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HOUSE RECORD

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Contains: Corrected Committee Reports

ADDENDUM TO HOUSE CALENDAR NO. 5

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4
REGULAR CALENDAR

EDUCATION

HB 1272-FN, relative to bus transportation for chartered public school students. **OUGHT TO PASS.**
Rep. Ralph Boehm for Education. This bill provides for transportation to public charter schools if the charter school is in the school district. This bill only mandates bus transportation in accordance with the same terms and conditions as they provide to their regular public schools. Current law states that transportation be provided for private schools in the school district. **Vote 11-8.**

MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

HB 1214, allowing towns and cities to authorize an additional surcharge on hotel occupancy under the meals and rooms tax. **MAJORITY: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE. MINORITY: OUGHT TO PASS WITH AMENDMENT.**
Rep. Franklin Sterling for the **Majority** of Municipal and County Government. Towns and cities would be authorized to levy a local tax on hotel occupancy under this proposed bill. Although minimal, it would establish yet another tax and it is unclear what the costs of administering this program would be. The bill implies that the tax would simply be administered under the current Meals and Rooms Tax program but the funds received would have to be returned to the municipality which collected it and would not be subject to the education funding that is part of the current Meals and Rooms Tax structure. Therefore, it would require separate accounting and possibly additional costs at the state level which would need to be considered in setting budgets. Setting a new tax on room occupancy that would vary from municipality to municipality could have an adverse effect on tourism and the unintended consequences of such a change are undeterminable at this time. The committee felt this legislation, although permitted in other states, was not in keeping with our low tax image. **Vote 10-6.**
Rep. Marjorie Porter for the **Minority** of Municipal and County Government. As we are all aware, budgetary constraints have resulted in the State reducing the share of the meals and rooms tax revenues sent back to cities and towns by tens of millions of dollars over the past several budget cycles. Communities which are tourist destinations have been hit particularly hard by this downshifting. Local property tax payers must foot the costs for the extra municipal services needed when their populations swell during tourist season. Extra police may be needed or specialized fire equipment must be purchased, for example. HB 1214 allows these communities, if they so choose, to add an additional surcharge, not to exceed $2.00, on hotel occupancy within the municipality under the meals and room tax. In this way, visitors would help pay for services they use, and the burden on local taxpayers would be reduced. This is enabling legislation, and allows for local control.

HB 1402, prohibiting the state and political subdivisions from acquiring military-equipped vehicles or equipment which are not readily available in an open national commercial market. **MAJORITY: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE. MINORITY: REFER FOR INTERIM STUDY.**

Rep. Franklin Sterling for the **Majority** of Municipal and County Government. This legislation would prohibit the state and political subdivisions from acquiring military-equipped vehicles or equipment not readily available on the commercial market. This is identical to HB 407 introduced in 2015. HB 1402 has the same fault as the previous bill in that it calls for any hardware or equipment already in the possession of municipalities be forfeited but does not provide an entity to turn it over to. HB 407 was turned into a study committee with a reporting date of November 2016. The study committee has not completed its work at this time and should be allowed to complete its work before any legislation is introduced on this subject. Although there is committee support for addressing this issue, it was felt premature to adopt legislation that is subject to change based on any study committee findings. The committee options, therefore, would be Inexpedient to Legislate or Refer for Interim Study. Since there is likely to be new legislation that will result from the current study committee, RIS seemed to be a duplication of effort, ITL was deemed the appropriate motion. **Vote 11-4.**

Rep. Keith Ammon for the **Minority** of Municipal and County Government. Police departments should be part of the community and not styled after an occupying military force. The proliferation of military-style weapons among domestic law enforcement is a troubling trend. Last year President Obama issued an executive order limiting the types of weapons and equipment that domestic police departments are allowed to possess. However, executive orders can be reversed by the next administration. The minority felt that killing this bill sends the wrong message regarding this issue and instead wanted the bill Referred for Interim Study. A study committee created by a similar bill last year is still meeting and has yet to release its findings. Defining military style equipment may be difficult to do. We wouldn't want to prevent police departments from obtaining defensive gear that would protect the safety of officers. Perhaps, though, it is possible to codify some of the rules contained in the President's executive order into New Hampshire law, so that it cannot easily be reversed by a future presidential administration.