% or 22% of your total benefit payment withheld. If you subsequently decide you don't want the taxes withheld, you can file another W-4V to stop the withholding.

If you have additional questions on taxable Social Security benefits, call the IRS help line at (800) 829-1040.

Jim Miller, the Savvy Senior

SETTLING AN ESTATE CAN BE TIME-CONSUMING

Usually when asked to be the executor of a family member's estate, the person feels honored and trusted. It's a big responsibility since the executor will be tasked with carrying out a loved one's final wishes.

If you are asked to be an executor, it is a good idea to know some of the duties it entails before taking on the task. By definition, an executor is the person named to distribute a deceased person's property that passes under his or her will. Another main function of an executor is to arrange for the payment of debts and expenses.

If the executor is not willing or able to perform, there is usually an alternate executor named in the will. If there is no alternate, then it is up to

the courts to approve an executor for the estate.

Depending on the estate, it can be a difficult and time-consuming task to settle everything. Each state has its own rules. In some cases, the deceased may have left a letter of instruction making the process easier. The letter could contain information such as a list of the deceased's important documents, contacts for attorneys and accountants, a list of creditors, login information for important web sites, and final burial wishes.

Among the documents is usually a will. The executor will need to obtain a copy and read and understand it. Discussion with an estate-planning attorney is also needed to decide what type of probating (a process of getting a court to approve the validity of the will) is necessary.

An inventory of assets the deceased owned is taken and may be required by the probate court. Assets may need to be appraised. If the deceased had a safe deposit box, the contents need to be secured. Once the probate process is finished, assets then may be sold or gifted according to the deceased's wishes. Asset protection is a top priority during this time. This could include changing locks on property. The executor may pay mortgages, utility bills and maintenance costs on any property. The executor will need to change the name of the insurance on home and auto policies. Brokerage accounts will need to be retitled.

Can You Help?

You may make a donation to ENH through our fiscal agent, Disabilities Rights Center-NH, Inc. which is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation.

Make your check out to Disabilities Rights Center-NH, Inc. and note "EngAGING NH" on the memo line. DRC's mailing address is 64 North Main Street, Suite 2, 3rd Floor, Concord, NH 03301-4913.

Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

ENH welcomes all points of view and invites your submissions.

To send articles or to add your name to our newsletter mailing list, contact:

engagingnh@gmail.com

Forward it on!

Final expenses also need to be paid. The funeral home or coroner will provide death certificates that will be needed later on. For ex-

ample, when presenting the will to the court for the probate process, a death certificate is presented as well. The filing of life insurance claims is another example in which a death certificate will be necessary.

Other debts and taxes will require payment. Medical bills, credit card debt and taxes should be paid out of the estate. The executor and/or heirs are typically not personally responsible for the debts of the deceased that exceed the value of the estate.

If the deceased was collecting benefits, such as Social Security, the appropriate agency will need to know of the deceased's passing so benefit checks can be stopped. Any checks received after death will need to be returned.

As the saying goes, two things are certain in life: death and taxes. A final federal and state tax return for the deceased may need to be filed. An estate and gift tax return may also be necessary.

As can be seen, an executor has lots of duties. There is the need for the person to be honest, impartial and financially responsible. Estate assets need to be managed properly. The word for this in the law is a "fiduciary duty".

All of these steps can be made easier with the advice and guidance of an estate-

planning attorney. Consulting with an attorney is generally the best way to make sure there is compliance with all of an executor's duties.

Marc A. Hebert, MS, CFP, is a senior member and president of the wealth management and financial planning firm The Harbor Group of Bedford. Email questions to Marc at mhebert@harbortgroup.com.

Laugh & Live Longer

WHY WE LOVE CHILDREN

1) NUDITY: I was driving with my three young children one warm summer evening when a woman in the convertible ahead of us stood up and waved. She was stark naked! As I was reeling from the shock, I heard my 5-year-old shout from the back seat, "Mom, that lady isn't wearing a seat belt!"

2) OPINIONS: On the first day of school, a first-grader handed his teacher a note from his mother. The note read, "The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents"

3) KETCHUP: A woman was trying hard to get the ketchup out of the jar. During her struggle the phone rang so she asked her 4-year-old daughter to answer the phone. "Mommy can't come to the phone to talk to you right now. She's hitting the bottle."

4) MORE NUDITY: A little boy got lost at the YMCA and found himself in the women's locker room. When he was spotted, the room burst into shrieks, with ladies grabbing towels and running for cover. The little boy watched in amazement and then asked, "What's the matter, haven't you ever seen a little boy before?"

5) POLICE # 1: While taking a routine vandalism report at an elementary school, I was interrupted by a little girl about 6

years old. Looking up and down at my uniform, she asked, "Are you a cop?"

"Yes," I answered and continued writing the report. "My mother said if I ever needed help, I should ask the police. Is that right?"

"Yes, that's right," I told her. "Well then," she said as she extended her foot toward me, "Would you please tie my shoe?"

6) POLICE # 2: It was the end of the day when I parked my police van in front of the station. As I gathered my equipment, my K-9 partner, Jake, was barking, and I saw a little boy staring in at me.

"Is that a dog you got back there?" he asked.

"It sure is," I replied.

Puzzled, the boy looked at me and then towards the back of the van. Finally he said, "What'd he do?"

7) ELDERLY: While working for an organization that delivers lunches to elderly shut-ins, I used to take my 4-year-old daughter on my afternoon rounds. She was unfailingly intrigued by the various appliances of old age, particularly the canes, walkers and wheelchairs. One day I found her staring at a pair of false teeth soaking in a glass. As I braced myself for the inevitable barrage of questions, she merely turned and whispered, "The tooth fairy will never believe this!"

8) DRESS-UP: A little girl was watching her parents dress for a party. When she saw her dad donning his tuxedo, she warned, "Daddy, you shouldn't wear that suit."

"And why not, darling?" "You know that it always gives you a headache the next morning."

9) DEATH: While walking along the sidewalk in front of his church, our minister heard the intoning of a prayer that nearly made his collar wilt. Apparently, his 5-year-old son and his playmates had found a dead robin. Feeling that proper burial should be performed, they had secured a small box and cotton batting, then dug a hole and made ready for the disposal of the deceased. The minister's son was chosen to say the appropriate prayers and with sonorous dignity intoned his version of what he thought his father always said: "Glory be unto theFaaather, and unto the Sonnn, and into the hole he goooes."

10) SCHOOL: A little girl had just finished her first week of school.

"I'm just wasting my time," she said to her mother. "I can't read, I can't write, and they won't let me talk!"

11) BIBLE: A little boy opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. He picked up the object and looked at it. What he saw was an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages.

"Mama, look what I found," the boy called out.

"What have you got there, dear?"

With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear!"

Purposeful Living

BOB DEARBORN OF SULLIVAN COUNTY

Bob Dearborn has actively advocated for seniors in Sullivan County for the past 10 years, as a volunteer board member for the Newport Senior Center (NSC). To Bob, older adults are not

invisible; they are perennials who blossom year after year.

The NSC provides resources, tools, education and opportunities for socialization so that older adults can live easier, productive lives independently. These programs include, but are not limited to, a multiple variety of exercise programs, nutrition education, daily congregate meals, transportation and informational speakers to discuss identity theft, scams and how to protect your assets. But what good are these resources if individuals are not aware of what's available to them? This is where Bob comes in!

Bob travels the 528 square miles (14 towns and one city) that makes up Sullivan County to put up flyers and notices for special events. NSC, like all senior centers, rely on continuous fundraising efforts all year long, year after year. Not only is it important for older adults to be informed about the resources available to them but, there needs to be a venue where these valuable resources can take place and that feels like home. The NSC is that place in part thanks to Bob's dedication.

When it comes to spreading the word about fundraisers and programs, Bob is out there. He attends local televised programs as another opportunity to reach out to the community to bring them up-to-date information on opportunities that will assist individuals in avoiding isolation and depression. Along with television, Bob contacts radio stations, newspapers and other media alternatives that will allow older adults to spread their wings. If Bob is unable to do this himself, he reaches out to those who he knows can and does not give up until it is done. If Bob does not feel he is reaching as many people as he should, he attends seminars on marketing so that

he can learn how to extend his reach to as many older adults as possible.

In addition, Bob works as an advocate for seniors in the political arena for things like affordable health care, reducing poverty and funding programs crucial to older adults by urging law makers to pass policies that affect their ability to live healthy, active lives with dignity.

As the number of older adults in New Hampshire continues to grow, it is important that communities recognize older adults as great gifts who add a splash of color and a breath of fresh air to our environments. Without them, our lives would be duller.

Sullivan County is fortunate to have Bob Dearborn as a model, making sure the story about "old" people does not remain a dreary one about loss and decline, and is more about blooming for decades.

Board Notes

YOUR VOICE COUNTS MORE THAN EVER

"Live Free or Die," the New Hampshire State Motto, captures our Yankee independence, and our passion for having a say in decisions that affect our lives. From Town Hall Meetings, to one of the world's largest legislative bodies, to the two-year term for Governor with a Governor and Council structure that was adopted to ensure a balance of power, our state government is literally a model for truly representative government. We remain passionate about our right to be heard because we know representation brings the best outcomes.

One way we ensure public participation is the mandate that each and every stage of a bill becoming law includes the all-important open hearing for public comment.

It's our chance to make sure our representatives "get it right" by explaining how the wording of a bill helps or hurts constituents—and the bill's chance of being adopted. Words are important, and how things are framed can make all the difference in conveying the intent or not; of solving a problem or creating unintended consequences.

We are in the 2021 session of the Legislature, and of course it's complicated by COVID. Normally, there are many simultaneous hearings with rooms filled with interested parties, giving, and listening to testimony at each stage of the process: a bill is introduced; it's then assigned to a subcommittee for recommendations (Senate bills to a Senate Committee, House bills to a House Committee). Eventually, the bill goes back to the full House or Senate for a vote to approve or not. This stage can include one or more amendments. The final approved version then "crosses over" (House to Senate, Senate to House), and the process begins again. Each step is open to our scrutiny because the wording and effectiveness of the bill can change at any point, and constituents' viewpoints are vital to decision-makers.

The pandemic has brought complications for when and how the full House and Senate meet, and for those all-important committee sessions and public hearings. The State does have plans in place to address these, as well as health and safety concerns. Zoom sessions are being planned, but not with the frequency that in-person sessions had. Steps are being considered for how to expedite the complicated process by combining some bills or putting less urgent issues off to a later date. But this is the budget cycle of the biennium, when dollars are allocated for the people's priorities. Given the urgency of so many

health and economic challenges we're facing, there has never been a more critical time for public scrutiny and input.

Here are some things we can do:

Find out which bills relate to issues around aging:

Contact Martha McLeod, NH Alliance for Healthy Aging mmcleod@new-futures.org and request to be added to the weekly updates.

Monitor Bills of interest:

The House calendar is at www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/default.aspx.

The Senate calendar is at http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/Senate/calendars_journals/default.html.

The bill link at www.gencourt.state.nh.us/ will lead to the bill status where the language of the bill and scheduled hearing days/times can be found.

Learn about Remote Attendance and Testimony:

Members of the public may attend remotely as the State House is still closed to the public. The House and Senate have provided guidance for providing remote testimony. The House is included on the next pages; the Senate link is at www.gencourt.state.nh.us/

In addition, we've included a preview of some of the bills the Senate will hear.

"We're all in this together" doesn't just mean we're all impacted by government decisions. It means we can be part of making the best decisions for our own futures by getting involved and making our voices heard.

Hope to see you on Zoom!

**NH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PUBLIC GUIDANCE FOR REMOTE
COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

How to register support/opposition on a bill

To sign in to speak on a bill or to register support or opposition, you will utilize the newly created sign-in form located on the general court website available here: <http://gencourt.state.nh.us/house/committees/remotetestimony/default.aspx> You are encouraged to sign in well in advance of the hearing. If you not wish to speak on a bill or register support or opposition, but wish to view the meeting, you are encouraged to watch via the House of Representatives YouTube channel available here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxqjz56akoWRL_5vyaQDtvQ

This new online form will allow you to sign in on a bill as soon as it has been scheduled for a hearing.

1. Click on the date that the bill you are interested in is being heard.
2. Under the drop-down menus.

- a. Select the committee that is hearing the bill.
- b. Select the bill you are interested in.
- c. Select a category (elected official, lobbyist, agency staff, member of the public).
3. If you are representing an entity or someone other than yourself, enter that information in the box.
4. Indicate whether you support, oppose or are neutral on the bill by checking the appropriate circle.
5. If you wish to speak, check that box. Please DO NOT check that box unless you plan to speak. You can register your position on a bill without speaking.
6. Click continue.
7. Enter your name and contact information.
8. Click continue.
9. Carefully review that the information you have entered is correct. If it is correct, check the box and click continue. This completes the sign in process.

The sign in list will be compiled for all bills being heard by the committee on a given

Contact Information for NH Members of the U.S. Congress

Name	Mailing Address	Phone	E-Mail Contact Form
U.S. Rep. Chris Pappas	323 Cannon HOB, Washington, DC 20515	202-225-5456	https://pappas.house.gov/
U.S. Rep Ann Kuster	137 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515	202-225-5206	https://kuster.house.gov/contact/email-me
U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan	B85 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510	202-224-3324	https://www.hassan.senate.gov/content/contact-senator
U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen	506 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510	202-224-2841	www.shaheen.senate.gov/contact/contact-jeanne

ENH NEWSLETTER-FEBRUARY 2021

day 30 minutes prior to the start of the first hearing. If you sign up after that time, the Chair will not have your name before them. Before the Chair closes each hearing, they will ask if there is anyone who hasn't had the opportunity to speak but wishes to do so. At this time, you can raise your hand to speak, but it is important that you identify yourself for the record.

How to submit written testimony

Written testimony should be submitted to the committee e-mail which will be forwarded to the entire committee. If you have signed up to testify or register your opinion on a bill, the confirmation page will include instructions for submitting testimony. You may also utilize the "Email All Committee Members" link found on the relevant committee web page.

How to testify on Zoom

On the day of the hearing, you can join the Zoom by clicking the link provided in the House Calendar. The Zoom will not begin before the posted start time of the first bill being heard by the committee. Once the Zoom is opened to the public, all attendees will be muted and will not have video capabilities. Only the Zoom panelists (committee members and staff) will have video capabilities. When it is your turn to speak, the Chair will call your name. When your name is called, please "raise your hand" to make it easier to locate your name in the list of attendees.

To raise your hand:

- If you are participating by Zoom: click the "raise hand" icon at the bottom of the screen, or press the "Alt" and "Y" keys on your keyboard at the same time.
- If you are participating by telephone: press *9

You will be granted speaking capabilities but please note that you may also need to "unmute" yourself on your own device. When you have completed your testimony, the staff will disable your speaking capabilities.

In a busy hearing with many speakers, the Chair may decide to call several names at a time and ask that you virtually raise your hand. Doing so will bump your name to the top of the attendee column and make it easier for the Chair to identify you and grant you speaking capabilities. Even if multiple names are announced and asked to raise their hand, speaking capabilities will still only be enabled one person at a time.

Depending on the number of speakers on a bill, the chair has the discretion to limit individual testimony to certain number of minutes. The purpose of a hearing is for the committee to take public comment.

The members of the committee may ask questions of those who testify. Therefore, the virtual hand raising feature should be limited to the scenario outlined above, or if a committee member poses a general question to the audience and you are able to provide an answer. To afford everyone the opportunity to speak and to assist the committee in adhering to time constraints, if you realize you forgot to say something after your allotted speaking time, you are encouraged to email the committee.

And now to pique your interest, here is quick summary of what's in the NH Senate's Omnibus Bills, thanks GSIL Advocacy Alert & Anna Brown of Citizens Count in NH Business Review, 1-19-21).

UNWRAPPING THE DETAILS OF SOME 30 MEASURES EXPECTED TO EMERGE THIS SENATE SESSION

This year the NH Senate is working to combine most of their bills into roughly 30 “omnibus” bills. Ideally, this will streamline the legislative process, since it eliminates the need for individual public hearings for each bill. But omnibus bills can be very long and complex.

While the Senate has yet to publish the omnibus bill texts, they released an outline of their plan. Here are a few bills Citizens Count identified as 2021’s hot topics.

‘Covid’ bill

This bill appears to require employers to cover some Covid-19 testing and looks to establish a “Covid-19 relief fund.” The bill also calls for “a Covid-19 needs assessment of nursing homes and long-term care facilities.” Lastly, the bill has some other provisions related to how the state spends Covid-19 federal funds.

The bill could end up being a bit of a showdown between the Legislature and Gov. Chris Sununu, who has rebuffed legislators’ attempts to add oversight of his management of the coronavirus emergency.

‘Health and Human Services’ bill

This omnibus bill also dips into Covid-19 territory. Once again, no details are public, but it includes a request “relative to health facilities providing care in the declared emergency.” It also includes something about nursing home standards, which could be coronavirus-related.

The bill goes on to address Medicaid spend-down requirements, automated pharmacy systems, and how information is shared under the prescription drug monitoring program.

Two other proposals in this bill look to establish programs related to substance

misuse. One would establish a harm reduction and overdose prevention program. The other would start a “rehabilitation bed pilot program.”

‘Election omnibus’ bill

The five bills combined here may seem technical to the public. They address who can work as an election official, recount fees, campaign finance statements and town meeting procedures. Lastly, this omnibus bill would establish an “election information portal” that would let voters register and request and absentee ballot online. That part could prove controversial, given the heated debate around absentee voting in general.

‘Secretary of State request’ bill

All of the proposals here were requested by Sen. James Gray, R-Rochester. Each one relates to the administration of elections.

The bill is clearly a response to the concerns around election security that came out of the 2020 election. For example, the bill includes establishing a committee to study post-election audit counting devices. The bill also establishes the early, partial processing of absentee ballots. The Legislature passed a law that allowed early processing due to the large volume of absentee ballots during the pandemic, but that law expired at the end of 2020.

‘Renewable energy’ bill

Seven bill requests are rolled into this measure, mostly aimed at small energy installations, particularly related to net metering. New Hampshire’s net energy metering program credits small energy generators – such as customers with rooftop solar panels – for the electricity they contribute to the grid. There have been many attempts in recent years to expand

eligibility for net metering to include slightly larger installations, such as those owned by municipalities.

'Bradley net metering' bill

This bill is named after Sen. Jeb Bradley, R-Wolfeboro, who requested all three bills in this package. It looks like he is still trying to expand the size of community solar projects and hydropower plants that can participate in net metering, although he has a narrower plan than the proposal above.

'Environment' bill

This bill includes various regulations related to the coastal environment. It also addresses a statewide solid waste disposal reduction goal and prohibits the burning of PFAS. Without any details yet, the bill also looks to address the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program and the state's renewable portfolio standards. In general, you could say that this bill relates to conservation and environmental protection – but it also includes this curious bill request: “relative to the prevention of zoonotic disease transmission.” Is this something about people eating bats and pangolins? We have to wait and see.

'Judiciary 1' bill

There are 12 bill requests wrapped up in this omnibus package, and they are all over the legal map. One proposal relates to hemp, another to laser pointers, another to employer access to motor vehicle records. One proposal jumps out, given current events: a requirement for law enforcement officers to receive crisis intervention training. There is no other omnibus bill that appears to address police misuse of force.

'Property tax' bill

This bill relates to affordable housing, a topic of growing interest in the Legislature. Sen. Jay Kahn, D-Keene, looks to be resurrecting a bill he sponsored last year that would allow municipalities to adopt a program for tax relief for repairs and updates of affordable older homes under the community revitalization tax relief program.

The bill also includes a proposal to postpone assessment reviews and reappraisals of property. Lastly, the omnibus includes a proposal to allow towns to adopt a property tax exemption for some renewable energy facilities.

'Landlord/tenant' bill

Two of these bills combined here would modify the eviction process, for example to permit rental assistance earlier in the process. A third proposal relates to civil rights violations and discrimination in real estate transactions. This appears to be the only bill in the Senate this year related to renters and landlords coming out of the coronavirus emergency.

'Right to Know' bill

This bill looks to address some of the issues around virtual meetings and the state's “Right to Know” law. Governor Sununu issued executive orders that allow the government to operate virtually, but those orders are temporary. For example, one of the proposals in this omnibus bill would specifically authorize towns and cities to have virtual meetings.

'Tax' bill

This raft of tax changes covers everything from lowering business taxes to decreasing filing fees for the Site Evaluation Committee. Some of these changes will have to coordinate with the state budget

ENH NEWSLETTER-FEBRUARY 2021

process. Republicans and Sununu have made clear they want to prioritize tax cuts for businesses, despite last year's tax revenue shortfall.

Not all significant Senate legislation is getting wrapped up in omnibus bills. For example, there is still a standalone right-to-work bill, a standalone bill to allow taxpayer funds to pay for private and home schooling and a standalone bill to raise the minimum wage, among others. However, those debates will be easier to follow because they are not wrapped up in complex omnibus proposals.

Citizens Count is a nonprofit serving the New Hampshire community by providing objective information about issues, elected officials, bills, elections and candidates. This article is being shared by partners in the Granite State News Collaborative. For more information visit collaborativenh.org.