

Republican Review

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SENATE, HOUSE ANNOUNCE PLAN TO ADDRESS SUBSTANCE ABUSE EPIDEMIC

PARAMETERS TO BE ESTABLISHED DURING
SPECIAL SESSION ON NOV. 18

CONCORD – Today, Legislative leadership laid out their plan to combat the substance abuse epidemic as part of the Special Session on Nov. 18. During the Special Session, the House will introduce a Special Session House Concurrent Resolution which, if passed, will go into effect immediately to establish a joint Substance Abuse Task Force.

The Task Force will be made up of 26 House and Senate members representing a wide range of committees and will fully vet and debate a specific set of issues including:

- Updating penalties for fentanyl distribution to be consistent with penalties for heroin
- Requiring insurance companies to adhere to same substance abuse treatment evaluation criteria; removing prior authorization requirements
- Updating prescription drug monitoring program technology, increase statewide usage
- Expanding Drug Courts
- Increasing law enforcement prevention and interdiction measures
- Increasing prescriber educational standards

A final report will be presented on January 6, 2016 which will serve as the basis for filing legislation.

“During the Special Session, we will introduce a Substance Abuse Task Force that will be charged with carefully addressing each of the major issues surrounding the heroin and opioid epidemic. We look forward to working with both our House and Senate colleagues in a way that allows us to lead on addressing these issues, while also ensuring that we appropriately review them to best serve the State of New Hampshire,” said Senate President Chuck Morse (R-Salem). *CONTINUED ON PAGE 3*

OPIOID EPIDEMIC IS AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE A TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

BY: HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER
RICHARD HINCH (R-MERRIMACK)

In a recent op-ed, Governor Hassan laid out her reasons for calling a special session of the legislature to deal with the state’s ongoing opioid epidemic, which is directly affecting so many New Hampshire families. Addressing this crisis has been and will continue to be a top priority for the legislature.

A week prior to the Governor’s special session request, House and Senate leaders held a press conference where they presented an array of legislation that would be taken up in an expedited manner when the regular session convenes in January. These proposals aim to bolster the state’s response to the crisis, and include funding for more regional drug courts, improving access to long term recovery services, increasing penalties for fentanyl, and improving the state’s efforts in prevention and interdiction. With broad consensus in the legislature that addressing the opioid epidemic is our top priority, there was no disagreement that a bill could reach the governor’s desk in a matter of weeks, not months, as she claims.

The governor’s recent level of concern is a remarkable change of course from what we experienced this past summer, where millions of dollars in new funding for treatment and enforcement were delayed for 10 weeks by the governor’s veto of the legislature’s budget. While the governor was busy vilifying Republicans for changes to New Hampshire’s business tax code, much needed funding was delayed to the very things she is hoping to support today. *CONTINUED ON PAGE 2*

GRAHAM WINS IN LANDSLIDE GOP SWEEP OF SPECIAL ELECTIONS CONTINUES

MILTON - Republican Bob Graham was victorious in Tuesday’s special election in Strafford Co. District 1 winning 259 to 74, a more than 3 to 1 margin.

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In the legislature's budget, funding for drug and alcohol treatment and recovery programs was increased by 75% from the previous budget. The substantial growth in dollars budgeted for these types of services was a steadfast commitment by the legislature to help our state respond to the crisis. We had hoped the budget would become law as soon as possible, but the governor's veto stopped this new wave of dollars from reaching our overwhelmed addiction treatment and behavioral health service providers.

Included in these funds was a doubling of the budget for the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery. Because of the delay caused by the budget veto, the Commission could not set or approve their budget until October 23rd. Had the governor let the budget become law in June, her own Commission could have approved their budget in July or August, and the additional dollars could have been utilized months ago, rather than just now reaching programs and service providers.

Also included in the legislature's budget were funds earmarked for additional personnel in the State Police crime lab. The crime lab is facing an enormous backlog of work as a result of increased drug related crime requiring substance analysis. The legislature listened to the concerns of the Department of Safety and stepped up by fulfilling their request for additional dollars. Due to the governor's budget veto, these dollars are just now reaching the Department of Safety, and recent reports suggest that postings for new job openings are only now happening this week.

These are just two examples of a failure by Governor Hassan to recognize the important steps forward we were able to make in 2015, and a failure to recognize that her actions impeded the ability of her own executive branch of government to have the resources they need to do an effective job.

Governor Hassan's change of course suggests that she believes it is now more politically expedient to devote time and resources to the issue than it was in June or July. Rather than focus on the pragmatic policy implications of the legislature's budget, the governor chose to focus on politically driven talking points provided to her by staff and consultants whose business it is to manufacture disagreement.

During the 2015 legislative session we were proud to not only put forward a statewide spending plan with an emphasis on supporting programs to aid in the state's efforts to address this crisis, but we also passed legislation that gave first responders greater access to Narcan, passed a Good Samaritan law to protect those who report drug related emergencies, and increased funding for more community based mental health services.

We don't disagree with the governor that more needs to be done. But, in recent weeks, we've seen what a rushed process void of stakeholder input can produce, when the Board of Medicine rejected most of the Governor's proposed rule changes to prescribing practices. We want to avoid similar situations as we move forward.

The governor would like us to believe that a special session of the legislature is the solution to New Hampshire's drug crisis when, in fact, it is a deflection of her responsibility as governor. The solution won't merely be a set of bills that come before the House and Senate. It requires a leader capable of managing the executive branch of government to effectively deploy the resources the legislature has appropriated, and the ability to seek results instead of headlines. Up to this point, we have not seen these qualities manifested by the governor.

The legislature will continue to act in a proactive manner as we have demonstrated throughout this year, and are willing and able to work in a bipartisan, coordinated manner to pass the best legislation we can with the resources we have available. It is up to the executive branch to manage delivery of funds and services, and in turn produce measurable results.

SPECIAL SESSION & REPUBLICAN CAUCUS TIME CHANGE:

The House will meet on Wednesday, November 18th at 12:00 p.m.

There will be a Republican caucus on Wednesday, November 18th at 10:00 a.m. in Representatives Hall.

There will be a Special Session luncheon at 10:45am in LOB 210-211

**Please note that state offices will be closed on Thanksgiving and the day after
(Thursday, November 26th, and Friday, November 27th).**

“This Task Force will allow us the time to work on these bills appropriately but in an expedited manner to combat this crisis. It will allow legislative action to be taken in an open and transparent process in order to vet all proposals. House and Senate members have continuously heard from local leaders related to how this crisis is affecting their communities. We know that a process without their input could result in less effective results and create more problems. We believe this is the most effective way to come up with a solution which benefits the citizens of New Hampshire,” said House Speaker Shawn Jasper.

“The joint Substance Abuse Task Force will provide the foundation for the Legislature to take an effective approach to curbing the substance abuse epidemic by allowing a comprehensive, inclusive, and transparent deliberative process. House and Senate members will properly vet and debate proposals, listen to input from experts and community members, while ensuring that by seeking a solution to one crisis, we are not inadvertently creating another crisis,” said Senate Majority Leader Jeb Bradley (R- Wolfeboro).

“We believe this Task Force is the best approach to coming up with a comprehensive set of solutions. These are complex issues with huge consequences,” said House Majority Leader Richard Hinch (R-Merrimack). “By assembling this group of legislators who are experts in their respective policy areas, and putting together a process by which they work with external stakeholders, we believe we have a better chance of not just having good legislation, but having the best legislation we can, given what we know at this time. This is an evolving issue that the legislature is prepared to deal with throughout the coming months. This Task Force will be on the front lines of the legislative process, and their work will help our state respond in a swift, but measured manner.

LANDSLIDE GRAHAM

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Rep. Elect Bob Graham (R-Milton)

Graham, of Milton, was the Republican nominee in the race to fill the vacancy in the House left by Rep. Robbie Parsons who passed away in July. Strafford District 1 is comprised of the towns of Milton and Middleton.

With this victory, Republicans remain undefeated in special elections this year, with a record of 5-0

According to Foster's, Representative-Elect Graham has lived in Milton for 19 years. He served in the armed forces for 26 years before going to work in the defense industry as a force development and manpower analyst for 20 years.

Graham was educated at the University of Maryland and Franklin Pierce College. He currently belongs to the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a past post commander and District 3 commander, and the American Legion Posts 40 and 8. He is the chair of the Milton Republican Committee and is an alternate on the Milton Planning Board. Graham is retired and is married with five children, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Task Force Quick Takes:

- Report due out by January 6th
- LSRs can be filed until January 12th
- 26 members; 14 House members; 12 Senators
- 15 Republicans; 11 Democrats
- 14 members makes up a quorum
- There will be a Chair and Vice Chair
- Task force will split into divisions (similar to House Finance) to focus on specific issues
- Updating penalties for fentanyl distribution to be consistent with penalties for heroin
- Requiring insurance companies to adhere to same substance abuse treatment evaluation criteria; removing prior authorization requirements
- Updating prescription drug monitoring program technology; increase statewide usage
- Expanding Drug Courts
- Increasing law enforcement prevention and interdiction measures
- Increasing prescriber educational standards

The task force will have the authority to file legislation based on the following topics with the understanding that all issues relating to the heroin and opioid crisis are up for discussion: