

Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee

Kevin Condict 271-7875

HB 210, establishing a commission to study the state flag and its history.

Hearing Date: April 9, 2025

Time Opened: 10:45 a.m.

Time Closed: 11:00 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Pearl, McGough, Altschiller and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Gannon

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes a commission to study the state flag, its history, and vexillological principles to determine if the state flag should be redesigned.

Sponsors:

Rep. Cormen

Rep. H. Howard

Rep. Manos

Rep. Prudhomme-O'Brien

Rep. Wheeler

Who supports the bill: Rep. Carol McGuire (Merr. 27), Rep. Jaci Grote (Rock. 24), Rep. Thomas Cormen (Graf. 15), Rep. Jonah Wheeler (Hills. 33), and Sarahlynn Williams.

Who opposes the bill: Julie Smith, Daniel Richardson, and Sarah McCarthy.

Who is neutral on the bill: None.

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Tom Cormen, Grafton 15

- Rep. Cormen introduced House Bill 210.
- Rep. Cormen used a visual aid showcasing twenty-five state flags.
- Rep. Cormen said that Granite Staters like to think of New Hampshire as unique, but the state flag is anything but unique.
- Rep. Cormen said that the state flag fails to convey New Hampshire's unique qualities.

- Rep. Cormen brought attention to his handout from the North American Vexillological Association pertaining to the principles of flag design. He noted that New Hampshire's state flag violates every one of the principles listed.
- Rep. Cormen explained the principles: keep it simple enough for a child to draw, use meaningful symbolism, use two or three basic flag colors, and no lettering or seals. He said the ship on New Hampshire's flag, the USS Raleigh, was not widely known.
- Rep. Cormen stated that a flag is a graphic symbol, and lettering complicates the message. He said that seals are meant to be read at close range, not from a distance.
- Rep. Cormen said that the state seal on a blue bed sheet design is not distinctive at all.
- Rep. Cormen explained that this bill establishes a commission to study the New Hampshire flag without changing it. He said the commission would consist of three House members, one senator, the President of the New Hampshire Historical Society, and the head of the New England Vexillological Association.
- Rep. Cormen explained that the commission would review the history of the flag, examine the vexillological principles, develop criteria and a process for accepting flag designs, a deadline for flag designs, and decide how many designs to consider. According to the current drafting of this bill, when that process is over the commission will report their findings and propose legislation by November 1 of this year.
- Rep. Cormen said that if the Senate decides to move forward with this bill there could be a possible amendment to extend the date by six or twelve months.
- Rep. Cormen recommended that members of the Committee watch the YouTube video "Does you Flag Fail?"
- Sen. McGough said he supports this bill. He asked Rep. Cormen if he would be agreeable to an amendment pushing back the November 1 deadline.
 - o Rep. Cormen said he would be fine with such an amendment.

Representative Jonah Wheeler, Hillsborough 33

- Rep. Wheeler acknowledged that there are more important topics than changing the state flag, but said it is something that the legislature can do. He said being a legislator means being able to focus on many different topics.
- Rep. Wheeler agreed that New Hampshire's state flag is not unique. He said the flag should be changed, and that is why this bill was brought forward.
- Rep. Wheeler said that the commission will review everything, and New Hampshire artists will have an opportunity to submit new designs.

Representative Jaci Grote, Rockingham 24

- Rep. Grote said she personally likes the current version of the state flag but acknowledged that there have been many state flag bills.

- Rep. Grote stated that the intent of the House Executive Departments and Administration Committee had when they passed this bill was to create an efficient way to stop more flag bills from being drafted in the future.

Representative Carol McGuire, Merrimack 27

- Rep. McGuire said that her committee looked at the fact that new flag bills were always referred to the House Executive Departments and Administration Committee. She said that the committee decided they are not the right group of people to select a new flag design.
- Rep. McGuire said that some members of the committee like the flag because it is dignified and historic, many did not care about the flag, and others thought that someone with a better visual sense should select the flag.
- Rep. McGuire said that the House committee killed the bill that would have changed the flag directly and drafted this bill to add a commission to analyze the flag.
- Rep. McGuire said they specifically ensured that the commission does not need to choose a new flag. The commission would establish a process for choosing one.
- Rep. McGuire said she supports an amendment to move the selection process deadline back by one year.
- Sen. Reardon asked if the creation of the commission assumes a new flag.
 - o Rep. McGuire said that it does not. The commission would just investigate the history of the flag and develop criteria and deadline submissions of flag designs.
- Rep. McGuire said that if the commission decides that the current flag is good, then there will be no changes.
- Sen. McGough pointed to line 13. He asked about the recommendation that a committee member of the House Executive Departments and Administration Committee be a member of this commission.
 - o Rep. McGuire said that she did not add that parameter, but that she would recommend a member.