

In an effort to keep NH psychologists informed about the process of pursuing an independent board of psychology, NHPA has created this FAQ sheet to help answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact Dr. Kate Saylor at the NHPA office with additional questions or comments.

What does the recent turnover in the NH legislature mean for our initiative?

The change from a predominately Democratic majority to a predominately Republican majority legislature was not surprising to us. Fortunately, the political leanings of our legislature are not particularly germane to our effort. The primary sponsors of our proposed bill are returning Republican House Member, Representative Ken Weyler [Rockingham, District 8] and Democratic Senator Amanda Merrill [Durham, District 21]. We are finding further support on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers. The biggest challenge was, and is likely to remain, the state budget and the legislature's goal of balancing it. Having a Republican-led legislature may actually work to our advantage since we are talking about the "business" of psychology (the vast majority of practicing psychologists in NH are small business owners).

Your assistance is still very much needed. In the most immediate way, we need your financial support, with checks of any size. Our sincere thanks to those who have already donated to this cause. In the coming weeks and months, we will also need your help in reaching as many legislators as possible. We will supply you with the information needed to ensure a uniform argument for an independent board of psychology.

Why didn't I hear about this when it first was proposed?

For years we have heard overwhelmingly from the membership at large how desirous it would be for psychologists to have an independent board of psychology, but the timing never seemed appropriate. However, last spring things changed. First, legislators began questioning why all five guilds were lumped together, especially psychologists. Incidentally, the majority of these questions came from Republican legislators. Second, we found two champions for our cause: former Senator Cilley and current House Member, Representative Ken Weyler. Third, the association was finally in a stable position, both financially and in terms of leadership. With the convergence of these factors, we decided to seize the opportunity, pursuing an initiative the membership had previously endorsed. The speed of this pursuit does not in any way indicate a lack of thought; many people came together quickly to put together this initiative in a planned manner.

When this became a viable option last spring, NHPA began talking to psychologists at our Spring Annual Meeting, via the NHPA legislative luncheons, and other small venues. In the earliest stages, it was important to keep our intentions confined to our membership to prevent our plan from going viral until we had time to build the platform and set the plan. We did not want to give potential opposition time to launch an attack or derail our progress before we had the opportunity to set our strategy and put protective measures in place. For better or worse, this is a political initiative requiring political strategy.

What is the process?

The bill language has been submitted. It appears that our bill will begin in the House of Representatives. The Speaker of the House will assign the bill to the appropriate committee. In our case, our bill will be heard in the House Executive Departments & Administration (ED&A). Once the bill is assigned to the committee it is then assigned a date of public hearing. The public hearing is our opportunity to

present testimony in favor of our bill and educate the legislators on its importance. The public hearing is also the place for opposing parties to present their arguments against our bill. Having psychologists attend to the public hearing to lend their support either through testimony or by showing up to lend their support through their presence is vitally important. Following the public hearing, the Committee members vote to pass the legislation, amend it, refer it back to the Committee for further study, or defeat the legislation. The Committee's decision then goes to the Floor of the House for a vote by the full body.

On the Floor of the House, an ED&A Committee member presents the Committee's decision. Then there is opportunity for a Floor debate. It is rare that the full House overturns the Committee's recommendation. This makes involvement at the Committee level and the public hearing imperative. After the debate, if any, the full House votes on the Committee's decision.

Once the bill has passed the House it is crossed over to the Senate. The process on the Senate side is the same as the House's process.

If both the House and Senate pass the bill then it goes on to the Governor for approval. The Governor has five days to veto the bill or, if the Governor takes no action within five days, the bill passes into law. If the Governor vetoes the bill it will take 2/3 of both the House and Senate to override the veto and pass the bill into law.

How can I help?

There are several ways you can assist this initiative. First, stay in the communication loop. Important information will be sent either through the weekly NHPA In Brief or via individual email. Legislative action often happens quickly and sometimes with little scheduling notice. Therefore, be sure to read the weekly NHPA In Brief's, particularly the ones related to this initiative for up-to-date information.

Second, make a commitment to come to the Legislative public hearings in both the House and the Senate. Your presence is vitally important whether you testify orally, present written testimony, or show your support with your physical presence. If you are interested in presenting oral or written testimony, please contact Dr. Kate Saylor at NHPA.

Third, speak with your legislators. In the coming weeks, NHPA will send out information on the message to send to your legislators. Psychologists whose Representatives or Senators sit on either the House of Senator ED&A committees are important links to the committee at large. Once these committees are set, we will let you know.

Fourth, donate to the Independent Psychology Board Fund.

How does my donation help?

NHPA has contacted with a professional lobbying firm to assist in our initiative. We have received a grant which covers half of the contract expense. Your donation goes towards bridging the financial gap left between the grant award and the contract.

How does this initiative help NHPA?

By in large, this initiative does not have any impact on NHPA. Once the new independent psychology board bill is passed, NHPA has limited involvement. We will advocate strongly for involvement in helping to craft the practice language and help in finding Board members. This initiative is really more about what NHPA is doing for NH psychologists.