

# Senate Judiciary Committee

*Brendan Bunnell 271-4063*

**CACR 11**, relating to sheriffs. Providing that no person shall hold the office of county sheriff after he or she has attained the age of 75 years.

**Hearing Date:** February 17, 2026

**Time Opened** 1:50 p.m.

**Time Closed:** 2:10 p.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Gannon, Abbas, Altschiller and Reardon

**Members of the Committee Absent:** Senator Carson

**Bill Analysis:** This constitutional amendment concurrent resolution raises the retirement age for sheriffs to 75 years of age.

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**Sponsors:**

Sen. Reardon

Sen. Abbas

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**Who supports the bill:** Senator Reardon, Senator Abbas, David Goldstein (Rockingham County Sheriff's Office), Charles Massahos (Rockingham County Sheriff's Office), Sheriff Bill Wright (Belknap County), and Jennifer Favreau.

**Who opposes the bill:** Corinne Gordon and Leigh Hutchinson

**Who is neutral on the bill:** None.

**Summary of the testimony presented:**

**Senator Tara Reardon (SD-15) and Senator Daryl Abbas (SD-22)**, introduced the bill, explaining that it would change the age limit for being a Sheriff in New Hampshire from 70 to 75. Senator Reardon explained that the current age limit had been set in the eighteenth century, and was no longer relevant when considering the relative difference in lifespans between that time and today. The Senators expressed their desire that the age limit be raised to 75 or outright eliminated.

- Senator Reardon stated that being 70 today is not the same as being 70 in the eighteenth century, when considering the health and acuity of modern individuals in their 70s.
- Senator Abbas stated that there are no other age limits present in New Hampshire's constitution for elected officials. He explained that being a

sheriff is an elected position, and ought to be held to the same standards as other roles without an age limit.

- Explained that there is no monetary incentive for being a Sheriff, as the role is paid far less than a Senior Deputy or other roles.
- Expressed that, in view of recruitment and retention issues in Law Enforcement roles, the state ought not to compel a popularly elected and highly experienced Sheriff to retire from that role.
- Senator Gannon stated that 75 seemed like a fair place for the age limit to be raised to, given that there could be some slowdown beyond that point.

**High Sheriff Charles Massahos and Lieutenant David Goldstein**, of Rockingham County, spoke in support of the bill, expressing that 70-year-olds are now capable of taking on far greater responsibilities than they were in 1792. Sheriff Massahos explained that there were many functions of the office that rely heavily on sound judgement and experience.

- Explained that the office of Sheriff is primarily executive in nature, and not limited to patrol duties. Sheriffs oversee many administrative necessities, including budgetary and personnel matters.
- Argued that disqualifying a Sheriff based solely on age neglects the skills necessary for that role. There are 10 Sheriffs in New Hampshire subject to this mandate and 240 Chiefs of Police not bound by age constraints.
- Argued that arbitrary age limits on Sheriffs removes the decision from the electorate that appointed them.
- Explained that, given the current retention and recruitment struggles of Law Enforcement, limiting leadership options in this way is especially harmful.
- Expressed that voters had the ability to decide the ability of a Sheriff to preform their role already, and that this democratic structure made age limits unnecessary.
- Asked the committee whether they felt that arbitrary age limits served the interests of the state, or if it would be best to leave the issue to the electorate.
- Introduced Lieutenant David Goldstein, who Sheriff Massahos had hired on account of his dedication and service to the state of New Hampshire. Lieutenant Goldstein is 74 years old, making him ineligible for the office of Sheriff. Sheriff Massahos wondered why anyone would want to give up the experience that Lieutenant Goldstein had acquired while a Police Chief.

- Senator Gannon asked how much of the office was devoted to field work.
  - o Sheriff Massahos answered that he was not involved in field work unless there was a major emergency. Most of his role was dedicated to administrative work and keeping his officers safe while providing the best possible law enforcement services.
- Senator Gannon asked, in view of the possibility of an emergency, if 75 was a good year to stop at or if legislators ought to eliminate the age limit all together.
  - o Sheriff Massahos answered that they should not be penalized with an age limit at all, but that 75 was better than 70.
  - o Expressed that you ought to be able to remain in the role as long as you are mentally, physically, and financially stable.
- Senator Abbas asked whether a Sheriff that became constitutionally disqualified from their role could then continue to serve a similar function in another role.
  - o Sheriff Massahos answered that this was correct, but that each role in the department had a specific job to perform.
- Senator Gannon asked if Sheriff Massahos would be happy for the bill to state that no one shall run for the office after the age of 75, meaning that individuals already elected to the role might get an additional couple of years in office.
  - o Sheriff Massahos said that he would prefer no age limit at all.
- Senator Altschiller asked whether the experience of a particular Sheriff could be retained by appointing that individual to another role in the department.
  - o Sheriff Massahos said that it could be, but that it would be in a different role with separate responsibilities and might leave the new appointee to the role of Sheriff lacking in the face of the office's many responsibilities.
  - o Lieutenant Goldstein explained that he was currently the Mental Health and Wellness Coordinator at the Rockingham County Sheriff's Office.
  - o Expressed that there are other options including term limits, which some other places rely upon.
  - o Argued that the New Hampshire Constitution is a living document which has been amended 149 times since 1792.

- Senator Gannon asked if Lieutenant Goldstein would prefer to move the limit to 75 years or to eliminate the age limit entirely.
  - o Lieutenant Goldstein expressed that he would prefer to take it out entirely.

BMB

Date Hearing Report completed: February 24, 2026