



January 24, 2012

The Honorable Beverly Ferrante, Chair
House Municipal & County Government Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 301
Concord, NH 03301

Subject: HB 1342, prohibiting state and local governments from using funds to employ a lobbyist.

Dear Representative Ferrante:

The New Hampshire Planners Association, representing over 200 land use planning professionals in our state, is opposed to HB 1342, which would prohibit towns from authorizing the expenditure of tax revenues on lobbyists, whether the lobbyist is engaged directly by the town or through an organization to which the town pays dues.

A substantial amount of the laws passed by the state legislature have a direct impact on New Hampshire's towns. Therefore it is essential that towns have the opportunity to voice their perspectives with respect to legislation that may affect both local budgets and the ability of local governments to govern. However, like the members of the New Hampshire legislature, the thousands of elected town officials around the state are essentially volunteers who dedicate a substantial amount of time to serve their communities. It is simply impractical and quite unfair to expect these hard-working volunteers to travel to Concord to share their perspectives on legislation that will directly impact the towns they have been elected to represent. Nor is it fair to ask that Towns send paid staff to Concord to share its views. Especially now when municipal budgets around the state are shrinking, it is a waste of time and money for each Town to send paid staff when they can, in many instances, pool their resources and send a single representative to express shared views. Indeed, that is part of the reason for which towns become members of organizations that use lobbyists. Having lobbyists is simply a more efficient means of getting good information to the legislature from a variety of perspectives.

For these reasons, we urge you to recommend that HB 1342 be found "inexpedient to legislate". Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the bill.

Sincerely,

/s/Timothy J. Corwin

Timothy J. Corwin, Esq.
NHPA Legislative Liaison