

March 11, 2021 - Representative Jeff Greeson comments

Yesterday, March 10, 2021, the House Judiciary Committee voted 11-10 Ought to Pass on two bills which, if signed into law, would provide important protections for Granite Staters' civil liberties.

1. HB-440, the Civil Liberties Defense Act, would protect all civil liberties from being “suspended” during a state of emergency—something Governor Sununu’s attorneys have claimed the power to do. Did you know that you lived this entire last year and are still living with your civil liberties suspended, and you only have the rights you have as dictated by Governor Sununu? I do not exaggerate he is running the entire state at his discretion. The House and Senate have met and cast votes, but nothing has been sent to his desk. He has expressly stated on numerous occasions his opposition to any bills that would limit his power. The emergency declaration is still in place. All emergency orders have been given the effect of law (even the state's website precedes all applicable RSA's with emergency orders giving the EO's precedence). He continues to issue EO's to this date; even non-COVID related ones. The Governor has given no sign of when the emergency will end. Wait until the next emergency!
2. HB-542, the Religious Liberty Act, would protect all houses of worship in New Hampshire from closure during a state of emergency by categorizing houses of worship as essential services during such times. If you recall, shutting down all houses of worship, claiming them to be non-essential, was one of the first actions taken by the governor, all the while liquor stores and stores like Home Depot were "essential" and remained untouched. (It should be noted that revenue to the state via liquor sales was significantly higher last year over 2019, and everyone is giddy about that.) While we did not see police handing out \$500 fines at churches holding drive-in style services like what happened in Greenville, MS, the governor issued the same declaration. He was able to ease off before any legal challenges. Your right to worship does not come from any governor; it comes from God. The governor does not have the authority to take it away from you.

Gail Sanborn (Grafton 6), Beth Folsom (Grafton 11), Mark Alliegro (Grafton 7) and I support these bills, but other Reps around the state may need a little encouragement. Please call or email those representatives and ask them to vote yes on HB-440 and HB-542. As you can see by the committee vote, it is, sadly, a partisan vote. Let the governor know your thoughts, too!