

SB 653 - AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

14May2026... 1797h

2026 SESSION

26-3255

07/08

SENATE BILL

**653**

AN ACT enabling counties to change the dates of their biennial budgets and relative to the adopting of a municipal budget committee and electing members thereof.

SPONSORS: Sen. Lang, Dist 2

COMMITTEE: Election Law and Municipal Affairs

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AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill:

I. Modifies the procedure for adopting, rescinding, and electing a municipal budget committee.

II. Modifies the time frame for the appointment of initial members of a cooperative school district budget committee.

III. Enables counties to change the dates of their biennial budgets.

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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Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

## STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

*In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six*

AN ACT                    enabling counties to change the dates of their biennial budgets and relative to the adopting of a municipal budget committee and electing members thereof.

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

1            1 Municipal Budget Law; Budget Committee. RSA 32:14, III is repealed and reenacted to read  
2 as follows:

3            III. Voting shall be by official ballot unless the town has not adopted the official ballot, in  
4 which case the clerk shall cause the same question to be printed upon special ballots, which shall be  
5 used to determine the vote of the town at the annual meeting, and ballots shall be accepted by the  
6 moderator for a period of not less than one hour following the completion of discussion on the  
7 question.

8            (a) If budget committee members-at-large are to be appointed by the moderator  
9 pursuant to RSA 32:15, II, the wording of the question shall be: "To assist voters in the prudent  
10 appropriation of public funds, shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:14 to establish a budget  
11 committee consisting of (number) members-at-large who are appointed by the moderator?"

12            (b) If budget committee members-at-large are to be elected with initial members-at-large  
13 appointed to one year terms by the moderator pursuant to RSA 32:15, III, the wording of the  
14 question shall be: "To assist voters in the prudent appropriation of public funds, shall we adopt the  
15 provisions of RSA 32:14 to establish a budget committee consisting of (number) members-at-large  
16 who are elected, with the initial members appointed to one-year terms by the moderator?"

17            (c) Except for a town or district that uses an official ballot form of meeting under RSA  
18 40:13 or under a charter adopted pursuant to RSA 49-D, if budget committee members-at-large are  
19 to be elected with initial members-at-large elected to one-year terms pursuant to RSA 32:15, III, the  
20 wording of the question shall be as follows: "To assist voters in the prudent appropriation of public  
21 funds, shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:14 to establish a budget committee consisting of  
22 (number) members-at-large who are elected, with the initial members elected to one-year terms by  
23 the meeting?"

24            (d) For a town or district that uses an official ballot form of meeting under RSA 40:13 or  
25 under a charter adopted pursuant to RSA 49-D, if budget committee members-at-large are to be  
26 elected with initial members-at-large elected to staggered terms at the next annual meeting  
27 pursuant to RSA 32:15, III, the wording of the question shall be as follows: "To assist voters in the  
28 prudent appropriation of public funds, shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:14 to establish a  
29 budget committee consisting of (number) members-at-large who are elected, with initial members  
30 elected at the next annual meeting?"

SB 653 - AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

- Page 2 -

2 Municipal Budget Law; Adoption. Amend RSA 32:14, V to read as follows:

V. A town or district which has adopted this subdivision may rescind its adoption in the manner described in paragraphs II and III, ***except that the wording of the question shall be: "Shall we rescind the provisions of RSA 32:14, eliminating the budget committee so that the governing body assumes all budgetary responsibilities for the prudent appropriation of public funds?"***.

3 Municipal Budget Law; Budget Committee Membership. Amend RSA 32:15, III-IV to read as follows:

III. ***If a town or district uses an official ballot form of meeting under RSA 40:13 or under a charter adopted pursuant to RSA 49-D, and the meeting decides members-at-large are to be elected, the meeting shall either elect the initial members-at-large for staggered terms as described in paragraph II at the next annual meeting, or shall authorize the moderator to appoint members-at-large to serve a one-year term until the next annual meeting, as provided in RSA 669:17. Otherwise, if the meeting decides members-at-large are to be elected, the meeting shall either elect the initial members for one-year terms by means other than by official ballot, or shall authorize the moderator to appoint members to serve until the next annual meeting, as provided in RSA 669:17. Elections for staggered terms, as described in paragraph II, shall not begin until that next annual meeting, and shall be by official ballot if the municipality has adopted the official ballot system, as set forth in RSA 669 or RSA 671. A budget committee shall be deemed duly constituted and able to conduct business once a quorum of its elected or appointed members-at-large have been sworn into office.***

IV. A town or district which has adopted this subdivision may vote at any subsequent annual meeting to change the number or manner of selection of its members-at-large. No such change shall take effect until the annual meeting following the meeting at which the change was adopted. ***Currently elected or appointed members-at-large shall continue to serve until the end of their current term.***

(a) ***To change the number of members-at-large, the wording of the question shall be: "Shall we change the number of budget committee members-at-large from (number) to (number)?"***

(b) ***To change the manner of selection of members-at-large, the wording of the question shall be: "Shall we change the manner of selection of budget committee members-at-large from ("appointed by moderator" or "elected by voters") to ("elected by voters" or "appointed by moderator")?"***

4 Cooperative School Districts; Budget Committee. Amend RSA 195:12-a, I to read as follows:

I. A cooperative school district at an annual meeting, under a proper article in the warrant, may vote to establish a budget committee pursuant to RSA 32:14 and may rescind such action in a like manner. The budget committee shall have the same number of members as the cooperative

**SB 653 - AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE**

**- Page 3 -**

1 district school board plus one additional member from the school board as provided in this  
2 paragraph. The terms of office and manner of election of members shall be determined in the same  
3 manner as for the cooperative school board. Whenever it is voted to establish a budget committee,  
4 the moderator in the first instance shall appoint the members of the budget committee, except for  
5 the additional member appointed from the school board, within ~~[15]~~ **30** days of the vote establishing  
6 the committee. The members appointed by the moderator shall serve until the next annual meeting  
7 when the meeting shall elect their successors. No member of the cooperative school board shall be  
8 appointed or elected to the budget committee except that the chairperson of the cooperative school  
9 board shall appoint a member of the board to serve on the budget committee in an ex-officio, non-  
10 voting capacity. After appointment or election, the budget committee shall promptly organize and  
11 choose a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary. The secretary shall keep records of the  
12 proceedings of the budget committee, which shall be public records open to public inspection.

13 5 New Section; Municipal Budget Law; Biennial Budgets; Procedure for Fiscal Year Change.  
14 Amend RSA 32 by inserting after section 26 the following new section:

15 32:27 Procedure for Fiscal Year Change.

16 I. Upon an affirmative vote of a majority of county voters, a county may move the biennial  
17 budget to the off year of the state election. Putting the question on the ballot shall require a vote in  
18 the affirmative by a majority of the county commissioners. Said vote shall happen no later than the  
19 September 1 before the state elections.

20 II. Notice of a vote of the county commissioners pursuant to paragraph I shall be given at  
21 least 15 days, but not more than 60 days, prior, by a local newspaper of general circulation, public  
22 notice on the county's main website or any social media accounts utilized by the county, and public  
23 notice posted in the 2 places where the county regularly posts notices of its governing body meetings,  
24 or by any other means deemed appropriate by the county commissioners.

25 III. The question shall be put to the voters at the November state election and shall read as  
26 follows:

27 "Shall NAME OF COUNTY move to a biennial budget cycle starting in the year YEAR NUMBER?"

28 6 Repeal. RSA 32:14, IV, relative to procedure if the vote is favorable, is repealed.

29 7 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.