

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1125, enabling school districts to adopt partisan school district elections.

Hearing Date: March 31, 2026

Time Opened: 11:27 a.m.

Time Closed: 11:34 a.m.

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

Members of the Committee Absent: Senator Lang

Bill Analysis: This bill enables school districts to choose whether or not to adopt partisan school district elections.

Sponsors:

Rep. Wherry

Rep. Aylward

Rep. Creighton

Rep. Freeman

Rep. Harvey-Bolia

Rep. Pauer

Sen. McGough

Sen. Murphy

Who supports the bill: 2 people signed in to support this bill. For a complete list of names, please contact committee aide, Jessica Bourque at jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov

Who opposes the bill: 178 people signed in opposed to this bill. For a complete list of names, please contact committee aide, Jessica Bourque at jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Bob Wherry, Hillsborough-District 13

- This bill would allow school districts to determine if they want to adopt partisan school district elections.
- A nonpartisan ballot does not help voters understand who a candidate is.
- Uninformed voters cause low voter turnout.
- Unidentified candidates' positions on educational policy and funding weaken accountability.
- Rep. Wherry mentioned an amendment to the bill that the committee may want to consider.

Senator Rochefort clarified that Rep. Wherry is saying this bill is the same as last year's vetoed bill, so the committee needs to amend it to prevent it from being vetoed this year.

Rep. Wherry said that is correct.

Linda Bundy, Antrim

- Opposes this bill.
- Nonpartisan ballots require voters to learn what candidates understand the needs of their school district and will work in the best interest of the community and not party interests.
- In her town, local newspapers publish candidates' statements, and the grange hosts a candidates' night where members of the public can meet the candidates.

Brian Hawkins, NEA-NH

- Opposes this legislation.
- Their members have clearly communicated that they oppose partisan school board elections.
- The governor stated in her veto that turning local elections into a partisan fight would cause unnecessary division among Granite Staters, and NEA-NH agrees with that.
- Educators put a lot of effort into keeping politics out of the classroom.
- The prime sponsor said that not having partisan elections weakens accountability, but they believe the opposite.