



NEW HAMPSHIRE HOUSE REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE



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ABUSE OF THE HEARING PROCESS IN NH HOUSE

The right of citizens to be fully represented and to have public hearings held on all legislation are two principles that have been fundamental to New Hampshire from the beginning. Alarming, since gaining control of the legislature in 2007, Democrat leadership has consistently worked to shoulder these two important principles aside. Abuse of the hearing process worsened last year and then culminated this month with the outright disenfranchisement of Republican representatives with regard to the holding of hearings on Republican-sponsored bills.

The new low was reached shortly after convening the 2010 session when it was discovered that Democrat leadership had deliberately scheduled the majority of Republican-sponsored bills to be heard in just the first few days of the new legislative session. Three of every five bills scheduled to be heard during the first two weeks were sponsored by Republicans. Rep. Renzullo (R – Hudson) had eleven sponsored bills scheduled for hearing on the same day, with a number of them scheduled at precisely the same time. On no less than ten occasions, Republican representatives were required to introduce bills at two or more simultaneously scheduled hearings. “This blatant abuse of scheduling deprived constituents of Republican members the right to be fully heard on issues of importance to them,” said Renzullo. When Democrat committee chairs were asked if they could help with the rescheduling of conflicting bills, they refused because they’d been directed by the Speaker to make no accommodation for Republicans representatives serving in the House.

Rep. Ingbretson (R-Pike) stated, “This hearing abuse is not new. Last June for example, with Governor Lynch’s approval, two onerous new taxes, the 13.5% Small Business Income Tax [the LLC tax] and the Campground Tax were adopted as a part of the state budget without hearings being held at all.” When hearings were later scheduled for LLC tax rulemaking, pains were taken to convene public hearings far away from the southern tier of New Hampshire, where the majority of the state’s LLCs operate. When a related hearing was recently held to determine what level of LLC compensation would actually be taxed, the hearing was suspended at mid-day to discourage further public testimony. When it was reconvened late in the day after the many businessmen who had initially attended had gone back to work, only paid lobbyists remained to testify, and, worse, only a third of the committee reconvened to hear that testimony.

The Principles of Accountability that preface the legislature’s Ethics Guidelines provide, “...that Legislators should assure that government is conducted openly, equitably, and honorably in a manner that permits the citizenry to make informed judgments and hold government officials accountable.” “Democrat leadership has consciously and consistently sought to violate this most fundamental ethical precept, and the people of New Hampshire are being badly served by the political party in power,” expressed Rep. O’Brien (R-Mont Vernon).

“NH Democrats need to be held accountable for their disenfranchisement of all individuals and interest groups who have a right to petition and to be heard by government,” O’Brien concluded.

The NHHRA is comprised of members of the NH House of Representatives striving for legislative support for bills supporting the NH and U.S. Constitutions and NH Republican party platform. For more information, please log onto www.nhhra.org ###