CONSENT CALENDAR

March 3, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The Committee on Municipal and County Government to which was referred HB 554,

AN ACT enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property.

Having considered the same, report the same with the following amendment, and the recommendation that the bill OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT.

Rep. Dale Girard

FOR THE COMMITTEE

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee:	**Municipal and County Government**
Bill Number:	**HB 554**
Title:	**enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property.**
Date:	**March 3, 2025**
Consent Calendar:	**CONSENT**
Recommendation:	**OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT 2025-0570h**

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This bill amends RSA 664:17 to grant municipalities the authority to determine whether political signs may be placed on municipal property. Under current law, all political signs are prohibited on municipal property, restricting local control over this matter. This bill does not mandate municipalities allow political signs but simply provides them with the option to make that decision based on local needs and preferences. The committee believes that decisions regarding the placement of political signs should rest with local governments, who are best positioned to determine what is appropriate for their communities.

Vote 18-0.

Rep. Dale Girard
FOR THE COMMITTEE

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

CONSENT CALENDAR

Municipal and County Government

HB 554, enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property. **OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT.**

Rep. Dale Girard for Municipal and County Government. This bill amends RSA 664:17 to grant municipalities the authority to determine whether political signs may be placed on municipal property. Under current law, all political signs are prohibited on municipal property, restricting local control over this matter. This bill does not mandate municipalities allow political signs but simply provides them with the option to make that decision based on local needs and preferences. The committee believes that decisions regarding the placement of political signs should rest with local governments, who are best positioned to determine what is appropriate for their communities. **Vote 18-0.**

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

Rep. Girard, Sull. 6
Rep. D. Murphy, Ches. 11
February 24, 2025
2025-0570h
08/02

Amendment to HB 554

Amend the title of the bill by replacing it with the following:

AN ACT relative to the placement of political advertising on municipal property.

Amend RSA 664:17 as inserted by section 1 of the bill by replacing it with the following:

664:17 Placement and Removal of Political Advertising. No political advertising shall be placed on or affixed to any public property including highway rights-of-way or private property without the owner's consent. ***Municipal property may be used for political signs in accordance with local sign ordinances and in compliance with laws and rules relative to electioneering.*** All political advertising shall be removed by the candidate no later than the second Friday following the election unless the election is a primary and the advertising concerns a candidate who is a winner in the primary. Signs shall not be placed on or affixed to utility poles or highway signs. Political advertising may be placed within state-owned rights-of-way as long as the advertising does not obstruct the safe flow of traffic and the advertising is placed with the consent of the owner of the land over which the right-of-way passes. No person shall remove, deface, or knowingly destroy any political advertising which is placed on or affixed to public property or any private property except for removal by the owner of the property, persons authorized by the owner of the property, or a law enforcement officer removing improper advertising. Political advertising placed on or affixed to any public property may be removed by state, city, or town maintenance or law enforcement personnel. Political advertising removed prior to election day by state, city, or town maintenance or law enforcement personnel shall be kept until one week after the election at a place designated by the state, city, or town so that the candidate, or a member of the candidate's campaign or local political committee of the same party may retrieve the items.

2025-0570h

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill enables municipal property to be used for political signs in accordance with local and state laws, rules, and ordinances.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

EXECUTIVE SESSION on HB 554

BILL TITLE: enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property.

DATE: March 3, 2025

LOB ROOM: 301-303

MOTIONS: **OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT**

Moved by Rep. Girard | Seconded by Rep. D. Murphy | AM Vote: 16-2

Amendment # 2025-0570h

Moved by Rep. Girard | Seconded by Rep. D. Murphy | Vote: 18-0

☐ **WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION**

CONSENT CALENDAR: YES

Statement of Intent: Refer to Committee Report

Respectfully submitted,

Rep Marie Louise Bjelobrk, Clerk

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

EXECUTIVE SESSION on HB 554

BILL TITLE: enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property.

DATE: 3/3/25

LOB ROOM: 301-303

MOTION: (Please check one box)

☐ OTP ☐ ITL ☐ Retain (1st year) ☑ Adoption of Amendment # 0570h

☐ Interim Study (2nd year) *(if offered)*

Moved by Rep. Gerard Seconded by Rep. Murphy Vote: 16-2

MOTION: (Please check one box)

☐ OTP ☑ OTP/A ☐ ITL ☐ Retain (1st year) ☐ Adoption of Amendment # _____

☐ Interim Study (2nd year) *(if offered)*

Moved by Rep. Gerard Seconded by Rep. Murphy Vote: 18-0

MOTION: (Please check one box)

☐ OTP ☐ OTP/A ☑ ITL ☐ Retain (1st year) ☐ Adoption of Amendment # _____

☐ Interim Study (2nd year) *(if offered)*

Moved by Rep. _____ Seconded by Rep. _____ Vote: _____

MOTION: (Please check one box)

☐ OTP ☐ OTP/A ☐ ITL ☐ Retain (1st year) ☐ Adoption of Amendment # _____

☐ Interim Study (2nd year) *(if offered)*

Moved by Rep. _____ Seconded by Rep. _____ Vote: _____

☐ **WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION**

CONSENT CALENDAR: ✓ **YES** ____ **NO**

Minority Report? ____ Yes ____ No If yes, author, Rep: Gerard Motion OTP/A

Respectfully submitted: Marie Louise Bjelobrk

Rep Marie Louise Bjelobrk, Clerk

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE HOUSE CLERK
2025 SESSION

1/7/2025 11:46:41 AM
Roll Call Committee Registers - 2025 draft Report

Municipal and County Government

Bill #: HB 554 **Motion:** _____ **AM #:** 2025-0570h **Exec Session Date:** 3/3/25

Members	YEAS	Nays	NV
Pauer, Diane Chairman	16		
MacDonald, John T Vice Chairman	1		
Guthrie, Joseph A.		1	
Dolan, Tom	2		
Aylward, Deborah		2	
Bjelobrk, Marie Louise Clerk	3		
Franz, Linda	4		
Karasinski, Sly	5		
Murphy, Denis Vincent	6		
Walker, David E	7		
Stavis, Laurel	8		
Gilman, Julie D	9		
Maggiore, Jim V.	10		
Fracht, David	11		
Colby, Eleana Marie	12		
Germana, Dylan N	13		
Girard, Dale R /	14		
Grund, Stephanie	15		
TOTAL VOTE:	16		

16 - 2

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE HOUSE CLERK
2025 SESSION

1/7/2025 11:46:41 AM
Roll Call Committee Registers - 2025 draft Report

Municipal and County Government

Bill #: HB 554 **Motion:** OTP/A **AM #:** _____ **Exec Session Date:** 3/3/25

Members	YEAS	Nays	NV
Pauer, Diane Chairman	18		
MacDonald, John T Vice Chairman	1		
Guthrie, Joseph A.	2		
Dolan, Tom	3		
Aylward, Deborah	4		
Bjelobrk, Marie Louise Clerk	5		
Franz, Linda	6		
Karasinski, Sly	7		
Murphy, Denis Vincent	8		
Walker, David E	9		
Stavis, Laurel	10		
Gilman, Julie D	11		
Maggiore, Jim V.	12		
Fracht, David	13		
Colby, Eleana Marie	14		
Germana, Dylan N	15		
Girard, Dale R	16		
Grund, Stephanie	17		
TOTAL VOTE:	18	0	

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

PUBLIC HEARING ON HB 554

BILL TITLE:	**enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property.**		
DATE:	**February 18, 2025**		
LOB ROOM:	**201**	**Time Public Hearing Called to Order:**	**9:10 a.m.**
		Time Adjourned:	**9:26 a.m.**

Committee Members: Reps. Pauer, J. MacDonald, Bjelobrk, Guthrie, T. Dolan, Franz, Karasinski, D. Murphy, Walker, Stavis, Gilman, Maggiore, Fracht, Colby, D. Germana, Girard and Grund

Bill Sponsors:

Rep. Andrus	**Rep. Kuttab**	**Rep. Perez**
Rep. Rice	**Rep. See**	**Rep. Sellers**
Rep. Turcotte	**Rep. H. Howard**	**Sen. Innis**
Sen. Pearl	**Sen. Ward**	

TESTIMONY

* Use asterisk if written testimony and/or amendments are submitted.

Representative Andrus (prime sponsor): deciding political signs is a difficult decision. 1974 - not allowed - last several years this has changed depending on the location. Municipalities should determine whether or not this can be done.

- **(Q) Rep. Fracht:** what entity told you no?
  (A): conflict cited state law.
- **(Q) Rep. Gilman:** does that include right of way?
  (A): you can put them on the state's right of way. Not sure how far the state's property extends. We need to make this.
- **(Q) Rep. Maggiore:** who is the body that would define municipality?
  (A): that and who should have that power.
- **(Q) Rep. Dolan:** now the moderator does this, is that what you wish?
  (A): maybe the moderator should do this?
- **(Q) Rep. Murphy:** are people brining up electioneering? Regarding sign placement in your town?
  (A): not sure.
- **(Q) Rep. Gilman:** would this apply to town hall or town office building?
  (A): up to the municipality. The state law prohibits this.
- **(Q) Rep. Pauer:** concern with "may" decide and inconsistent application?
  (A): it can be changed with an amendment.
- **(Q) Rep. Guthrie:** there is no problem with my town at the entrance way of a driveway?
  (A): it is up to each town what they want.
- **(Q) Rep. Stavis:** isn't the language similar to the state law?
  (A): I wish the municipalities to decide. I thought this was helpful.
- **(Q) Rep. Maggiore:** line 14 - that sentence could create a problem regarding sign removal?
  (A): state should not interfere with local law.
- **(Q) Rep. Fracht:** clarify statute 664:17? It seems that signs at/near the polling place are not included, not highways. Does it refer to signs placed in general or near polling places?
  (A): municipality cannot override state electioneering law.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Bjelobrk, Clerk

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

PUBLIC HEARING ON HB 554

BILL TITLE: enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property.

DATE: 2/18/25

ROOM: ~~301-303~~ 201 **Time Public Hearing Called to Order:** 9:10 am ~~9:07 am~~ (mb)

Time Adjourned: 9:26 am

(please circle if present)

~~Committee~~ Members: Reps. Pauer, J. MacDonald, Bjelobrk, Guthrie, T. Dolan, ~~Aylward,~~ Franz, Karasinski, D. Murphy, Walker, Stavis, Gilman, Maggiore, Fracht, Colby, D. Germana, Girard and Grund

All present Not Aylward

Bill Sponsors:

Rep. Andrus	Rep. Kuttab	Rep. Perez
Rep. Rice	Rep. See	Rep. Sellers
Rep. Turcotte	Rep. H. Howard	Sen. Innis
Sen. Pearl	Sen. Ward	

TESTIMONY

* Use asterisk if written testimony and/or amendments are submitted.

R. Andrus: sponsor - support - deciding political signs is a difficult decision. 1974 - not allowed - last several years this has Δ'd depending on location. ~~Suddenly~~ Municipalities should determine whether or not this can be done.

R. Fracht: Q: What entity told you "no"?

A: Conflict w/ fed state law.

R. Gilman: Q: Does that include "right of way"?

A: You can put them on the state's right of way. Not sure how far the state's property extends. We need to make this

R. Maggiore: Q: Who is the body that would define "municipality"?

A: That and who should have that power.

R. Dolan: Q: Now the moderator does this, is that what you wish
A: Maybe the moderator should do this?
R. Murphy: Q: Are people bringing up electioneering? Regarding sign placement in your town?
A: Not sure.

R. Gilman: Q: Would this apply to town hall or town office bldg?
A: Up to the municipality. The state law prohibits this.

Chair: Q: Concern ε "may" decide and inconsistent application?
A: It can be Δ'd ε amendment.

R: Guthrie: Q: There is no problem ε my town at the entranceway of driveway.
A: It's up to each town what they want.

R. Stavis: Q: Isn't the language similar to the state law?
A: I wish the municipalities to decide. I thought this helpful.

R. Maggiore: Q: Line 14 - that sentence could create a problem RE: sign removal?
A: State should not interfere ε local law.

R: Fraught: Q: Clarify statute 664:17? It seems that signs at/near the polling place are not included, not highways. Does it refer to signs placed in general or near the polling place?
A: Municipality cannot override state electioneering law.

	S	O
Remote	3	9

Blue = blank

SIGN UP SHEET

To Register Opinion If Not Speaking

Committee: House Municipal and County Government Committee

Bill #: **HB554** **Date:** **2/18/2025**

****Please Print All Information****

Name	Address	Phone	Representing	Pro	Con

House Remote Testify

Municipal and County Government Committee Testify List for Bill HB554 on 2025-02-18

Support: 4 Oppose: 15 Neutral: 0 Total to Testify: 0

Export to Excel

Name	City, State Email Address	Title	Representing	Position	Testifying	Non-Germane	Signed Up
Pearl, Senator Howard	Loudon, NH Howard.pearl@gc.nh.gov	An Elected Official	Myself	Support	No	No	2/13/2025 4:27 PM
McCarthy, Sarah	Manchester, NH SWOODMAN013@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/13/2025 8:56 PM
Palmer, Dylan	Wolfeboro, NH dpalmer1301@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/16/2025 8:35 AM
Howland, Curtis	Manchester, NH howland@priss.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/16/2025 4:33 PM
Konze, Margaret	Pembroke, NH maggiekonze@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/16/2025 6:16 PM
Richardson, Daniel	Nashua, NH daniel6_22@comcast	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/17/2025 8:06 AM
Hutchinson, Leigh	Derry, NH hutch1844@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/17/2025 8:20 AM
Lucas, Janet	Campton, NH janluca1953@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/17/2025 9:00 AM
Gardner, James	Keene, NH yourgardner@dcnh.day	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/17/2025 9:56 AM
Sterling, Sandra F	Northfield, NH sfs2@metrocast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/17/2025 10:41 AM
Howard, Heath	Strafford, NH heath.howard@gc.nh.gov	An Elected Official	Strafford-4	Support	No	No	2/17/2025 4:34 PM
Barr, Lisa	Danville, NH scottbarr107@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/17/2025 7:13 PM
Janowski, Michaela	Epping, NH mijanowski11@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/17/2025 8:54 PM

Templeton, Alexander	Madison, NH ajt700@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/18/2025 12:09 AM
Matte, Oliver	North Sutton, NH Omatte2112@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/18/2025 6:51 AM
Willcutt, Hannah	North Sutton, NH Hannah.willcutt@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/18/2025 6:51 AM
Braggins, Benjamin	Andover, NH Bnbtnt2@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/18/2025 9:21 AM
Schweiker, Roy	Concord, NH royswkr@hotmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/18/2025 7:24 PM
Barkhouse, Meredith	Manchester, NH Mkbarkhouse@live.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/18/2025 8:33 PM

James Gardner

This bill violates the New Hampshire Constitution, specifically Part First Article 30. [Freedom of Speech.], which states "The freedom of deliberation, speech, and debate, in either House of the Legislature, is so essential to the rights of the people, that it cannot be the foundation of any action, complaint, or prosecution, in any other Court or place whatsoever."

I would highly recommend this committee review the New Hampshire Constitution: https://www.nh.gov/glance/constitution.htm

Sandra F Sterling

Any municipal building should not be able to post anything showing favoritism toward any party or candidate. These types of displays should remain in a neutral public forum.

Benjamin Braggins

This is a terrible idea. It's going against voter wishes.

Ideally this law should also clarify when First Amendment rights would supersede this decision

HB 554 - AS INTRODUCED

2025 SESSION

25-0804
08/09

HOUSE BILL ***554***

AN ACT enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property.

SPONSORS: Rep. Andrus, Merr. 5; Rep. Kuttab, Rock. 17; Rep. Perez, Rock. 16; Rep. Rice, Hills. 38; Rep. See, Merr. 26; Rep. Sellers, Graf. 18; Rep. Turcotte, Straf. 4; Rep. H. Howard, Straf. 4; Sen. Innis, Dist 7; Sen. Pearl, Dist 17; Sen. Ward, Dist 8

COMMITTEE: Municipal and County Government

ANALYSIS

This bill designates the authority to decide where political signs will be placed in a municipality to that municipality.

- -

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics.***
Matter removed from current law appears [~~in brackets and struckthrough.~~]
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

HB 554 - AS INTRODUCED

25-0804
08/09

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Five

AN ACT enabling municipalities to choose whether or not to place political advertising on municipal property.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 Political Advertising; Placement and Removal of Political Advertising. Amend RSA 664:17 to read as follows:

664:17 Placement and Removal of Political Advertising. No political advertising shall be placed on or affixed to any public property including highway rights-of-way or private property without the owner's consent, ***except that municipalities may decide the locations of signs in that municipality.*** All political advertising shall be removed by the candidate no later than the second Friday following the election unless the election is a primary and the advertising concerns a candidate who is a winner in the primary. Signs shall not be placed on or affixed to utility poles or highway signs. Political advertising may be placed within state-owned rights-of-way as long as the advertising does not obstruct the safe flow of traffic and the advertising is placed with the consent of the owner of the land over which the right-of-way passes. No person shall remove, deface, or knowingly destroy any political advertising which is placed on or affixed to public property or any private property except for removal by the owner of the property, persons authorized by the owner of the property, or a law enforcement officer removing improper advertising. Political advertising placed on or affixed to any public property may be removed by state, city, or town maintenance or law enforcement personnel. Political advertising removed prior to election day by state, city, or town maintenance or law enforcement personnel shall be kept until one week after the election at a place designated by the state, city, or town so that the candidate, or a member of the candidate's campaign or local political committee of the same party may retrieve the items.

2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.