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## Governor Applauds Senate Passing Landfill Bill That Keeps Local Control

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Gov. Kelly Ayotte on Friday visited Forest Lake State Park to greet opponents of a proposed landfill and to reaffirm her own opposition. Left to right: Ayotte, state Sen. David Rochefort, R-Littleton, and Tom Tower, of Whitefield and the vice-president of the North Country Alliance for Balanced Change. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

After a Senate Finance Committee amendment on Tuesday, the full New Hampshire Senate, in a voice vote on Thursday, passed House Bill 707, which seeks to establish a new solid waste site evaluation committee while preserving local control for communities.

Among those applauding the vote was Gov. Kelly Ayotte, who said the bill will “protect New Hampshire’s outdoors and ensure local communities have a say in the siting process for new landfills.”

“I’m proud to see the Senate advance legislation that gives local communities a say in the site evaluation process for landfills,” Ayotte said in a statement. “I’ve said from day one that we would not let beautiful areas of our state become a dumping ground for out-of-state trash, and I thank the advocates from the North Country and across our state who worked together to get this done. New Hampshire’s natural beauty is central to who we are, and I will always fight to protect what makes our state unique.”

The bill preserves the settlement agreement that the town of Bethlehem has with Casella Waste Systems that allows the town to prohibit expansion of Casella’s commercial landfill along Trudeau Road after it reaches capacity, which is expected in 2026.

In support was state Sen. David Rochefort, R-Littleton, who on the Senate floor said the bill was seven years in the making and now puts forth a comprehensive plan, which doesn’t “unwind settlement agreements that communities have entered into regarding this topic.”

He called it a good bill.



“I came to the Senate with the mission to address solid waste issues in the North Country,” Rochefort said after the vote. “The road has been long with many turns and a number of potholes. As a legislator, we are cautious not to let perfect be the enemy of good, but the final version of 707 is very, very good.”

In Dalton, resident Adam Finkel, a professor of environmental health who has worked at the U.S Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, expressed his support.

“This bill is an important initial step towards bringing New Hampshire’s solid waste policy and science into the late 20th century, and more in line with the rest of the world,” said Finkel.

Creating a broad-based solid waste site evaluation committee is absolutely needed, because the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services has failed, he said.

“DES proudly told the citizens it works for that ‘our job is to help get the applicant to yes,’” said Finkel. “And earlier this year, DES told the House Environment Committee that ‘property values, human health, tourism, outdoor recreation and wildlife, traffic, noise and odor, and economic impacts and benefits ... are all important factors for consideration, but they’re generally outside of our areas of expertise.’ So without this bill, DES would continue to ignore and misunderstand the important harms, and would seek to please the applicant at any cost. Now, finally, we have a group to rein them in, look at the whole picture, and balance the needs of the few against the needs of the many. We are grateful for the hard work of the House, the Governor, and, better late than never, the Senate.”

HB 707, as amended, now heads back to the New Hampshire House of Representatives for a vote.



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