



Common Cents

New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute Blog

House Fails to Pass State Budget, Process Moves to Senate

April 6, 2017

The New Hampshire House, for the first time in recent history, has opted to not pass the [State Budget bills](#), introduced as House Bill 1 and [House Bill 2](#). April 6 was the deadline set by legislative leadership to pass those bills out of the House and move them to the Senate, a day often referred to as "crossover." The Senate phase of the budget begins after April 6, and the Senate has [expressed an intent](#) to move forward with a budget in the Senate Finance Committee and not wait for a rule change or other movements in the House that would enable them to pass the budget bills. However, with no House Bill 1 or House Bill 2 crossing over, the Senate has to forge an alternative path to debate and amend the budget.

The most likely path is for the Senate to amend two bills which have already passed the House and append the budget bills to them. The Senate has [selected](#) House Bills [517](#) and [144](#) to be the vessels for these amendments. Per the [State Constitution](#), spending bills must originate in the House, and budget bills must only contain expenses for government with no other provisions. This requirement provides the rationale for House Bills 1 and 2 to be separate pieces of legislation that move through the process together. The Senate will likely amend the selected House bills with its own preferred starting point for the budget, which appears to be the [Governor's initial proposal](#) from February, and also plans to hear input offered by the House Finance Committee.

The Senate must finish its budget proposal by June 1, per the current legislative calendar. The Committee of Conference is currently scheduled to begin at that time. However, the Committee of Conference usually involves reconciling the differences between the House and Senate budget bills. The House members in the Committee of Conference may have less formal negotiating power because of the lack of a House version of the budget; the only items the House has formally and fully agreed to support are those that passed the House in their original forms (House Bills 517 and 144 as passed, in this case). However, any final budget produced by the Committee of Conference must still pass the House and Senate before going to the Governor and becoming the State's new operating budget on July 1.

See NHFPI's [Building the Budget](#) resource publication for more background on the budget process, and find additional resources at our [NH State Budget](#) web page.