

NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER

Chuck Morse and Jeb Bradley: Senate will focus on the needs of working families

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AS WE START the new legislative session, the people of New Hampshire can count on Republicans to focus on the issues that matter most to our working families and Main Street businesses. We're living in serious times and serious times deserve real action. That's why Republicans plan to deliver conservative, common-sense legislation that will continue to move New Hampshire forward, building on the strong gains we made in 2021.

We know that the New Hampshire Advantage works. We've long been ranked one of the safest states in the nation, often #1 overall according to FBI data. U.S. News & World Report ranked us the top state for economic opportunity. We often top the annual rankings of most livable states. We have the lowest poverty rate, and recently reached our pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 2.6%, one of the lowest in the country. Recently, the Cato Institute again named New Hampshire the freest state in the nation.

We are proud of the work we did last year to pass a balanced budget that meets the needs of New Hampshire's most vulnerable populations. In responding to the unprecedented needs of the COVID-19 pandemic, we protected public health while preventing the economic and budget collapses experienced by other states. Thanks in part to our pro-jobs budget, New Hampshire has now returned to the low unemployment rate of 2.6% that we had prior to the pandemic.

We expanded school choice for working families, protected unborn children from late-term abortions, and increased capacity for those struggling with opioid addiction and mental health challenges.

This year, Republicans intend to concentrate on issues that will have the greatest and the most positive impacts on the lives of New Hampshire citizens. This means keeping people safe as the COVID-19 pandemic remains with us, continuing to strengthen our economy, protecting taxpayer dollars, improving educational opportunities, continuing to invest in mental health, and ensuring honest elections.

Because of our fiscally responsible budget, New Hampshire's economy is growing and that has led to a projected budget surplus. The current budget delivers a record amount of per-pupil state education aid and a record amount of revenue sharing with cities and towns under the Rooms and Meals Tax. We are hoping this year to direct some of the projected surplus to local school districts.

In the fall of 2020, New Hampshire voters sent a clear message that they did not want higher property taxes and a new state income tax proposed by the Democrats. Senate Republicans kept their promise to stop any new broad-based tax and provided over \$300 million in property tax relief to New Hampshire families. In 2022, we plan to continue down the road of lower taxes so that working families can keep more of their hard-earned money. We will oppose spending proposals that would necessitate an income tax, sales tax, capital gains tax or any new taxes, as well as any schemes to bring back donor towns.

Our new school choice program, Education Freedom Accounts, has been a huge success with 1,800 New Hampshire families taking advantage of the need-based scholarships to provide educational options for their children. We will fight efforts to repeal this program or to drown it in bureaucratic red tape.

School choice is important to New Hampshire parents, and we're listening to them. Likewise, we will protect the right of parents to speak up at local school board meetings.

Protecting public safety is one of our most important responsibilities. This year, we will fix our state's bail system to prevent violent criminals from further harming the public and ensure that they are not released on bail before even going before a judge.

New Hampshire's elections are the gold standard for the nation, and we will continue to protect their integrity. This means ensuring that our elections are reserved for New Hampshire residents, updating and improving absentee ballots applications, updating and clarifying our campaign finance limits, and creating an election portal to enhance voters' access to election information.

As New Hampshire families struggle to keep up with inflation, we will work to make health insurance more affordable, lower the cost of electricity and home heating, and protect families from new taxes and fees.

Senate Republicans will continue to deliver on the promises we made to New Hampshire, and reward the trust they placed in us.

Senate President Chuck Morse (R-Salem) represents District 22. Senate Majority Leader Jeb Bradley (R- Wolfeboro) represents District 3.