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EDITOR'S PICK

# New Gov. Says “There Will Be No Landfill At Forest Lake In Dalton”

Residents, Lawmaker Share Their Reactions

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Republican Kelly Ayotte, a former U.S. senator who succeeds fellow Republican Chris Sununu, is sworn in during her inauguration at the State House, Thursday, Jan. 9, 2025, in Concord, N.H. (AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

In her inaugural address in Concord on Thursday, during her first remarks as New Hampshire governor, Kelly Ayotte highlighted the North Country and two of its biggest issues of concern — carbon sequestration in the northern reaches of Coos County and a proposed 70-acre commercial landfill in Dalton.

"The greatest resource our state has, besides its people, is our beautiful landscape," she said. "No other state boasts the natural beauty we do. And there's a lot that comes with that, from recreation to tourism to industry. And a true gem of our state is our North Country. We need to make sure that it stays that way."

Ayotte said her administration will enforce the state's conservation easement for the 146,000-acre Connecticut Lakes Headwaters Working Forest — where a national company is letting trees grow in exchange for the sale of carbon credits to other companies required to buy them to offset their greenhouse emissions — that was negotiated on a bipartisan basis by then-Gov. Jeanne Shaheen, D-NH, and then-U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg, R-NH.

"We're going to ensure that that beautiful tract of land remains open for recreation and that it also remains open for logging and timber harvesting for the people of New Hampshire," she said to applause. "Similarly, there will be no landfill at Forest Lake in Dalton."

Those words, too, drew robust applause.

"We will not allow that beautiful part of our state, and that beautiful area, to become a dumping ground for out-of-state trash," said Ayotte. "It's just not going to happen."

Afterward, some local residents and lawmakers shared their reactions.

Among them was Adam Finkel, an environmental scientist from Dalton, who said he wanted to express his admiration for Ayotte.

"It's a beautiful thing to have endured a governor for six years who claimed to be an 'environmental engineer,' but never understood that putting millions of tons of out-of-state trash in a sandpit, operated by a company with an abysmal record, was an idea that should never have been entertained," said Finkel. "Kelly Ayotte figured this out in her first 45 minutes on the job."

State Sen. David Rochefort, R-Littleton, also an opponent of the landfill proposal, said she knew where Ayotte stood, but was caught off guard by her strongly worded remarks.

"She was talking about the carbon issue, which is an issue for me as well, and everyone's applauding, and then she was unequivocal that the dump will not happen in Dalton," he said. "As soon as this happened, my phone blew up. We haven't heard this solid a message of defending our natural resources up north in a long time."

Rochefort said he will thank Ayotte personally the next time he sees her, which will be at the governor's inaugural ball at the Mt. Washington Hotel on Saturday, and will gather more details from her office on how they can approach the issue.

He said her North Country positions come from her regular visits to the region through the years, where for the last year and a half, Rochefort had been meeting with Ayotte regularly.

In 2023, Ayotte was in Littleton, where Rochefort spoke of his concerns about the landfill and told her it's an issue for him and the community.

"As we were walking down Main Street, at least three people came up to her, unprovoked, and said you have to help us keep this dump out of Dalton," said Rochefort. "She has been solid on it from the get-go."

During Thursday's address, Ayotte could have talked about any number of topics, but the landfill is clearly a priority for her, he said.

"I couldn't have asked for a better position," said Rochefort. "She clearly enjoys the North Country and has a desire and a motivation to preserve the natural resources that we have. The North Country should be feeling pretty good tonight. She really came through."

Also pleased was Tom Tower, a Whitefield resident and the vice-president of North Country Alliance for Balanced Change.

"We are thrilled by Gov. Ayotte's promise of protecting the North Country and New Hampshire from becoming New England's dumping ground," he said. "We look forward to working with her to finish the job and ensure that no landfill is sited without the proper protections in place to benefit all residents of the Granite State."

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