

THE CILLEY REPORT NEWS FROM SENATOR CILLEY

Issue 2 July 2008

New Consumer Protections for Home Buyers

SB 212 sponsored by Senator Cilley took two years to get passed by both chambers of the legislature, but was actually the culmination of several more years of efforts to protect New Hampshire home buyers. This bill that establishes licensure requirements and a board that will oversee the industry was signed by Governor Lynch on June 25th.

At the outset of 2007 there was a House bill and a Senate bill that outlined standards of practice and licensure requirements for home inspectors. Each of these bills was requested by different home inspector associations who failed to agree on the specifics of each bill. As a result the hearings on these bills became quite contentious at times and both State Representatives and Senators were lobbied long and hard by working factions. In the end, a committed bi-partisan effort by Senator Cilley and Senator Bob Clegg produced legislation that will ensure that all home inspectors offering their services within the state will have the same foundational knowledge of the home inspection field and consumers will be offered a higher level of protection in the purchase of their largest single asset.

Home inspectors or those wishing to enter the field will have until January 2010 to acquire their license. This two-year window will allow for the establishment of a new Home Inspector Board, the development of standards of practice and a comprehensive licensing exam.

New Hampshire Passes Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Cont'd

RGGI is to reduce our region's contribution to greenhouse gases, one of the leading causes of global warming.

As important as RGGI is, however, there is much more that every one of us can do to work collaboratively on this effort. There are a wide range of actions that we can each take that collectively will have a very significant impact. For example, simply installing energy-efficient lighting in place of florescent bulbs reduces electric usage and costs. Purchasing energy-efficient appliances, fuel efficient cars, conserving by turning off lights and unplugging appliances when not in use and car pooling whenever possible are all relatively painless steps we can take. To halt the effects of global warming and, indeed, to reverse it will require changes in lifestyle habits and the efforts of all of our citizens and businesses.

You can always trust Jackie to come through and speak honestly on issues she believes in. Jackie has done this for many things such as fair voting practices, water issues and helping us elect our outspoken Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter. If you want something accomplished in NH, Jackie doesn't talk about it she does it.
Gail Mitchell



Senator Cilley and Representative Dale Sprague at a Somersworth Coffee & Chat - January, 12, 2008

District 6 State Education Grants

The NH House and Senate passed a new, constitutionally sound education funding formula this spring. The formula, in conformity with the NH Supreme Court mandate of funding the elements of an adequate education, distributes a base adequacy amount (approximately \$3,400) for each pupil in the school district and adds to that figure "disparity" aid for schools in economically disadvantaged districts. Additionally, the formula smoothes out the transition from an earlier, unconstitutional formula in such a way that state aid does not drop precipitously for the next three years in districts that will ultimately receive less disparity aid.

Communities in District 6 will receive in 2009-2010 comparable funding to what they received in 2007-2008. The following is the estimated state grant for each community in District 6:

Barrington	\$ 3,925,320
Madbury	\$ 903,318
Nottingham	\$ 1,167,725
Rochester	\$22,458,109
Somersworth	\$ 7,288,749

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

It is difficult to believe that the end of my first term as Senator for District 6 is right around the corner. Please accept my sincerest gratitude for giving me this opportunity to serve you. It has been an honor to represent you in Concord and it has been a unique pleasure to get to know so many of you personally as I have traveled around the district throughout these past two years.

Throughout this term I have focused considerable energies and attention on issues that impact the lives of our working men and women, that ensure sufficient funding to educate all of our children, that enhance environmental protections to ensure both the quality of our life as well as the attractiveness of our state to visitors and new residents, that foster a sound economy, and increase consumer protections. Please know that you are at the center of every legislative decision that I make and every vote that I cast. It is an exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, thing to do to please everyone when votes are counted. However, every attempt is made to balance the interests of stakeholders in each issue of importance to our district.

Although the work of the session is over this year, I am keeping quite busy on issues likely to impact our citizens in the upcoming year. For example, I am very concerned about what lay ahead for our citizens as they try to pay for oil and food that has been increasing in price at historic rates. Those spiraling costs coupled with the, as yet, unresolved mortgage crisis has placed many of our working men and women in a very vulnerable position and has resulted in unprecedented demands upon our social service programs. As this newsletter goes to press I will be meeting with a wide range of our social service providers including municipal welfare officers, CAP staff, Service Link staff, Health and Human Services personnel, representatives from US Representative Carol Shea-Porter's office and others to review the programs available to help us through these difficult times as well as assessing ways to make such programs more effective. It is my hope that this networking will result in creative approaches to the needs of our citizens before serious problems develop.

Additionally, throughout the summer and autumn months I will continue my work on the numerous committees and commissions to which I have been assigned. For a full list of the boards, committees and commission on which I sit as the NH Senate member, please go to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/statstudcomm/default.aspx>. These bodies are public entities and their activities are open and available to the public. If you have input that you would like to share relative to any of these, please do not hesitate to send that along to me for consideration.

Lastly, please don't hesitate to contact me personally or my legislative aide, Patrick Murphy (271-2609) with any questions or concerns that you may have. Patrick and I have heard from many of you over the course of the term and it has been our pleasure to assist you in any way that we can. I look forward to continuing to be of service to you.



Recognizing Our Heroes

If you have ever been in a serious automobile accident or had an emergency life-threatening illness or injury you likely already know how indispensable an emergency medical technician is. These brave men and women willingly care for us when accident, injury or illness strikes, often being subjected to sights that would make most of us shudder. Frequently, they also risk injury or illness to themselves personally and they generally do it all as volunteers.

Typically, they receive little or no recognition for their services that save lives.

That is about to change in New Hampshire. Thanks to the dogged efforts of Tony Maggio an EMS Chief of Barrington and the sponsorship of Senator Cilley, we will now formally recognize the contributions of our emergency management service providers on the first Saturday of May each year.

Senate Bill 525 had a rather bumpy path on its way to approval in that chamber. The original bill called for the fourth Saturday, that would coincide with the national EMT recognition week. However, because that day often falls on Memorial Weekend, some senators felt that it would conflict with honoring our veterans. Due to those objections and the fact that there is consideration underway to push back the national program, a compromise was arrived at to designate the first Saturday of May to honor our emergency service personnel.

The bill passed the N.H. Senate on a 24-0 roll call vote and was signed by the Governor on May 29th.

I wholeheartedly offer my continued support to Senator Jackie Cilley. After knowing her for over twenty years, I'm still amazed at her endless energy and unwavering dedication. As a senator, Jackie listens carefully to her constituents, gathers information, and makes informed decisions that are always in the best interest of the state.
Cheryl Mahoney



Senator Cilley helping to kick off the Barrington Public Library summer reading program on June 20, 2008

N.H. Retirement Legislation Passed

One of the most important, and contentious, issues the legislature addressed this year was the status of the N.H. Retirement System (NHRS). This year was, in fact, a continuation of work begun in 2007 to ensure the solvency of the NHRS going into the future.

At the outset of the 2007 legislative year the NHRS was only 58% funded for its obligations to the System's members. Contributing to the troubling status of the system was a \$2.6 billion shortfall due to many years of under-funding by the state, municipalities and the school districts (collectively referred to as the "employers"), a questionable funding methodology that allowed the under-funding, the under-performance of the system fund due in part to market conditions as well as a very risk-averse investment strategy, and the lack of professional investment experience of the NHRS Board of Directors.

There was general agreement about those contributing factors. However, there was disagreement over other factors that may or may not be contributors to the problems experienced by the system in recent years. For example, some legislators argued that because the NHRS Board contains a higher percentage of employee/union representatives, 57%, that this has led to both poor investment decision-making and poor financial decision-making. Additionally, commitments such as a healthcare coverage stipend for some members of the System, an accelerator to the stipend that attempted to ensure that it corresponded to increases in healthcare coverage costs, a cost-of-living adjustment and years of service/age of retirement of 20/45 were cited as factors in the significant increased contribution costs by employers.

Doing nothing was not an option. Experts estimated that employers (our towns and school districts as well as the state) would see upwards of 53% increases in their contribution costs if action was not taken. Although another expert hired by a coalition of employee groups disputed these figures, few lawmakers were willing to risk making the wrong call. Moreover, the topic of the NH Retirement System became the political hot button issue of the year.

Senator Cilley has worked arduously on this issue for the past two years, taking the time to review the entire legislative history of the System as well as the statutes governing its operations. In addition, she attended presentations sponsored by stakeholder groups as well as the legislature to ensure a deep understanding of how the fund has evolved overtime and a sound basis of decision-making.

A priority in Senator Cilley's decision-making was that commitments made be honored to those who are already retired and therefore, no longer capable of extending their work lives, changing career paths or taking second jobs.

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New Hampshire Passes Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

On June 11 Governor Lynch signed into law New Hampshire's version of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) that had previously passed the House and Senate by significant majorities. This law will now allow New Hampshire to join nine surrounding states who have already passed RGGI into law in order to reduce the region's carbon emissions.

RGGI is an important first step toward the reduction of greenhouse gases. There are though, certain facts of which citizens should be aware. For instance, there will be modest increases to electricity costs. These will be negligible at the household level but are likely to be more noticeable to businesses who use large quantities of electricity. It should be noted that cost increases would have come about regardless of whether New Hampshire joined its neighboring states in this initiative or not and, indeed, there are significant returns for doing so. The reason that NH residents and businesses would see increases is due to the fact that New Hampshire, just as the other nine participating states, derives its electricity from a pooled grid into which all electricity generated throughout the region goes and from which all electricity demanded is derived. Consequently, the costs of generating electricity is borne by all of the states tied into the grid.

A substantive benefit of New Hampshire's participation in RGGI will be the pool of money generated by the sale of carbon credits to electricity generators. Some have estimated that this fund could reach as high as \$100 million or more. These monies will be available to both consumers and businesses to retrofit for energy use reduction involving all sources of energy used. As a result, consumers and businesses will have financial assistance to reduce overall energy consumption for electricity, heat and hot water. This energy reduction is anticipated to more than offset any additional per unit costs of electricity.

Other benefits of RGGI, as well as programs such as the renewable energy portfolio standards passed by the NH Legislature last year, are its incentives for the creation of new "green" businesses. Such incentives coupled with market conditions is expected to spur thousands of new jobs across the region and the country. And, of course, the primary benefit of participating in

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Senator Cilley took on the thorny issue of providing emergency services access on Class VI and private roads, convinced that the applicable road RSA's did not adequately address the need to ensure the public safety. Balancing municipal needs against the reality of crafting legislation, she stuck with it, and we are continuing to go forward towards an eventual solution. I am particularly pleased that Senator Cilley has taken the time to persevere on solving an issue of considerable significance at the local level.

Steve Conklin, Barrington



Senator Cilley and Jeanne Shaheen at a BK 101 meeting on April 14, 2008.

NH Retirement Legislation Passed cont'd.

Although negotiations among lawmakers did result in changes being made to retiree benefits (i.e. the 8% healthcare coverage subsidy was eliminated for four years), the most vulnerable of our retirees were protected from significant negative impacts resulting from these changes (i.e. retirees making \$20,000 per year or less will receive a "13th" check of \$1,000).

Another priority for Senator Cilley was to work toward balancing promises made to System members who are still working with potential increased burdens on our state's taxpayers. Both the Senate version (supported by Senator Cilley) and the House version of the legislation addressing the NHRS resulted in approximately a 14% increase in costs of employees. This figure was due to the under-funding by employers over a 16 year period and not to any particular decisions made within either version of the NHRS legislation.

As we move forward there will undoubtedly be more work on this topic. Some have described this as a five year process, with two of those years now behind us. Decisions relative to COLA's and medical subsidies will need to be made and are currently being addressed by commissions established by the legislation. The composition of the NHRS Board as well as years of service and age of retirement will also be reviewed as this work continues.

Senator Cilley is very aware as a property taxpayer herself, and as the mother of three children who are property taxpayers in New Hampshire of the burdens on our citizens. She is also a staunch believer in fulfilling promises and obligations made to our public employees. It is with a commitment to balancing the needs of these two groups that she will address future work on the NHRS.

Paid for and authorized by Friends of Jackie Cilley; Fiscal Agent, Cathy Cilley, Somersworth

Contacting Senator Cilley

Senator Cilley is in her first term in the NH Senate after having served in the NH House of Representatives for Strafford County, District 3. She can be reached at:

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She is assigned to the following standing committees within the NH Senate:

Vice-Chair, Election Law
Energy, Environment, and Economic Development
Executive Departments and Administration
Commerce Committee

In addition to the standing committees of the senate, Senator Cilley also serves on a number of statutory committees. For example, she chairs the Commission to Study Issues Relative to Groundwater Withdrawals, Water Resources Committee, and the Citizens Trade Policy Commission. For more information on other committees or commissions on which Sen. Cilley services, please visit <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/statstudcomm/default.aspx>.

If you have any questions about these committees or simply want other information about the statehouse or our state government, please don't hesitate to contact Senator Cilley at the number provided.

Summer is the time to consider future legislative initiatives. Senator Cilley finds it extremely helpful to have regular input from citizens in this process. Legislation is developed during the summer for filing in November. This is a critical time in the legislative process. Your ideas and guidance as to what legislation is most important to your community are welcomed and valued.

If you would like to learn more about the outcome of any of the legislation that Sen. Cilley worked on over this past session please don't hesitate to call her office at 271-3045.