

Senate Ways and Means Committee

Sonja Caldwell 271-2117

SB 561, relative to change of address for certain game operator employer licensees.

Hearing Date: January 21, 2026

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Lang, Rosenwald and Fenton, McConkey

Members of the Committee Absent : Senators Murphy and Sullivan

Bill Analysis: This bill enables applicants for a gaming facility license to change their address while the application is pending.

Sponsors:

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Gannon

Sen. Sullivan

Sen. Watters

Sen. Avard

Who supports the bill: Dr. Deborah Warner, Joseph Barton, Malcolm Starring, George Gilman, Ryan Russo, Bonnie Vanek, Patricia E Kellogg, George Morgan, Laurie Morgan, Patricia Bartel, Delia Smith, Sen. Keith Murphy, James Anan

Who opposes the bill: No one

Who is neutral on the bill: No one

Summary of testimony presented:

Grant Bosse

Mr. Bosse introduced the bill for Sen Murphy. He said the bill was a request of Dr. Deborah Warner of Littleton. It concerns the ability of charitable gaming license applicants to change their business address while the application is pending. Sen. Murphy has also prepared amendment 0191s for the committee's consideration.

Dr. Deborah Warner – Littleton

- Dr. Warner said Littleton was surprised to be invited to a listening session at the high school in May of 2023 for a proposed casino that intended to occupy the Staples store.
- Over 100 people came and 95% spoke against the casino. They were told then that nothing could be done about it.

- The citizens created an ordinance to prohibit the casino but at the planning board hearing they discovered that the state law nullified the local action. The article passed on the town warrant by 60% but could not be enforced.
- The citizens brought this concern to the legislature and the local option bill was passed. Towns are now seeing articles on warrants regarding the opt out statute.
- They were involved in the crafting of the bill, including a carve out for businesses already invested in casino facilities. Casinos shouldn't be forced out of a town by local option after they are already established.
- The same deference is also granted to new applicants in the moratorium pool. A small restriction in the moratorium statute hampers a voluntary move from a town if the applicant wishes to change their municipal placement. She described this as not being pro-business. She said the no-move restriction in RSA 284:22 B II (b) is overly austere. It does not allow a gentle resolution of the conflict between a town's stance and the casino's own right to business.
- They are asking that the statute be amended to allow a reasonable distance movement for the casino applicant that wishes to make such a move. This is voluntary flexibility; not a forced move.
- Littleton has respected the rights of these businesses all along. The no-move restriction in the moratorium eliminates business agility.
- There are many other places that would welcome a casino within the geography described in the amendment. Freezing a casino applicant's location limits the ability of the business to compromise, resolve issues, and stifles opportunity for success.
- Regarding the geographic area outlined in the amendment which states that casino could move to a municipality within the same executive council district or an abutting county of the same latitude or a more northerly one – Littleton is in Grafton County and Coos County is to the north of them. She said many people in Coos County would love to have a casino in their town.

Valerie King – NH Lottery

Sen. Lang asked Valerie King of the Lottery Commission to come forward to answer questions from committee members. Sen. Lang said he wanted to understand the implications. He said RSA 284:22 B II (b) is a small subsection of the Lottery laws, and it only pertains to applicants in a small window of time between January 1 and October 15 of 2023.

Ms. King said that was correct.

Sen. Lang said there were only five applicants who fell in that window and 2 were granted, 2 were not, and he wasn't sure of the status of the last one.

Ms. King said that was correct and added that only two are viable for this.

Sen. Lang asked if Salem and Littleton were the two that would fall under this bill.

Ms. King said that was correct

Sen. Rosenwald asked why it is fair to allow only two of the applicants to move and not the rest of the operators.

Ms. King said that is not something the agency determines; it is a legislative decision.

Sen. Lang said operators can't move once granted a license.

Ms. King said that was correct; they have to remain within that same town.

Sen. Rosenwald asked if it was correct that if she held a license in Nashua and wanted to move to Concord or Merrimack, she couldn't; however, if she were granted a license in Salem and wanted to move someplace north of Salem, she could.

Ms. King first clarified that if you have a games of chance only license you can go anywhere. This bill only applies to the VLT and HHR license, and in that case, you can only move within town in which you were licensed.

Sen. Rosenwald said this was making different rules for different entities within the same field.

Ms. King reiterated that this was a legislative decision, not an agency decision.

Sen. Lang said it is not uncommon for the legislature to do this. He said the legislature has named entities before and passed laws based on individual entities allowing them to do something that everyone isn't allowed to do, such as with Hinsdale, Rockingham, and Belmont.

Sen. Rosenwald asked what the executive council districts have to do with where these facilities are located and why the bill says you can only go more northerly and not east or west.

Ms. King said that is a question for the prime sponsor.

Sen. Lang said the reason is because priority is given to charities within the same executive council district.