

I strongly urge you to vote against the Amendment to HB 686-FN. This bill poses a severe threat to public information access and the fundamental rights of public employees. This legislation severely restricts the ability of libraries, educational institutions, and city/town governments to provide vital information to the public and legislators, hindering informed civic participation.

This bill is no different than SB213 which was vetoed by Governor Ayotte. It simply references RSA 652:16-h for the definition of electioneering, thereby reducing the text in the bill and making it more likely that people will not read the referenced RSA and therefore not understand what they are voting for.

- **Overly Broad Definition of "Electioneering":** The bill's definition of "electioneering" is dangerously overbroad, encompassing neutral activities like hosting candidate forums and conducting public surveys – activities essential for informed civic participation.
- **Suppression of Public Information:** This bill directly undermines the core mission of libraries and local governments to provide unbiased information to the public.

Silencing public employees will profoundly harm their institutions, local governments, and the public. This suppression of free speech will allow harmful and even dangerous laws to pass without essential public comment. The public deserves the right to communicate honestly and openly with their public employees.

Furthermore, the amendment to HB 686-FN directly conflicts with RSA 98-E, the Public Employee Freedom of Expression statute, posing a significant threat to free speech protections for local public workers.

The bill's extreme breadth means any of the following actions could result in a misdemeanor offense:

- Informing the public of any bill in process even if it would directly affect
  - the public institution
  - the work of a municipality
  - local ordinances
  - citizens' ability to vote
- Notifying a supervisor, Trustee, City Councilor/Selectman, or co-workers about bills in progress. E.g., a Library Staff member notifying their Library Trustees that the NH State Library was slated for closing during the budget process.
- Public employees testifying to dangerous repercussions of a bill, including Police and Fire officers tasked with protecting the lives and property of the public.
- Any items on a staff person's desk that may be viewed as political, even if it is a non-public area.
- Allowing a flyer about a political event on a public bulletin board in a municipal building.

- This letter to you.

This bill represents a dangerous overreach that directly threatens the fundamental principles of the First Amendment, intellectual freedom, and local control. I urge you to carefully consider the profound and harmful consequences of the amendment to HB686-FN and veto this dangerous legislation.

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