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**KWOKA**  
**STATE SENATE**

Hi everyone,

Last week, after a marathon 3-day series of House meetings, a flurry of House bills made their way over to the Senate, including the State’s biennial budget. We’ll spend the next few weeks sorting through them and finalizing a budget of our own.

Already, the House budget includes many troubling components—the inclusion of HB 544 prohibiting teaching of “divisive concepts” and the defunding of Planned Parenthood and child mental health services, to name a few. My colleagues and I will be working hard to ensure these fight the inclusion of these items into the final budget, while also ensuring we are taking care of District priorities, in our case including the capital investment needed for the turning basin in the Port, and fighting the suspension of State Aid Grants, some of which have already been earmarked and contracted in our District.

In addition to the budgetary process, things have been chugging along in the Senate. All of my prime-sponsored bills have received

a vote and I'm proud to announce that 8 of 11 have passed the Senate, most unanimously! I worked hard on amendments and bipartisan compromises on these bills, all of which I felt comfortable with and in many cases felt were an improvement – the process working as it should. We were able to pass legislation on preserving digital meetings, relief for our small businesses, renter protections, improving our elections, incentives for renewable energy, and others. The bills which were not successful unfortunately were along partisan lines – protections for an independent redistricting process and increasing our renewable energy goals. More exciting work ahead as these bills enter the House!

Of course, there are plenty more developments that have come out of the Senate, both good and bad. Read on for the scoop:

### *Legislative Update*

#### **Removing HB 544 and Its Divisiveness from the Budget.**

Earlier this week, Senators Whitley, Prentiss, and I published an oped against HB 544, which seeks to ban the teaching of "divisive topics" like race and sex. We can't hope to end systemic racism and gender inequality if we aren't willing to have difficult conversations. Sharing these concerns, New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility, Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire, and some of our largest employers have all come against this bill, citing how it harms our states' small business' ability to attract and retain a diverse workforce. They're right and we'll continue to fight against the inclusion of HB 544 into our budget. For more, check out our oped [here](#).

#### **All Out of State College Students Will Be Eligible for**

**Vaccines:** On Friday, April 2nd, four Senate Democratic colleagues and I sent a letter to Governor Sununu, asking for

out of state college students to be included in vaccination efforts. Less than a week later, thanks to strong advocacy across NH, the Governor announced all folks in New Hampshire can begin receiving a vaccine on April 19th. More proof that advocacy works!

**Save Our Granite Stages Act Included in Senate Budget:**

Thanks to strong bipartisan support, relief for independent live venues will be included in the Senate Budget! A huge win for our live music industry and for our state's ability to attract and retain young people.

**Testifying Against House Anti-Reproductive Rights Bills:**

With HBs 625 & 233 making their way to the Senate, I testified against their harmful effects of interfering with a person's medical decisions and pushing a false narrative that denies grieving families the compassionate care that's best for them. Politicians have no place in personal medical decisions. We'll continue working to keep it that way.

**Redistricting Fairness & Transparency Bill Defeated:** The Republican majority voted down my SB 90 omnibus that would have strengthened our democracy by ensuring a more fair and transparent redistricting process by including protections that are not included in RSA 91-A. I even made a motion on the Senate floor to take it off the table, but unfortunately that was again defeated along partisan lines. Pushing for redistricting reform has been a key priority of mine this term, yet my Republican colleagues continue to prevent these crucial changes.

**Police Transparency Bill Passed Without Data Collection:**

Despite unanimous LEACT commission expert recommendation, data collection was not included in SB 96.

This data collection is such a key component to demonstrating why change is necessary; the systemic racism people of color face every day is present in our society, and the sooner we can embrace this experience of our community and work on needed reforms, the sooner New Hampshire can truly live up to its potential. As we move forward, we will continue listening to communities of color as we work to make our state more just.

### *News & Events Recap*

#### **Legislatively Podcast Discussing Electronic Poll Books: I**

had a great time joining Legislatively to discuss my bill (SB 46) to allow the use of electronic poll books, which will shorten wait time and make the polls more accessible. This bill passed the Senate 24-0 and was presented to House Election Law recently. Listen [here](#) for more!

**Signed up for my COVID Vaccine!:** Anyone 16 years of age and over is now eligible—visit <https://vini.nh.gov/providers/s/> to sign up! I will get my second vaccine April 28th and thus be immune May 12th. I am looking forward to it!



From our family to yours, wishing you the best as Spring arrives. I know we are all looking forward to a summer where we can share more time together outdoors, vaccinated and safely!

Best,  
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