

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1369, relative to the manner of posting the warrant for a special town meeting.

Hearing Date: March 18, 2026

Time Opened: 2:05 p.m.

Time Closed: 2:14 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Lang, Rochefort, Perkins Kwoka and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill requires the warrant for a special town meeting to be posted on a town's website in addition to in a newspaper of general circulation.

Sponsors:

Rep. Beaulier

Rep. Barton

Rep. Berry

Who supports the bill: Brendan McQuaid, Cory Stone

Who opposes the bill: Brodie Deshaies, Priscilla Dube

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator Lang introduced the bill on behalf of the prime sponsor.

Brodie Deshaies, NH Municipal Association

- Opposed to HB 1369, as amended by the House.
- Current statute already requires there to be a public notice of a special town meeting either in a newspaper in general circulation or on the town's website if there is one.
- This is just for special town meetings.
- There are fewer newspapers in circulation, and a lot of those are moving to digital formats that require a subscription to read them.
- Most people visit a town website or go to the town hall to see when meetings are scheduled.
- An increasing number of Americans today get their news from social media.
- This bill requires the town post the notice of a special meeting on its website, if it has one, and in a newspaper with general circulation.
- Only special meetings require two postings. The law that governs this was enacted in 1945, which made sense at the time.

- The legislature should be moving towards allowing towns to post online instead of the newspaper, as this is where people get most of their news.

Senator Lang said there is always concern about online posting, noting that not everyone has access to it. He asked whether NHMA would oppose requiring towns to post on a town website and to display notices in two specific physical locations within the town as a compromise.

Mr. Deshaies that this is the direction NHMA believes the state should be heading, and that a good compromise would be for them to post online and at two physical locations in town. NHMA would be happy to draft an amendment reflecting that if the committee would like them to.

Brendan McQuaid, President of the NH Press Association and NH Union Leader Publisher

- Fully supports the amendment made to this bill in the House because it considers that access isn't noticed. Someone might see a scheduled meeting on a website, but if they don't know it's happening, why would they seek that information?
- Reviewed information and couldn't find any Press Association members who put meeting notices behind paywalls. It is important for them that people know about what is happening in their town governments.
- Some towns do not have a newspaper in circulation, so he believes this is a good compromise.
- When a town newspaper does exist, the notices should be in the newspaper.

Senator Lang said that newspapers are increasingly moving to a weekly or only several-times-a-week schedule, rather than publishing seven days a week. His concern is that towns are advertising meetings, for example, in the Union Leader, even if they are far from Manchester. To comply with state law, our communities are having to publish meeting notices in newspapers that may not be relevant to their communities, and he sees this as becoming a problem.

Mr. McQuaid stated that the Union Leader is a statewide newspaper, but this bill strikes a good balance because it requires that a notice be posted in a newspaper circulating in that town. This differs from other NH statutes, which specify posting in a publication that circulates in the county. While the Union Leader is available in every county, it isn't present in every town. Publishing notices in newspapers is important because people regularly read them. Mr. McQuaid also said that if a town wanted to bury something online, it would be very easy to do so.