

**Board of Directors**

**William H. Dunlap, Chair**

**David Alukonis**

**Eric Herr**

**Dianne Mercier**

**James Putnam**

**Todd I. Selig**

**Michael Whitney**

**Daniel Wolf**

**Martin L. Gross, *Chair Emeritus***

***Directors Emeritus***

**Sheila T. Francoeur**

**Stuart V. Smith, Jr.**

**Donna Sytek**

**Brian F. Walsh**

**Kimon S. Zachos**

# Measuring NH in 2015



A Visual Guide to the Year Ahead

January 2015

*“...to raise new ideas and improve policy debates through quality information and analysis on issues shaping New Hampshire’s future.”*

# Measuring 2015

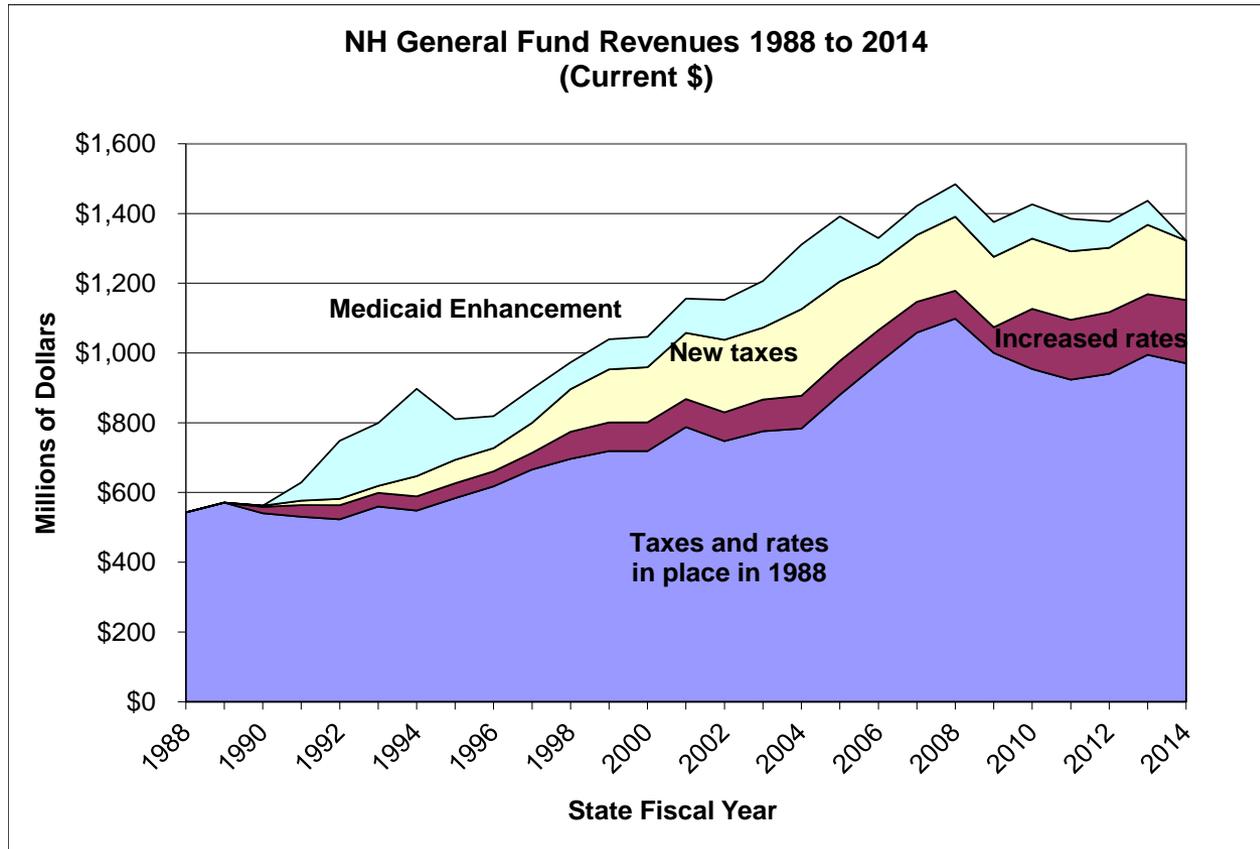
In terms of statewide policy, the drafting of the next two-year state budget will likely dominate much of the public debate in New Hampshire through the first half of 2015, and beyond.

But policymakers, businesses, non-profits, educators, healthcare providers and others will also have plenty of other issues on their mind in the coming months.

The following seven charts provide a selective overview of some of those topics. As in recent years, the precise terms of the coming discussions are hard to predict with clarity. But these charts scope out the policy hot spots and summarize a few of the major issues likely to shape the state's near future.

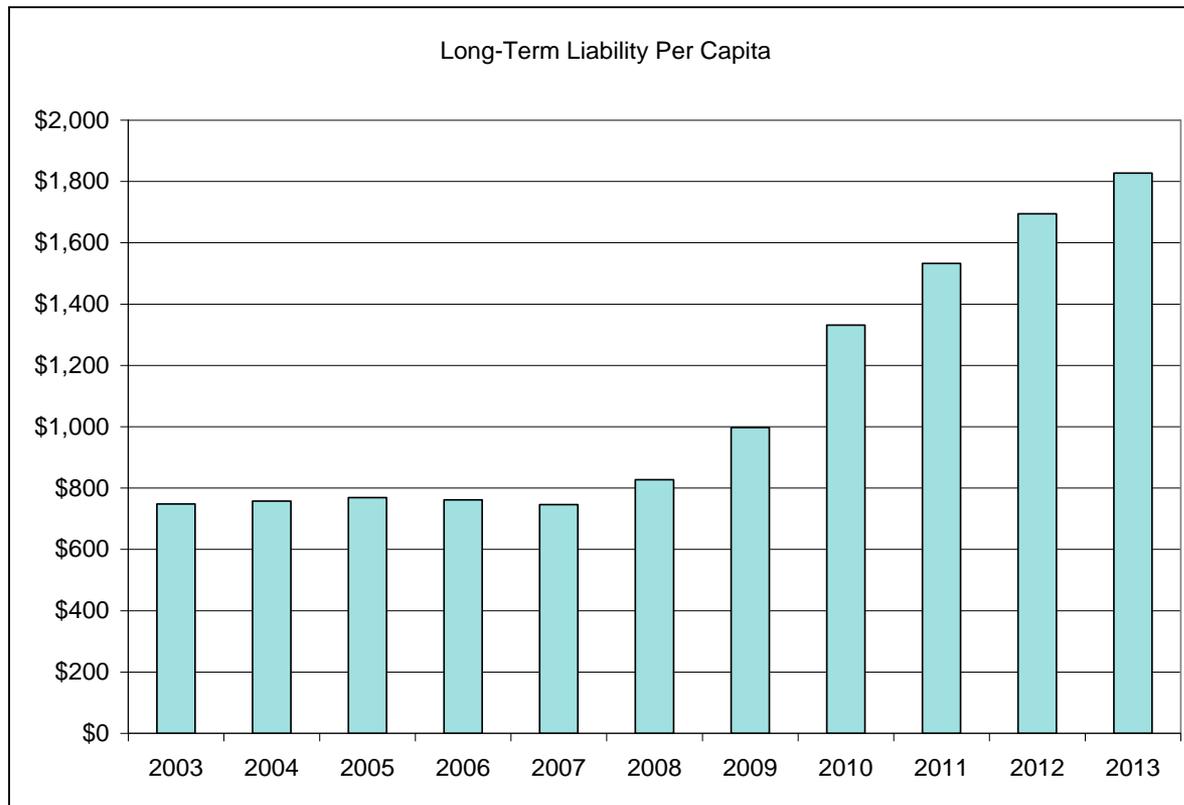
You'll find lots more information on these topics at the Center's website – [nhpolicy.org](http://nhpolicy.org).

# State revenues and the coming budget conversation



Much of the debate over the FY16-17 state budget will revolve around the question of revenues: how much money the state can expect to raise through taxes, fees and other sources over the next two years. General Fund revenues have remained relatively flat since 2008, putting increased pressure on budget writers to find savings or cut existing programs. Revenue projections for the coming two years will play a big role in determining the course taken in this year's budget negotiations.

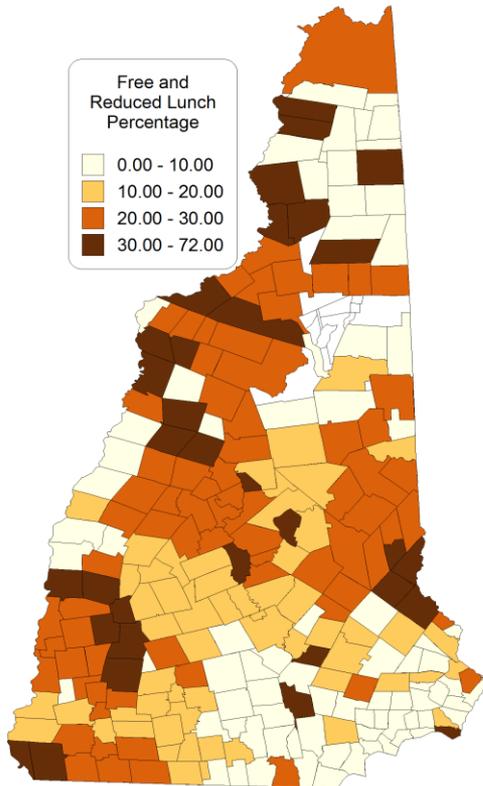
# Long-term liabilities are growing



While legislators typically focus most intently on the state's two-year spending plan, New Hampshire's long-term finances are also critical. And at least by one measure, there is reason for concern. Looking at the state's long-term liabilities per capita over time, it's clear that the impact of the Great Recession is still being felt. After a period of stability during the early years of the 2000s, the state's long-term liabilities began growing quickly, from less than \$800 per capita to more than double that in 2013, at \$1,800 per capita. How will this future obligation shape conversations about the state's current revenue and spending plans and long-term needs such as transportation and infrastructure investments?

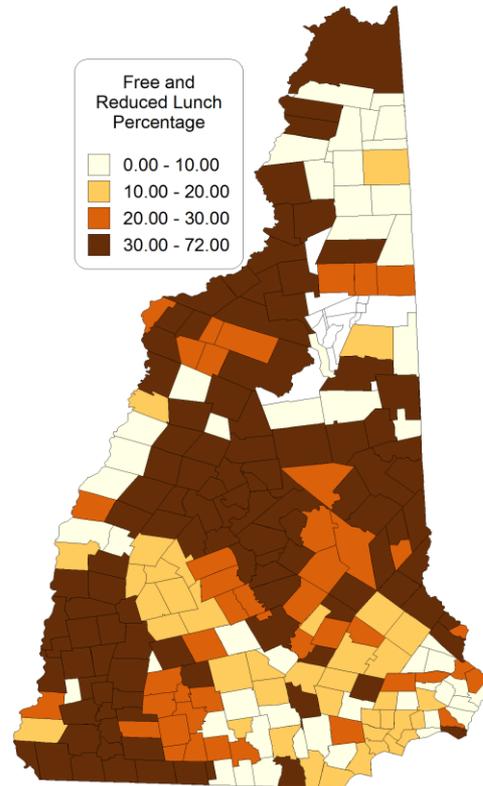
# Child poverty on the rise

NH Free and Reduced Lunch 2004-2005



Source: New Hampshire Department of Education

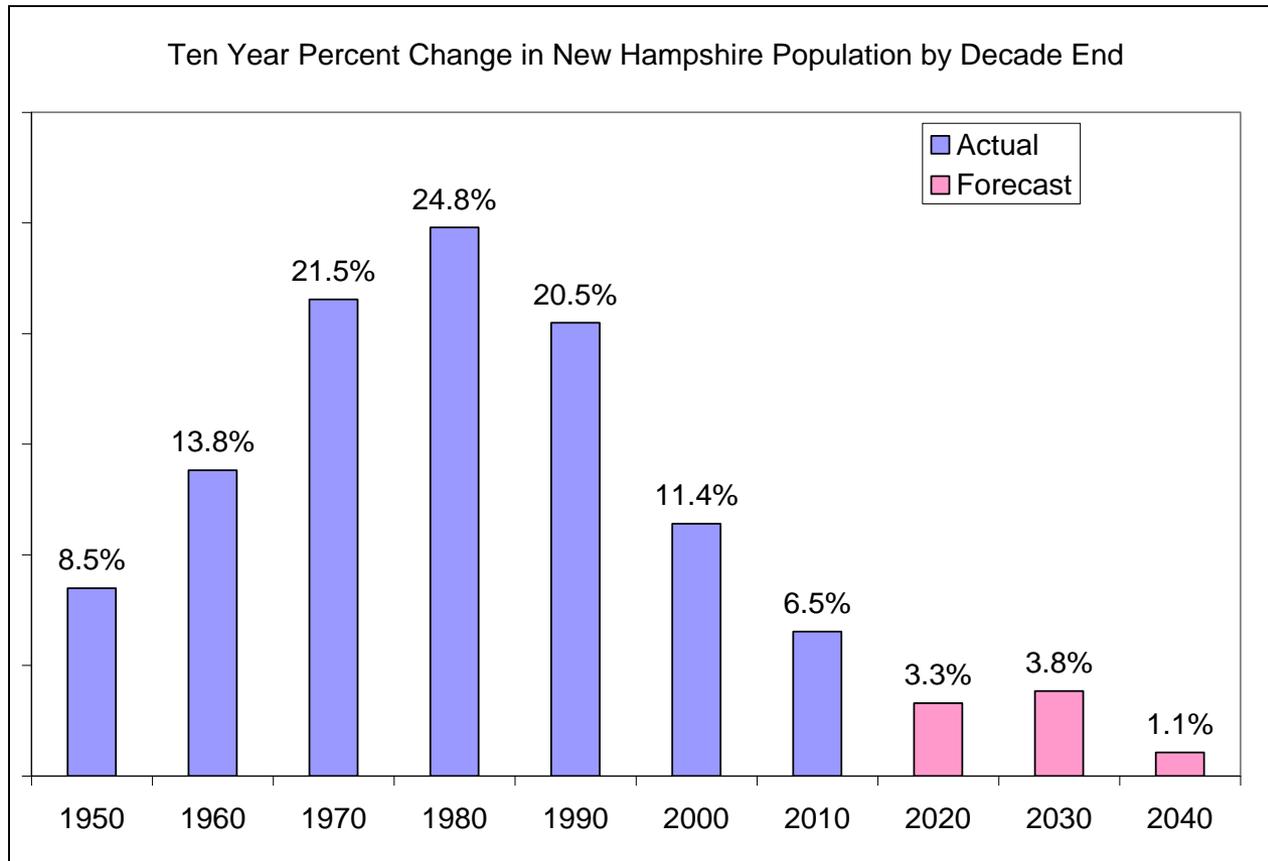
NH Free and Reduced Lunch 2013-2014



Source: New Hampshire Department of Education

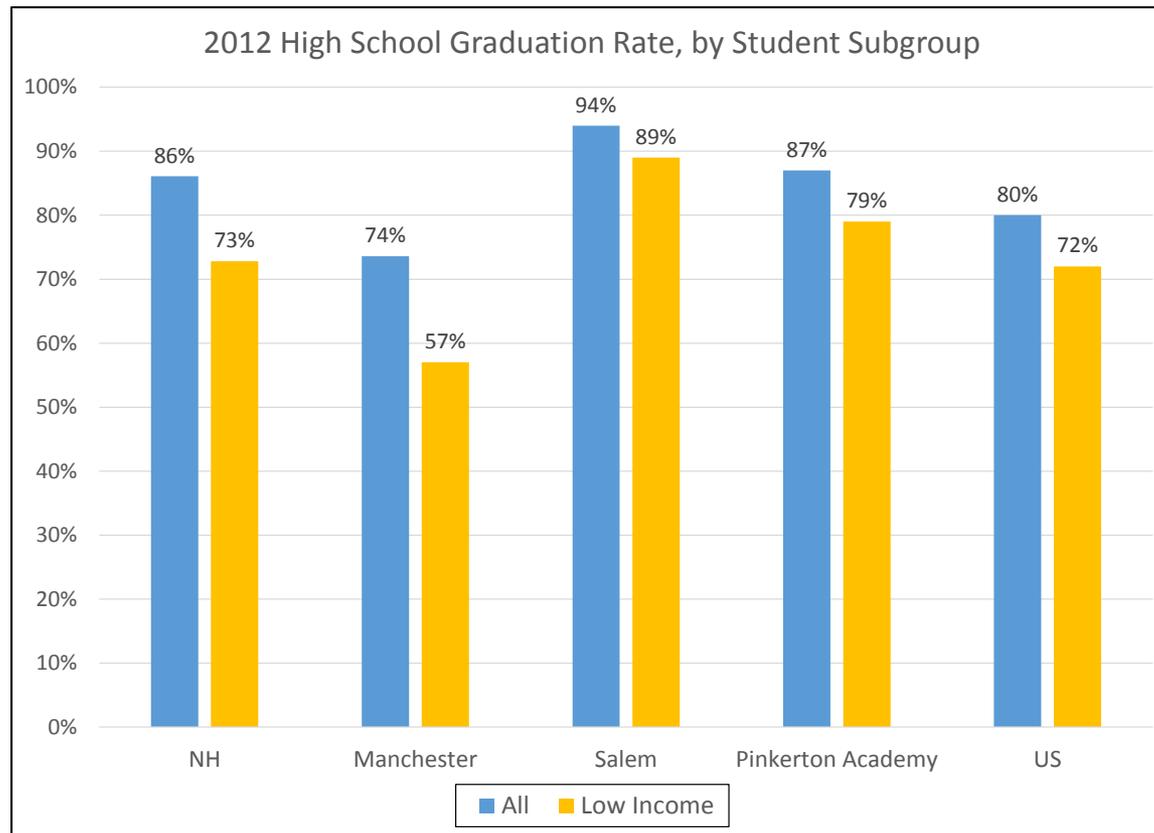
While the most dire impacts of the Great Recession are on the wane, several troubling economic trends continue to linger. Among those is the continued rise in the share of New Hampshire students qualifying for free or reduced school lunches – one measure of child poverty. This measure is critical in discussions of student performance, since children from low-income households, on average, have worse outcomes on indicators like high school drop-out and graduation rates. There is also considerable geographic variation to this topic, as these maps illustrate.

# Slow population growth continues



New Hampshire has seen a steep drop in population growth in recent years, and projections forecast that to continue for the next few decades. The implications of that slower growth across policy areas – housing, education, public spending, job growth – have yet to be fully grasped. What further steps will policymakers take in 2015 to plan for this projected slower growth, or attempt to reverse it?

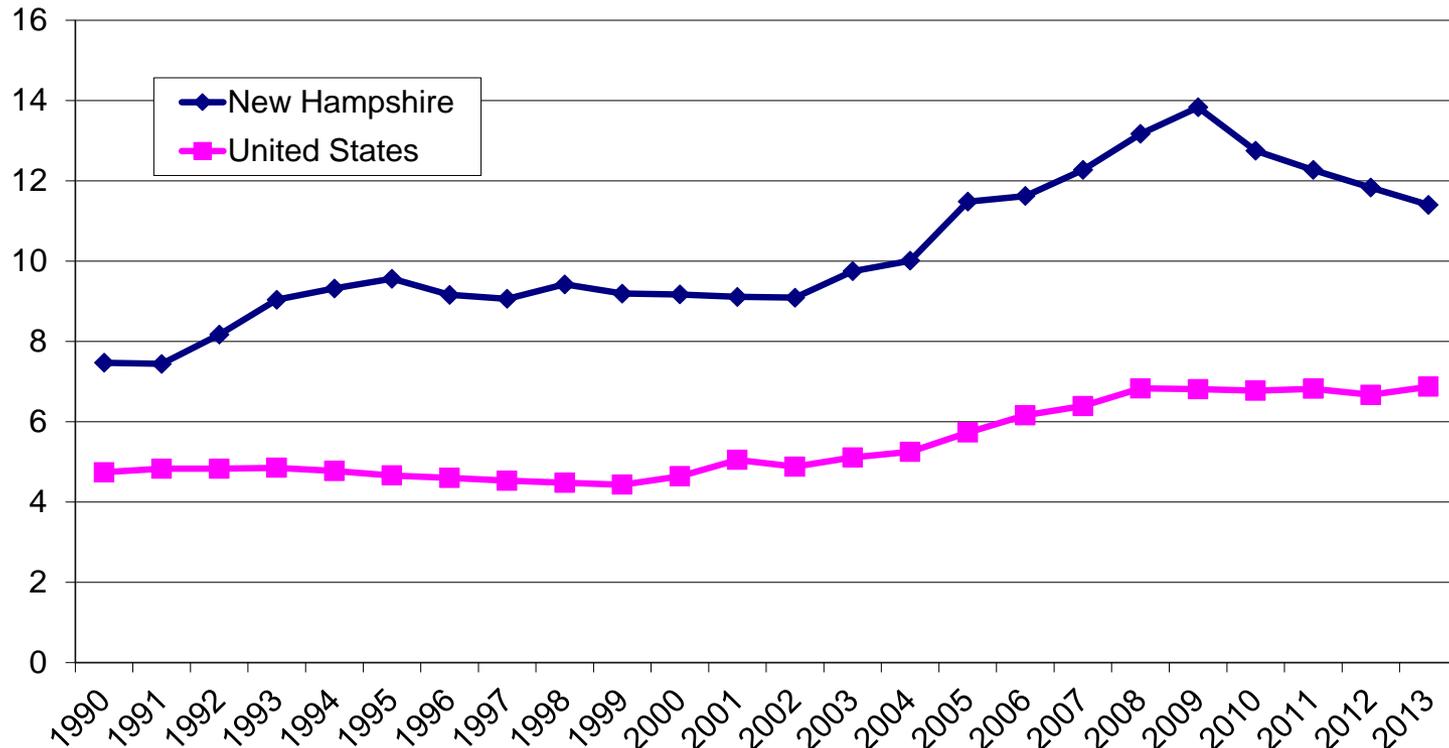
# Student performance & the Common Core



The continuing transition to the Common Core State Standards will occupy state educators through 2015, especially the implementation of new standardized tests this spring. How well students perform on those new assessments will get plenty of public scrutiny. But the underlying question – how well will the Common Core prepare students for success in college and the workplace? – also demands attention. Among the facets of this question is New Hampshire’s (and the country’s) ongoing challenge to shrink the gap in student performance between students from low-income households and the rest of the student body.

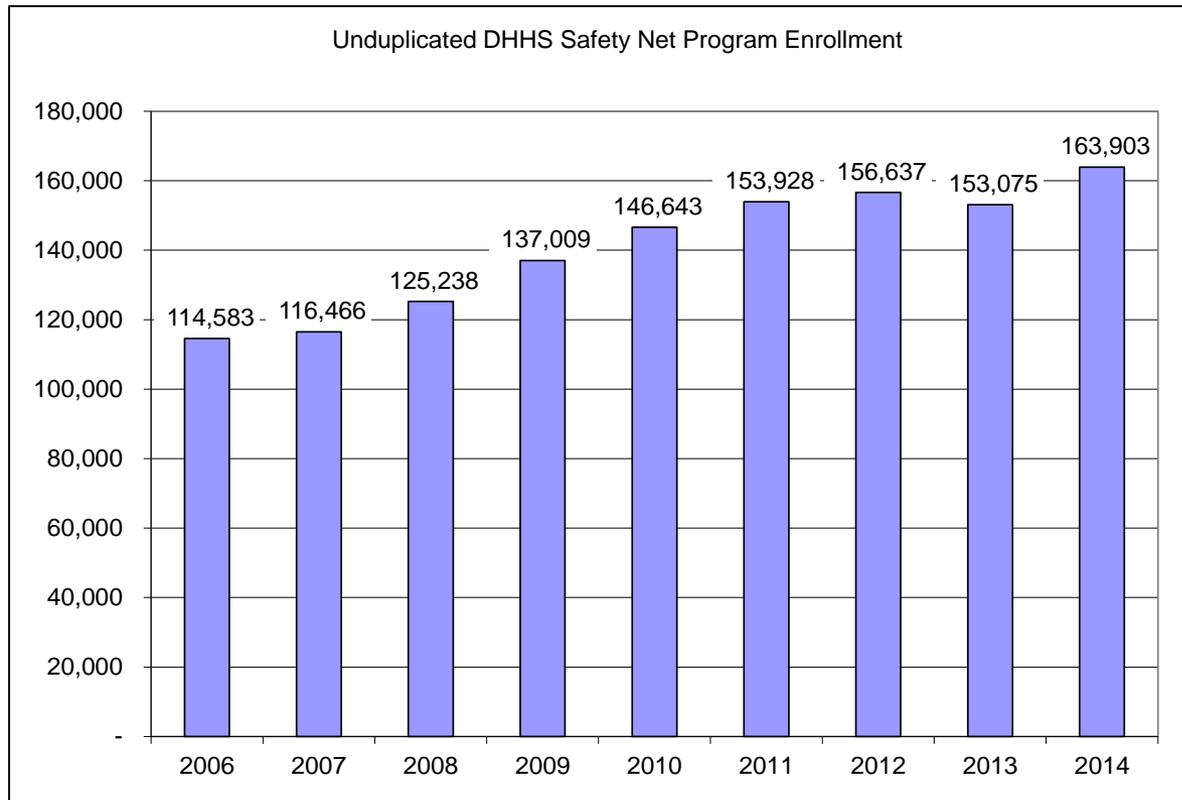
# Energy prices remain a challenge

Industrial Electricity Price (cents/KWH)



New Hampshire's energy price have tracked higher than the national average for years. Rising energy costs remain a concern for state residents, businesses and government agencies. Several high-profile proposals aim to address the state's limited supply of energy. But balancing energy demands and costs against environmental concerns and other quality of life issues will continue to fuel considerable public debate through 2015.

# Health care coverage still under debate



Public sector spending on health insurance has increased considerably. The Affordable Care Act, the expansion of the state Medicaid program, and changing economic circumstances have fundamentally altered the coverage landscape in New Hampshire. As shown above, unduplicated caseloads (including food stamp and Medicaid recipients) have grown by 40 percent since 2006. Combined with coverage of approximately 40,000 individuals through the new federal Health Insurance Exchange created by the Affordable Care Act, individuals, providers and communities have seen a marked change in the delivery of healthcare. Questions about these changes – including whether to reauthorize the state’s expanded Medicaid program – will continue into 2015.

# New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies

## Board of Directors

William H. Dunlap, Chair

David Alukonis

Eric Herr

Dianne Mercier

James Putnam

Todd I. Selig

Michael Whitney

Daniel Wolf

Martin L. Gross, *Chair  
Emeritus*

*Directors Emeritus*

Sheila T. Francoeur

Stuart V. Smith, Jr.

Donna Sytek

Brian F. Walsh

Kimon S. Zachos

## Want to learn more?

- Online: [nhpolicy.org](http://nhpolicy.org)
- Facebook: [facebook.com/nhpolicy](https://facebook.com/nhpolicy)
- Twitter: [@nhpublicpolicy](https://twitter.com/nhpublicpolicy)
- Our blog: [policyblognh.org](http://policyblognh.org)
- (603) 226-2500

*“...to raise new ideas and improve policy debates through quality information and analysis on issues shaping New Hampshire’s future.”*