

AI rollercoaster requires responsive state-level regulation

RECENT months have seen significant changes in U.S. policy regarding artificial intelligence. The resulting ups and downs are as difficult to follow as the rapid evolution of AI technology itself. Below are key examples and some of the challenges that emerge.

One major issue is the regulation of AI at the state level. The House version of the budget legislation contained a provision calling for federal preemption of all state AI regulations for the next 10 years. New Hampshire has joined 40 other states in opposing this legislation.

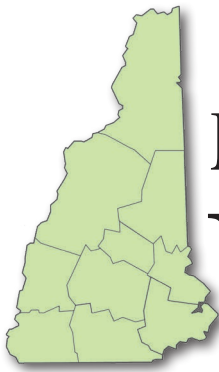
While big-tech companies may prefer uniform federal regulations over a patchwork of state laws, the ability of Congress — backed by the limited resources of the FBI and other agencies — to effectively address AI-related issues is impractical. Historically, states have served as testing grounds for legislation that later informs federal policy.

Consider a few examples: AI-generated “deep fake” scams, AI-driven bullying, falsified quotations that disrupt contract interactions, misleading AI-generated court submissions, AI-powered misinformation affecting voters, abuses of AI in education, and other emerging challenges.

State legislatures can respond to these variations much faster than federal processes, and state law enforcement agencies can pursue bad actors with greater focus and timeliness than federal entities. While action at both levels is necessary, eliminating state authority to regulate AI is a serious concern.



Jim Isaak



NEW HAMPSHIRE VOICES

At the same time, Congress has passed a bipartisan bill affecting AI called the Take It Down Act. This law makes it a federal crime to publish intimate images of a person online without their consent and requires platforms to remove such images within 48 hours upon request from victims. This applies to both real and AI-generated images, and cases have involved celebrities as well as schoolchildren. While the bill enjoys near-universal approval, there is a potential downside: abuse of this law to remove images that are objectionable but not intimate. In theory, platforms should only act on qualifying content, but given the speed at which they must respond, they may lack time and resources to verify whether an image meets the criteria. This could lead to censorship affecting editorial cartoons, unflattering photos, or AI-generated spoofs — none of which are intimate images. This challenge may even

impact editorial pages, comic strips, and freedom of the press.

A recent executive order, Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth, aims to improve AI education. This initiative is crucial, as AI will impact all aspects of American life. Children and the public at large must develop a deeper understanding of AI — its promises and pitfalls. The executive order calls for AI education programs from kindergarten through high school, workforce development, continuing education, registered internships, and certification programs. However, it lacks consideration for college-level education, which is critical for training AI professionals and conducting essential research. Nevertheless, it marks an important step in the right direction.

Another significant issue is copyright. The Library of Congress houses the U.S. Copyright Office, which recently released

a draft paper on AI and copyright law. This third paper focuses on fair use and the training of AI systems. Virtually every online or privately held document is subject to copyright, except for works older than 90 years. Using copyrighted materials to train commercial AI models may require authorization from the original authors. This issue is currently the subject of lawsuits, with news organizations among those suing for unauthorized use of their content.

Interestingly, the heads of the Copyright Office and the Library of Congress were dismissed the same week this draft was released. Regardless, legal battles over AI training data and its copyright implications will require significant attention and resources.

AI is permeating schools, government, industries, businesses, and personal lives. According to Harvard Business School, AI’s most common public use is for therapy and companionship. A study at Dartmouth found that a purpose-built AI chatbot significantly helped individuals dealing with depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and eating disorders.

AI is entering daily life from all directions. Responsive regulation is one necessary approach, education and public awareness is another, and fair use of private data and published works remains a critical concern. We certainly live in interesting times.

(This article was created by a human author with proofreading improvements by the CoPilot AI.)

Londonberry’s Jim Isaak is president emeritus of the IEEE Computer Society and a participant in developing recommendations for policy in the areas of social media, privacy and AI.

Attack on local control failed

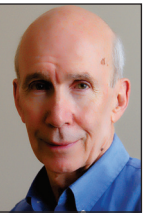
WE CHERISH local control in New Hampshire. So, there’s something surprisingly treacherous about stabbing local control in the back, which is exactly what most of our Republican state senators (and one Democrat) recently did.

Republican Sen. Howard Pearl, R-Loudon, was the champion of a surprise amendment to the upcoming state budget that would effectively put control of new landfill sites — or landfill expansions — in the hands of a state committee.

This would minimize, or even eliminate, the role of a town’s planning, zoning and select boards. The language raises the possibility that the state could cancel any legal agreements, as well as planning and zoning decisions.

“This could be the largest infringement on local control this body has ever considered,” warned Republican Sen. Denise Ricciardi of Bedford, one of two Republican senators who opposed it.

The amendment seems aimed at our little town of Bethlehem in the North Country. If the amendment becomes law, the state could approve an expansion of the Casella Waste Systems hated commercial landfill here. Residents have fought that for decades and have a legal agreement that prohibits expansion on adjacent



Chris Jensen

land.

It would be shortsighted to think that this doesn’t matter because there is no commercial landfill near you. Republican Sen. David Rochefort, who represents the North Country, warned the amendment could have statewide implications.

He argued that the legal impact of the amendment was not clear and said “critical uncertainties” included whether the new amendment “could invalidate a legally binding settlement [...] and overturn the will of the community.”

“What kind of precedent does this set? Could this logic apply to real estate contracts, NDA’s or employment agreements?” he asked fellow senators.

“Are we saying the legislature can undo contracts whenever it favors one outcome, that the state can force your community into expanding a landfill even if your town doesn’t want it,” Sen. Rochefort said.

He urged the senate not to “proceed blindly” and instead hit pause to take time for additional legal research to avoid making a serious mistake.

However, Sen. Pearl

dismissed the concerns, then 14 Republicans — along with Democrat Sen. David Watters, Dover — defeated the motion. Only two Republican senators voted to hit “pause” on the amendment, Rochefort and Ricciardi.

The Pearl amendment was killed recently by the House, but the point remains: If the Senate had its way, our cherished local control would have been gutted. And, there’s nothing to keep that idea from coming back next year as a separate bill.

So, if you like the idea of losing local control, you should be pleased with Sen. Pearl and the other Republicans and one Democrat. If not, when they seek another term, remember that they cavalierly wanted to take away your right to decide what happens to your town.

Those senators are: Howard Pearl, Loudon; Timothy Lang, R-Sanbornton; Mark McConkey, R-Freedom; James Gray, R-Rochester; Daniel Innis, R-Bradford; David Watters, D-Dover; Ruth Ward, R-Stoddard; Tim McGough, R-Merrimack; Kevin Avard, R-Nashua; Sharon Carson, R-Londonderry; Keith Murphy, R-Manchester; Victoria Sullivan, R-Manchester; Regina Birdsell, R-Hampstead; Daryl Abbas, R-Salem; Bill Gannon, R-Sandown.

Chris Jensen lives in Bethlehem.



Why chase alternatives? Let’s fix the schools we’ve got

ROSIE EMRICH’s recent published op-ed on the impact of the governor and Legislature’s preferential treatment of alternative education (“It’s raining in schools and Republicans are laughing”) told a familiar story.

Even before the Legislature imposed a moratorium on school building aid in 2011, approval of warrant articles for school construction, renovation and maintenance did not pass easily. With property taxpayers already bearing so much of the cost of education, the can gets kicked down the road leading to higher costs that voters find even more difficult to approve.

As Emrich said, the roof at Hooksett’s Memorial School leaks. Through a video (bit.ly/4ldirOH) on SAU 15’s website, I learned that repair is no longer an option. Further, the school’s two boilers are at the end of their lifespans.

In March, Hooksett voters were asked to approve a bond for \$5,995,998 with \$531,398 for the first annual payment and an estimated tax rate impact of 17 cents per thousand. Perhaps this had been brought forward before and defeated, as was the case this time (1,024-1,010), with not even a majority voting for it though a three-fifths majority was required for it to pass.

Would the result have been different if the School Building Aid program had contributed \$2 million?

Hooksett Memorial is not alone. Across New Hampshire, local taxpayers have invested \$537,174,495 in their district school buildings as of 2021. They did not receive the \$186,141,161 that would have reduced their taxes and interest costs had state School Building Aid been funded.

After several years without accepting



Rep. Michael Cahill

any applications, the state has begun funding a few new projects as bonds on earlier ones were paid off. In the last budget, three of 17 projects on the ranked list received state money; that left 14 schools serving 7,093 students without help.

New Hampshire has an estimated backlog of \$200 million in projects to update aging schools, yet there was nothing in the governor’s budget to address it. Instead, we saw the push for universal school choice instead, expanding the Education Freedom Account program so that wealthy people can even more comfortably afford bespoke educational experiences for their children.

Few of the families using the EFA program have ever enrolled their kids in their local public schools. Removing the income limit will not provide more opportunities for lower income students; it will guarantee fewer by further draining public schools.

Most New Hampshire families value and appreciate traditional public schools; they signed in to the legislature’s portal to oppose vouchers, and they were disregarded.

Our local public schools are not failing. Their test scores are better than the private charter schools that are favored and funded with state revenue by the Republican legislature and outgoing Commissioner of Education Frank Edelblut.

What more could we accomplish for education and property tax relief if we better funded our local public schools instead of zealously chasing alternatives to them?

Rep. Michael Cahill, D-Newmarket, represents Rockingham District 17.

Letter

HIV/AIDS commitment

To the Editor: For almost two decades I worked in international development in Sub-Saharan Africa with effective women’s empowerment programs often funded by USAID. I was happy to see my taxes turned into concrete changes in the lives of poor women and their families.

Combating HIV/AIDS was a major accomplishment, but now the lifeline has been cut for millions living with HIV/AIDS by the gutting of USAID and PEPFAR (President’s Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief), which worked across the

developing world to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS with prevention, education, research on vaccines and other effective public health strategies. Since 2003 PEPFAR has provided \$120 billion for HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention and research, making it the largest commitment by any nation focused on a single disease in history.

The super-rapid destruction of USAID by Elon Musk, DOGE and the Trump administration is sickening and unforgivable. According to Boston University researcher Brooke Nichols, associate professor of global health, if this foreign aid is

not restored before the end of 2025, more than 176,000 additional adults and children around the world could die from HIV.

As Bill Gates, once known as the richest man on Earth, remarked recently: the world’s richest man is “killing the world’s poorest children” through these huge cuts to the U.S. foreign aid budget. What kind of nation abandons a moral commitment without transition, knowing full well it condemns millions to suffering? We must reckon with this question — and demand better.

BILL MADDOCKS
Amherst

“There Is Nothing So Powerful As Truth” — Daniel Webster

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“Where the Spirit of the Lord Is, There Is Liberty” — II Corinthians 3:17

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MALLARD FILLMORE

By Bruce Tinsley

