

NH Senate rejects landfill moratorium again



N.H. State House

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In a voice vote on Thursday, the Senate rejected the landfill moratorium, once again, denying it the opportunity for discussion in both chambers.

Senate Bill 134 was initially proposed to provide disability pensions for police and fire personnel who suffer serious and permanent injuries from acts of violence before reaching retirement age while performing their duties.

However, last week, Rep. Kelley Potenza [amended the bill to include House Bill 1620](#), which pertains to landfill legislation previously rejected by the Senate.

“I don't agree with how Rep. Potenza approached this and put it onto this particular bill,” said Sen. Sue Prentiss, one of the sponsors of SB 134. “She could have potentially sunk not only the landfill moratorium but could have sunk this public safety pensions bill”

House Bill 1620 aims to place a moratorium on landfill permits until 2028. The bill's purpose is to halt landfill permits temporarily until the state's solid waste management goals and regulations are strengthened to better protect the environment and public health.

Many environmental advocates and legislators argue that New Hampshire doesn't need another landfill for at least a decade, especially if out-of-state trash is reduced.

“Pausing the issuances of these permits for four more years really wouldn't put the state at any type of disadvantage and would actually give time to do this right,” said Rep. David Rochefort, the prime sponsor of the landfill legislation. I feel like we're flying by the seat of our pants here in New Hampshire and we had a perfect opportunity, HB 1620 to pump the brakes to slow the roll and we didn't get that cooperation on the other side of the wall.”

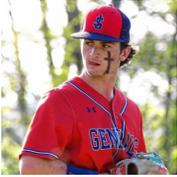
This isn't the first time the New Hampshire Senate has rejected landfill legislation. The pattern has been the same in the last few years causing concern among environmental advocates who worry that political considerations are being prioritized over environmental issues.

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Like many in support of the landfill legislation, Wayne Morrison, president of the North Country Alliance for Balanced Change, said that the Senate's decision to kill the bill was expected and did not come as a surprise.

"We brought a bunch of bills forward on solid waste," said Morrison. "The Senate has been very dismissive and it's disappointing that they're unwilling to recognize the problem and do anything about it."

Meanwhile, the Department of Environmental Services is reviewing Casella Waste Systems' application for a landfill in Dalton near Forest Lake, a location that has raised concerns among many residents statewide.

Morrison noted that if the bill had passed, "it would have certainly affected the timing" of permitting Casella's landfill in the North Country.

Killing Senate Bill 134 most likely won't affect the the disability pensions bill because Sen. Regina Birdsell, the prime sponsor of the bill had pre-emptively attached the legislation to three other house bills, in the case the original bill fails.

"The Senate needs to start coming up with solutions and offering ideas rather than just being silent and killing bills," Morrison said, adding that they will continue to advocate for stronger environmental protection measures. "It's just a terrible look and it's bad for the state and the Senate needs to wake up."