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SB2 at 5: Bonds, Ballots, and the ‘Deliberative Session’

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1. Five Years with the ‘Official Ballot’

SB2—the “official-ballot meeting” law—has worked well enough over the last five years in New Hampshire that towns and school districts continue to adopt its procedures, particularly because the official-ballot process does make it easier for more people to vote on town and school business. A legislated adjustment in 1999 made it somewhat easier for those towns and school districts to approve bond articles and that change may have made SB2 more palatable to many voters. Additional legislation is needed to make SB2 fulfill basic requirements of fairness and accountability. Until such legislation is passed, schools and towns should reject SB2 and consider some of the alternative governance structures authorized by New Hampshire law.

This report focuses on how communities decide whether to borrow money for major expenditures such as building a new school or sewer system, renovating a town hall or park, or purchasing land. Such decisions are often among the most controversial and expensive choices a community will make in any given year. State law recognizes the magnitude of a decision to bond for such projects by requiring super-majorities for approving bonds and by stipulating a number of procedural steps to guarantee clarity and accountability. The law treats official-ballot jurisdictions differently from traditional-meeting jurisdictions. This report explains those differences and shows how they influence the outcome of community decision-making.

The paper analyzes all of the bond articles that went to voters from 1998 through 2001, updating reports the Center published in February 2000¹ and March 2001², and examining:

- the particular impact of the state’s “official-ballot law,” known as Senate Bill 2 or “SB2”
- the impact of changes in the size of the majority required for adoption of bond articles in official-ballot jurisdictions, and
- the impact of the jurisdictions’ equalized tax rates on their willingness to undertake capital projects

A. Findings

- The national economy began to soften at just about the time New Hampshire voters cast their ballots on bond articles in early 2001. Spending on bonds was down somewhat from 2000, but voters made no sharp breaks from 2000 in terms of the number of bond articles on their warrants or the percentage of bonds they approved.
- Towns and school districts with traditional meetings approved somewhat higher percentages of bond articles in 2001 than did their counterparts with official-ballot meetings. Traditional-meeting jurisdictions approved substantially more spending per capita on bond projects than their counterparts. Official-ballot school districts, for example, approved \$164 per capita while traditional-meeting districts approved \$431 per capita.

¹ Douglas E. Hall and Stephen F. Knapp, “The Effect of the Official Ballot Referendum Form of Meeting on the Towns and School Districts of New Hampshire,” The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies. (Chichester, NH: February 2000).

² Richard A. Minard, Jr. and Stephen F. Knapp. “Bonds and Ballots: Four Years of Experience with ‘SB2’ in New Hampshire,” The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies. (Concord, NH: March 2001).

- School boards proposed much larger bonds than boards of selectmen, and voters approved much more spending on school bonds than municipal bonds. Voters statewide approved only about 28 percent of the dollar value of proposed school-district bond projects, however, leaving roughly \$258 million in school projects without sufficient support to move forward.³ In contrast, voters approved 50 percent of the dollar value of proposed municipal bond projects.
- The 1999 statute allowing official-ballot jurisdictions to approve bonds with a three-fifths (60 percent majority) rather than the two-thirds (66.7 percent) majority required in traditional-meeting jurisdictions kept a rough parity between the two types of jurisdictions in terms of their approval of bonds. Without that provision, official-ballot communities would have rejected a much higher percentage of bond articles than traditional-meeting communities.
- At this writing, the 60-percent provision is still held up in a federal court, having been challenged by voters in several SB2 communities. Voters in official-ballot jurisdictions approved 22 bond articles in 2000 and 2001 with majorities between 60 percent and 66.7 percent; these projects have been held up because of problems that would beset lenders if the statute were to be struck down. Inflation is driving up the costs of some of those delayed projects, necessitating two jurisdictions to propose bonds in 2001 to cover the increased costs.
- Official-ballot jurisdictions had significantly higher voter participation on bond articles in 2001 than traditional-meeting jurisdictions, continuing a trend that has been obvious in each of the five years since SB2 became an option.
- Although turnout has been high at the polls in SB2 jurisdictions, participation in the required “deliberative sessions” that establish the final wording of the articles on the warrant remains low, by most accounts. A simple majority of those present at the deliberative session can amend the articles proposed by elected school boards and boards of selectmen. Those present at a deliberative session do not have the authority to add or delete warrant articles, but they can amend the amount to be raised in any spending articles to zero, effectively defeating the proposal for a year. Thus, very small unelected coalitions can determine what choices whole communities may consider when they go to the polls. The failure of voters to embrace the deliberative session as a meeting with just as much significance as a traditional open meeting threatens the legitimacy of the official-ballot process as a tool for democratic decision-making.

B. Recommendations

1. Voters in towns or school districts interested in replacing their traditional-meeting forms of government with an official-ballot form should first consider adopting the official ballot under New Hampshire’s “home rule” or “local option” charter statutes (RSA 49B and RSA 49D or “HB141”) rather than SB2 (RSA 40:13). The charter statute allows jurisdictions to establish procedures for the deliberative session that would prevent very small minorities from exerting undue influence over the final content of the articles on the ballot. Among the options available to jurisdictions under the charter statute are:

³ This figure and the comparable figures for municipal bond are based on the sum of all bond articles proposed by school boards and selectmen or petitioned by voters in 2001 and thus overstate the total amount somewhat. In several jurisdictions, for example, voters were asked to choose among competing articles for essentially the same project.

- the form established in SB2, which grants the majority of those attending the deliberative session the authority to amend warrant articles proposed by elected boards and petitioners
- a form, spelled out in Londonderry and Seabrook’s charters, which authorizes a majority of those present to amend warrant articles, provided there is a quorum of the jurisdiction’s registered voters present (the jurisdictions set their own quorum requirements as part of the process of drafting their charters)
- a hybrid form, which would be new to New Hampshire, in which the jurisdiction’s charter would establish a quorum as in Londonderry or Seabrook, but also authorize the elected board members to decide how to proceed if a quorum is not present; the board could vote to accept or reject specific amendments to articles endorsed by the majority of those attending the deliberative session
- a form that would make the deliberative session advisory only, leaving the jurisdiction’s elected selectmen, councilors, or school board members with the final responsibility for placing articles on the ballot.

The charter process authorized by HB 141 provides jurisdictions with a great deal of latitude to tailor their form of government to their particular needs and values. That process is more involved than simply voting to pass SB2, which may be why relatively few jurisdictions have adopted charters.

2. The legislature should amend RSA 40:13 (SB2) to give jurisdictions the option of adopting the alternative deliberative session forms described above.
3. The legislature should allow HB 141 jurisdictions employing the official ballot for bond articles—as well as SB2 jurisdictions—to use three-fifths as the majority required for passage of bond articles.

C. Research Methods and Data Sources

State law requires every town and school district to file with the N.H. Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) a copy of its annual report, warrant, the minutes of its annual meeting, and the results of its votes on warrant articles. DRA uses some of that data to set tax rates and keeps the printed reports on file in Concord. The Center used those paper files as the source of the data for this report. The report’s authors reviewed the warrants and meeting minutes of each of the state’s 219 towns and 166 school districts for the year 2001 to determine whether it had included one or more articles to authorize borrowing. We found 88 municipal articles and 61 school articles proposing a bond issue. The Center did not consider how the state’s cities and other jurisdictions that hold no annual meeting dealt with bonds or capital construction. The Center used the same approach to gather the data for its reports in 2000 and 2001. For each warrant article proposing a bond article, the Center recorded:

- the total amount of spending for the project proposed on the warrant by the board of selectmen, school board, municipal budget committee, or petitioners (that total might include not only a sum to be borrowed but also money to be withdrawn from capital reserve funds or other accounts)

- the amount of spending that voters finally approved (that amount may differ from the proposed amount because voters have opportunities to amend the bond proposal before the final vote)
- the number of votes cast for and against each bond article (by state law, all votes on bond articles must be taken by paper ballot, so these counts are relatively precise).⁴

The Center did not gather any information on the nature of the bond articles, so there is no analysis here that might show the relative success of votes for libraries, fire stations, schools, or land acquisition. Nor do the Center's data allow us to follow the iterations of a particular project—a school expansion plan, for example—over a number of years.⁵ The Center did not include in this analysis articles to borrow money for two or three years for the acquisition of vehicles or other relatively small projects.

To determine each town or school district's per-capita spending rates, the Center used the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 counts, the most recent data available.⁶ To determine the percentage of registered voters casting ballots on the bond articles, the Center used the February 2001 count of registered voters compiled by the N.H. Secretary of State's Office; that count followed a statewide effort to purge checklists of all people not currently living in each town or city. That purge reduced the total number of registered voters statewide by 25 percent; in some communities the purge eliminated more than 35 percent of the registered voters. Readers are cautioned to remember that voter participation rates appear to have increased dramatically in 2001 but that change is largely a consequence of changing from an inflated checklist to a more accurate one in most communities.

This report also includes data about bond votes taken in 1998, which the Center gathered and published in its February 2000 report called "The Effect of the Official Ballot Referendum Form of Meeting on the Towns and School Districts of New Hampshire." That report considered a wider range of issues than this one and included data on votes taken in 1997. Because the data on bond votes taken in 1997 were incomplete, they are not included here.⁷

The authors augmented the data available from the Department of Revenue Administration with interviews with local officials and residents familiar with the jurisdictions' bond proposals and governance structures.

⁴ Jurisdictions may vote on a warrant article several times before taking final action on it for the year; in those cases, this report records only the final vote and the amount finally voted on.

⁵ Several jurisdictions called special meetings in the fall of 1999 to consider or reconsider bond articles. In three of those jurisdictions, the new 60-percent majority applied and allowed the bond to pass. The approved articles in those three official-ballot jurisdictions—Derry Cooperative School District, the Winchester School District, and the town of Ashland—are included here in the tallies for 2000 rather than 1999 to better illustrate the impact of the change in the rules for official-ballot jurisdictions.

⁶ The Center subtracted from each town's population those people living in "group quarters": college dormitories, prisons, county nursing homes, and other facilities whose residents tend not to pay taxes in that town or rely heavily on local services such as the public schools. The Center used the same approach in its 2000 publication on SB2, though in earlier analyses the population estimates were based on 1995 figures and were not adjusted for those in group quarters.

⁷ To the Center's knowledge, no one else in New Hampshire has attempted to gather and analyze all of the municipal and school bond-article data. The Center urges readers to send it any information that would augment or improve this data set.

2. Choices in Local Governance: A Primer

A. Adopting the Official Ballot

The New Hampshire Legislature adopted, and the governor signed, Senate Bill 2 (SB2) in 1995, creating RSA 40:13. As noted above, the law allows towns and school districts (referred to collectively as “jurisdictions”) to change the way they vote on their business, including their bond articles, by replacing traditional open meetings with the official-ballot process.

Jurisdictions choosing to use the official-ballot process must use it on all of their business: the Official Ballot Law requires that all warrant articles, including bond articles, appear on the official ballot.

In what this report calls **traditional-meeting jurisdictions**, the board of selectmen, school board, or budget committee proposes a budget and a set of warrant articles, which may include bond articles to borrow money for capital projects, land acquisition, or other expenses. Residents assemble at an open meeting to hear the board present the articles, and to debate their merits. During the open meeting, a majority of those registered voters present may amend or table the articles, including the bond articles, before they are formally called to a vote. State law (RSA 40:4-a) allows voice votes on most articles, but RSA 33:8 requires a secret ballot on bond articles and further requires that jurisdictions keep the polls open on bond votes for at least one hour.

Traditional-meeting jurisdictions also keep the polls open all day and use an official ballot, but only for the limited purposes of electing town officers and voting on planning and zoning articles.⁸

Table 1: Minority of NH Residents Live in Traditional-Meeting Jurisdictions

Percentage of NH Population by Form of Governance: 2002⁹			
	No Meeting	Traditional Meeting	Official Ballot
Municipalities			
Count of Municipalities	15	171	48
Percent of State Population	36%	33%	31%
School Districts			
Count of Districts	10	102	64
Percent of State Population	26%	22%	52%

⁸ RSA 40:4-e allows the use of the official ballot only when “that form of submission is specifically authorized or required by law.”

⁹ Population figures exclude those living in “group quarters.” See note 6.

Roughly one third of New Hampshire's population lives in towns that still use traditional open meetings (Table 1). Many of the state's largest jurisdictions adopted city forms of government years ago in which elected councilors, aldermen, or school board members vote on all matters on behalf of their constituents. Roughly one third of the state's population lives in those "**no-meeting**" jurisdictions.¹⁰ The remaining third of the population lives in towns that have adopted the official-ballot process.¹¹ More than half the population lives in official-ballot school districts.

In **official-ballot jurisdictions**, boards of selectmen, school boards, and budget committees still prepare budgets and warrants and present them to voters for debate and a vote, but the deliberation and final votes are held separately. The boards must convene the "first session" or "deliberative session" of the annual meeting 31 to 38 days before the balloting or "second session." At the first session, boards and budget committees present the warrant for discussion and amendment. Any registered voter in attendance may move to amend any of the articles, including any bond articles. A motion to amend requires a simple majority (50 percent) of those present to pass. As will be discussed below, relatively small groups of voters could use this opportunity to kill bond articles before they could go to the full jurisdiction for a vote

The Center summarized the original arguments for and against the passage of SB2 in the report published in 2000. Proponents of the law argued that more people would vote on the budget by ballot than in open meeting and hoped that this would rein in growth of local budgets and escalating property tax rates. Many people, particularly the elderly and those with young children, find it a hardship to attend long traditional meetings, so the goals of democracy would be strengthened if more people expressed their opinions at the polls. Opponents argued that the official-ballot process would eliminate the incentives residents have to attend the deliberative sessions and to learn from each other about problems and potential solutions. They maintained that democracy would be stronger in their jurisdictions if decision-making remained a face-to-face, participatory enterprise.

To become an official-ballot jurisdiction, someone in a town or school district must present a petition, signed by at least 25 voters, to the governing board for inclusion on the town or district's upcoming ballot.¹² Passage requires a 60 percent majority, as would any subsequent decision to repeal the vote and return to a traditional meeting. The change in status takes place the following year. The first jurisdictions to adopt the official ballot did so in 1996 and used the official-ballot process for the first time in early 1997.

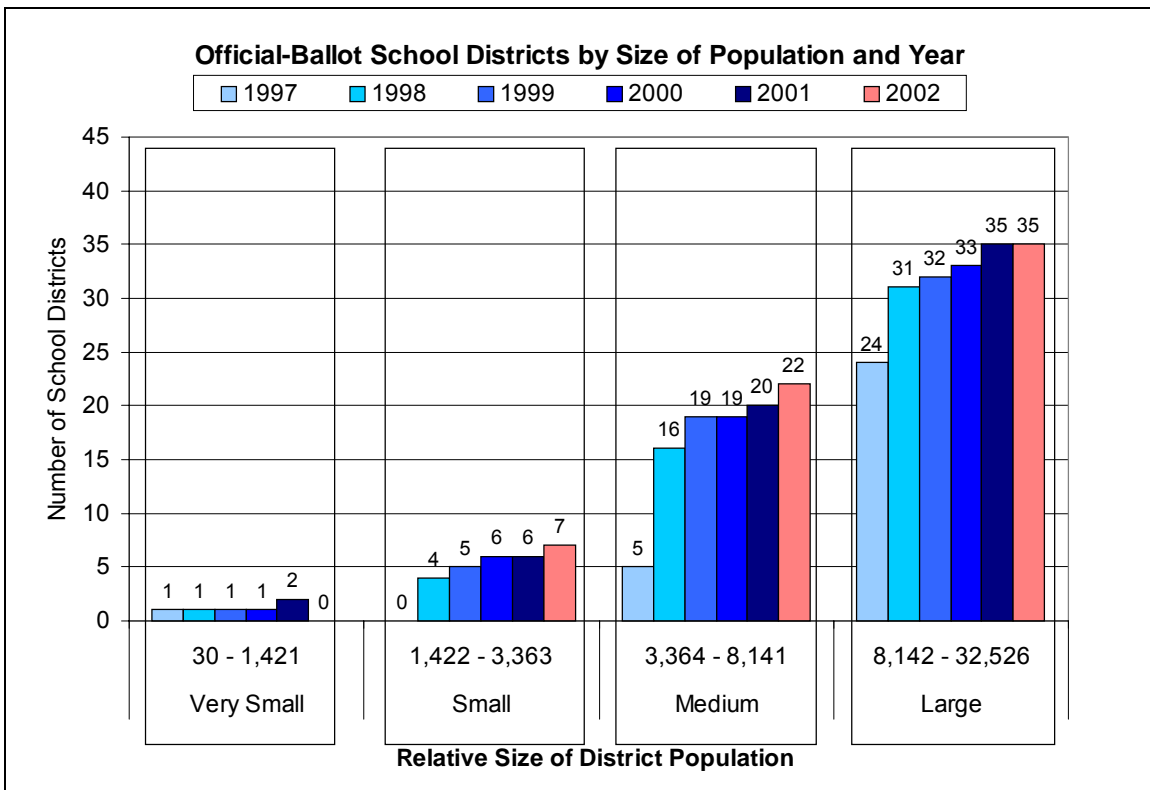
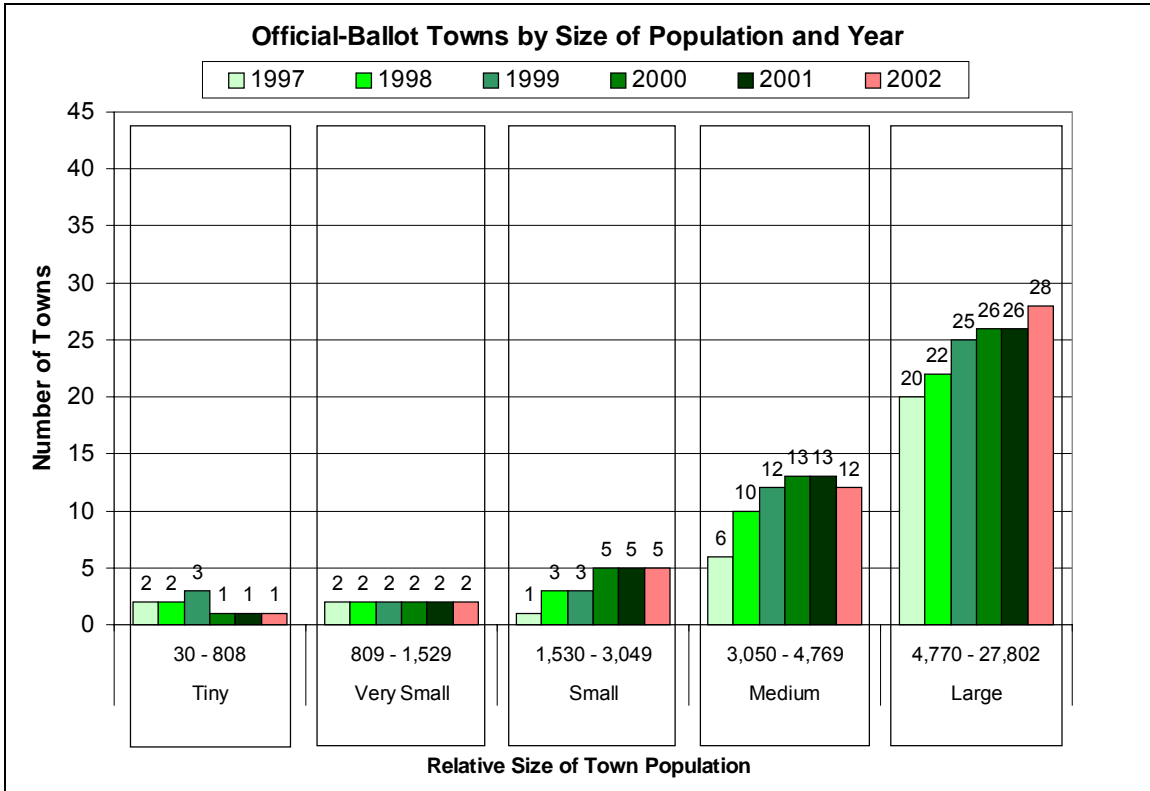
In 2001, six of the 172 traditional town-meeting towns considered adopting SB2. Two of them did so, with 63.5 percent and 60.1 percent voting in favor of SB2. The other four towns rejected

¹⁰ New Hampshire's no-meeting municipalities are: Berlin, Claremont, Concord, Derry, Dover, Durham, Franklin, Keene, Laconia, Lebanon, Manchester, Nashua, Portsmouth, Rochester, and Somersworth. The state's no-meeting school districts are: Berlin, Concord, Dover, Franklin, Laconia, Manchester, Nashua, Portsmouth, Rochester, and Somersworth.

¹¹ Two school districts and three towns have adopted rules in a statute referred to as HB 141, as opposed to those codified as SB2. The charters based on HB 141 call for official-ballot voting in a manner that is, in most respects, similar to SB2's requirements, so this paper groups the charter jurisdictions with the SB2 jurisdictions in all tables and graphs.

¹² RSA 40:14 prescribes the method of adopting the official-ballot form of meeting.

Figure 1 (M&S): Changes in Official-Ballot Jurisdictions by Size and Year



the change with 47.1 percent and 47.8 percent voting in favor of SB2. (DRA records did not include votes from the other two towns.) The six towns ranged in size from very small to large.

Orange and Dorchester voters repealed their official-ballot status in 1999 and returned to traditional meetings. In 2001, eight of the 47 official-ballot towns considered repealing SB2. Enfield did so, with 60.8 percent voting to restore the traditional town meeting. In the other seven towns, the votes in favor of repealing SB2 ranged from 31.7 percent to 55.3 percent. The eight towns range in size from tiny to large.

In 2001, seven of the 103 traditional-meeting school districts considered adopting SB2. One of them (Middleton) did so with 62.9 percent voting in favor of the official ballot. The other six districts voted to retain their traditional meetings, with votes in favor of SB2 ranging from 20.1 percent to 52.7 percent. Of the seven districts attempting to pass SB2, three were small and four were medium-sized districts.

In 2001, five of the 63 SB2 school districts considered repealing their SB2 status. None did so. The votes in favor of repealing SB2 ranged from 29.7 percent to 48.3 percent. Of these five districts, two were large and three were medium-sized districts.

The majority of the jurisdictions that have adopted SB2 are relatively large by New Hampshire's standards. Figures 1M and 1S show how many jurisdictions of various sizes have used the official-ballot process in each year since it became possible to do so in 1997. (Throughout this paper, municipal and school data are presented in paired figures labeled "M" for municipal government and "S" for school districts.) Some of the changes in the graphs are the result of jurisdictions gaining population in the 2000 Census and moving from one size group to the next.

The figures illustrate one of the most significant lessons from the official ballot: that those jurisdictions adopting the official-ballot process tend to be relatively large. Voters in those places seem to have concluded that their jurisdictions have grown too large for traditional open meetings to provide meaningful opportunities for residents to participate. The Center's research has shown that as towns grow, smaller percentages of voters tend to attend the meetings, increasing the risk that those attending will not well represent the will of the larger population.

Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix list all official-ballot towns and school districts.

B. The '60-Percent Majority' Reduces the Approval Gap

In 1999, the legislature adopted the 60-percent majority threshold for bond votes for official-ballot jurisdictions. The action appears to have been a compromise between those who wanted to reduce the threshold for *all* jurisdictions to 60 percent and those who wanted to leave the 66.67-percent threshold in place across the board.

The Center's previous analysis of the bond votes of 1997 and 1998 confirmed earlier indications that official-ballot jurisdictions were passing bond articles at much lower rates than traditional-meeting jurisdictions. That was particularly significant because the official-ballot jurisdictions

tended to be those experiencing the most rapid growth in New Hampshire and thus were most likely to need to borrow in order to expand their infrastructure (e.g., new municipal buildings, schools, utilities, or equipment). The legislature's action has significantly reduced the difference in approval rates between the two forms of governance.

Figures 2M and 2S show the impact of the change. In 1998 and 1999, official-ballot towns approved 40 and 24 percent of the bond articles on their warrants, while traditional-meeting towns were approving 67 and 72 percent of theirs. In 2000, that disparity was reduced when official-ballot towns approved 58 percent of their bond articles and traditional-meeting towns approved 76 percent of theirs. In 2001, the gap widened a bit, when official-ballot towns approved 44 percent of their bond articles and traditional-meeting towns approved 66 percent. The final pair of bars on Figure 2M shows the precise impact of the legislature's change: if the law still required a two-thirds (66.67 percent) majority, the official ballot towns would have approved only 42 percent of the bond articles on their warrants in 2000 and 19 percent in 2001.

Among school districts, the impact of the 60-percent majority has been equally pronounced, as illustrated in Figure 2S: because of the change, official-ballot districts approved 47 percent of the bond articles on their warrants in 2000, while traditional-meeting districts approved just 41 percent. That was the first time official-ballot jurisdictions had approved a higher percentage of bond articles than did their traditional-meeting counterparts. If the official-ballot districts had needed two-thirds majorities to pass their bonds, however, the rate of approval would have dropped to just 29 percent, well below traditional-meeting districts. In 2001, traditional districts approved a slightly higher percentage of bond articles than did official-ballot districts: 42 percent compared to 40 percent. Only 23 percent of the official-ballot articles would have passed under the two-thirds requirement.

Table 2 helps answer a number of "what-if" questions about the impact of changing the standard for a winning majority on bond articles. The table shows the number of bond articles on warrants in 1999, 2000, and 2001 and how many of them received two-thirds majorities, three-fifths majorities, or less than 60 percent. The table shows that the vast majority of bond articles in towns and school districts have received more than 50 percent of the vote, suggesting that boards of selectmen and school boards only present articles that are likely to have fairly broad public support.

Figure 2 (M&S): Bond Article Approval Rates, 1998-2001

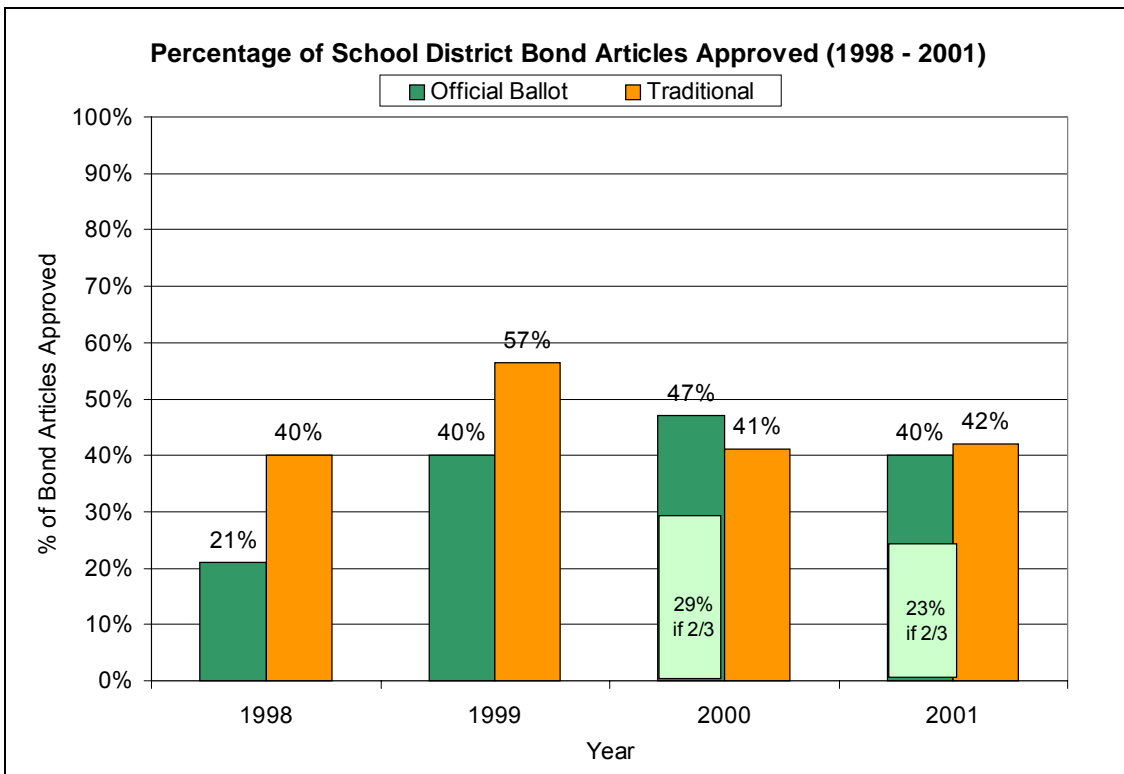
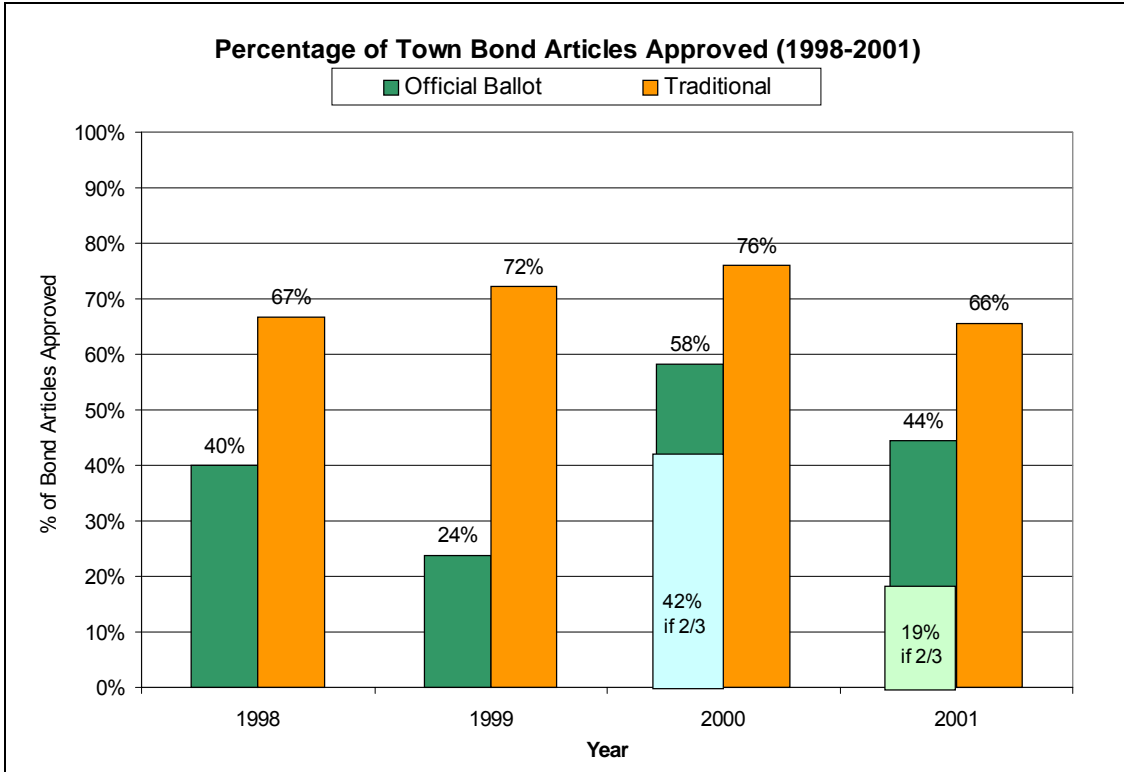


Table 2: Bond Articles and Voting Patterns 1999-2001

Municipal Bond Articles (1999 - 2001)						
	1999		2000		2001	
	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional
Number of Bond Articles Proposed	21	36	24	46	27	61
2/3 or more voting yes	5	26	10	35	5	40
3/5 to 2/3 voting yes	6	3	4	3	7	4
1/2 to 3/5	5	5	7	4	7	2
Fewer than 1/2	4	1	3	3	7	10
Other Action*	1	1	-	1	1	5
% with 2/3 or more	24%	72%	42%	76%	19%	66%
% with 3/5 or more	52%	81%	58%	83%	44%	72%
School District Bond Articles (1999 - 2001)						
	1999		2000		2001	
	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional
Number of Bond Articles Proposed	30	23	34	17	30	31
2/3 or more voting yes	12	13	10	7	7	13
3/5 to 2/3 voting yes	7	3	6	2	5	1
1/2 to 3/5	7	2	6	2	8	9
Fewer than 1/2	5	5	9	4	6	5
Other Action*	-	-	2	2	4	3
% with 2/3 or more	40%	57%	29%	41%	23%	42%
% with 3/5 or more	63%	70%	47%	53%	40%	45%
* Amended to "0"; tabled; passed over; charter provisions required 2/3 vote; disallowed						

Table 3 and Figures 3M and 3S aggregate the financial details of the bond votes and illustrate a greater degree of fluctuation in the dollar amount of proposed—and approved—articles than in the numbers of articles on the warrants. Voters in official-ballot jurisdictions sharply curtailed their spending per capita in 2001: by 63 percent in school districts and by 66 percent in municipalities. Traditional-meeting municipalities cut their spending per capita by almost 5 percent, while traditional-meeting school districts approved bonds that increased their spending per capita by almost 29 percent compared to 2000.

Figure 3 (M&S): Bonding Per Capita: Proposed and Approved, 1998-2001

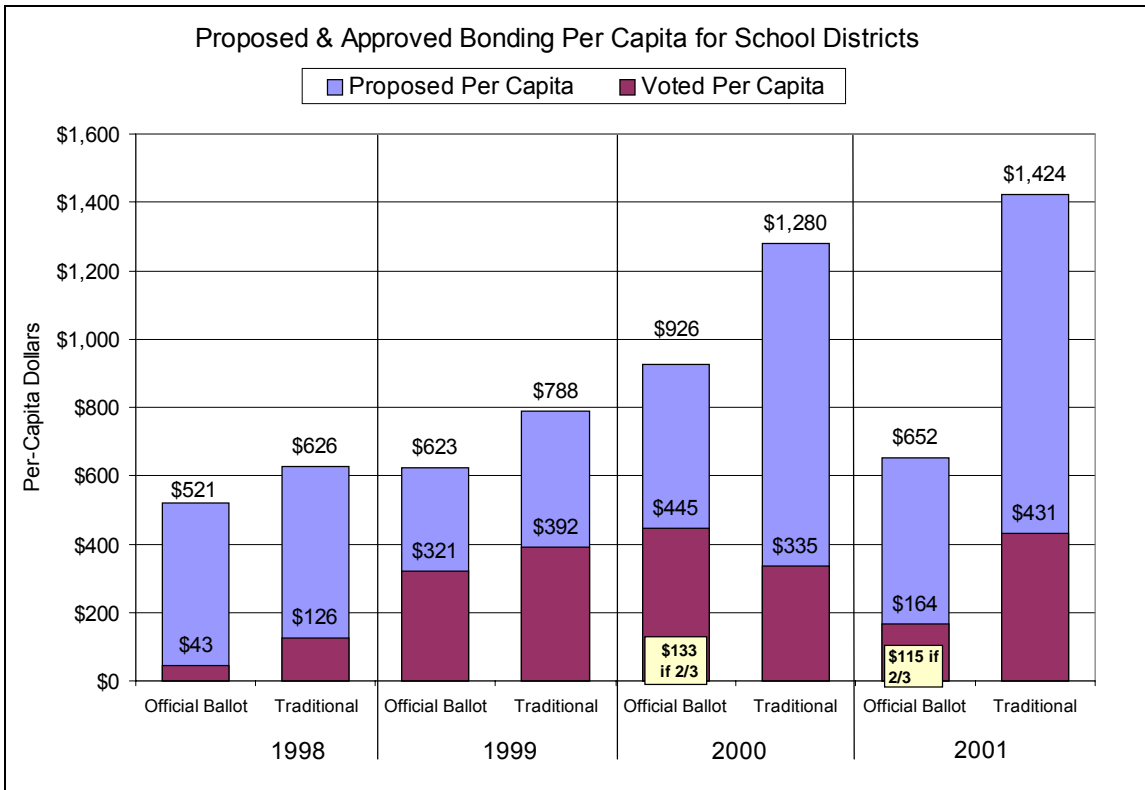
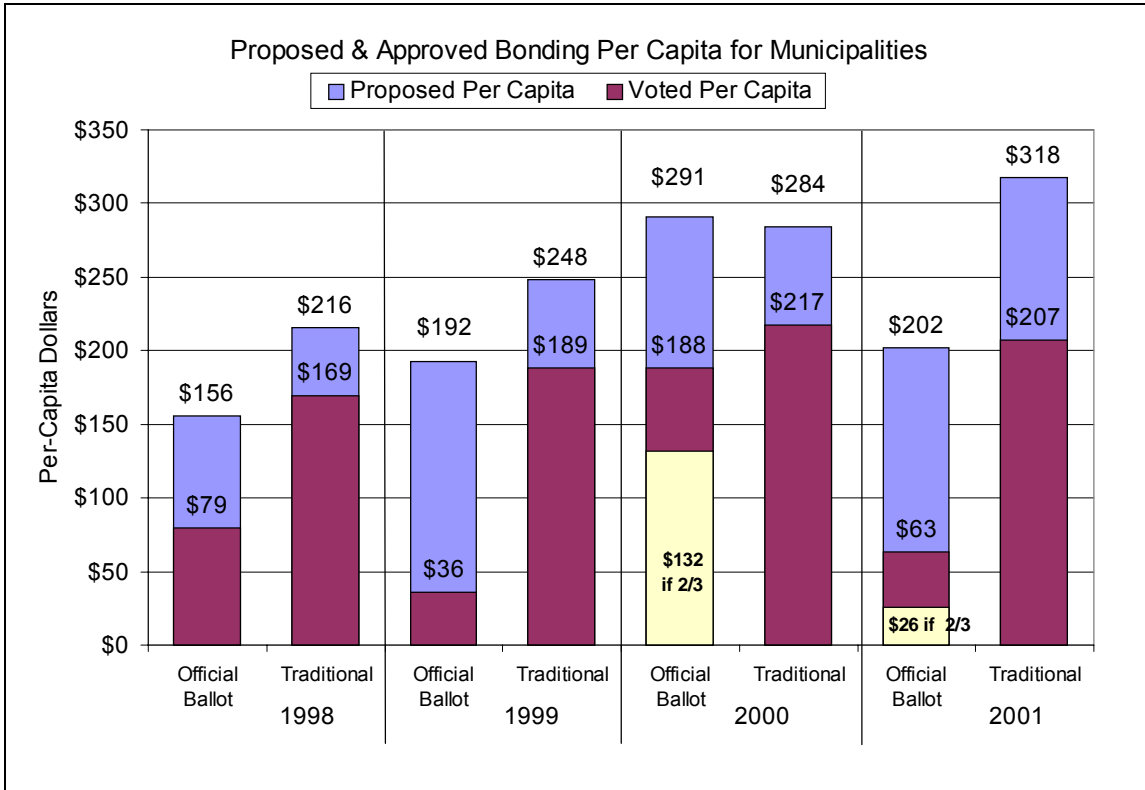


Table 3: Dollars Approved in Bond Articles 1998-2001

Bond Articles in Municipalities									
	1998		1999		2000		2001		
	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total
Towns with Bond Articles	15	48	17	31	18	38	17	46	63
# of Bond Articles	Not recorded	Not recorded	21	36	24	46	27	61	88
Population	158,693	163,992	153,502	95,977	135,661	112,583	205,613	152,644	358,257
Proposed \$	\$24,730,164	\$35,375,453	\$29,505,780	\$23,797,522	\$39,461,341	\$31,947,049	\$41,594,568	\$48,497,095	\$90,091,663
Approved \$	\$12,591,164	\$27,762,910	\$5,496,425	\$18,093,399	\$25,520,371	\$24,476,491	\$12,968,462	\$31,634,702	\$44,603,164
% of \$ approved	51%	78%	19%	76%	65%	77%	31%	65%	50%
Proposed/Capita	\$155.84	\$215.71	\$192.22	\$247.95	\$290.88	\$283.76	\$202.30	\$317.71	\$251.47
Approved/Capita	\$79.34	\$169.29	\$35.81	\$188.52	\$188.12	\$217.41	\$63.07	\$207.24	\$124.50
Rejected	\$12,139,000	\$7,612,543	\$24,009,355	\$5,704,123	\$13,940,970	\$7,470,558	\$28,626,106	\$16,862,393	\$45,488,499
Rejected/Capita	\$76.49	\$46.42	\$156.41	\$59.43	\$102.76	\$66.36	\$139.22	\$110.47	\$126.97
Bond Articles in School Districts									
	1998		1999		2000		2001		
	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total
Districts with Bond Articles	19	15	22	21	25	16	21	24	45
# of Bond Articles	Not recorded	Not recorded	30	23	33	18	30	31	61
Population	260,862	77,103	285,737	101,994	290,106	58,403	293,704	115,436	409,140
Proposed \$	\$135,821,381	\$48,736,801	\$177,902,799	\$80,371,709	\$268,776,916	\$74,760,530	\$191,414,302	\$164,431,683	\$355,845,985
Approved \$	\$11,115,681	\$9,703,743	\$91,626,690	\$39,959,189	\$129,128,755	\$19,538,112	\$48,194,956	\$49,731,222	\$97,926,178
% of \$ approved	8%	20%	52%	50%	48%	26%	25%	30%	28%
Proposed/Capita	\$520.66	\$625.74	\$622.61	\$788.00	\$926.48	\$1,280.08	\$651.73	\$1,424.44	\$869.74
Approved/Capita	\$42.61	\$125.85	\$320.67	\$391.78	\$445.11	\$334.54	\$164.09	\$430.81	\$239.35
Rejected	\$124,705,700	\$38,543,058	\$86,276,109	\$40,412,520	\$139,648,161	\$55,222,418	\$143,219,346	\$114,700,461	\$257,919,807
Rejected/Capita	\$478.05	\$499.89	\$301.94	\$396.22	\$481.37	\$945.54	\$487.63	\$993.63	\$630.39

The table includes the total dollar amount of proposed bond articles and the total amount approved and rejected. As noted earlier, the total proposed amount overstates the demand for projects somewhat because some warrants include several versions of the same project. Nevertheless, the totals offer a rough measure of the amount of investment that elected bodies and petitioners believe is needed. Those totals have been rising. Of particular note is the size of the total value of school projects that voters did not pass in 2001: \$258 million.

The population figures used to produce Table 3 and the associated graphs are the sum of the residents¹³ in all the jurisdictions with bond articles on their warrants; the “proposed cost” line sums the dollar values of the bond articles as they were proposed by the elected boards. The per-capita figures divide the total costs by the total population in those jurisdictions.

C. Tax Rates and Bond Approval

One might assume that municipalities with relatively low tax rates would be more likely to pass a higher percentage of bond articles than jurisdictions with relatively high tax rates. That has not been the case in New Hampshire over the last five years, however.

In each of its reports on the official ballot, the Center has grouped towns into two equal groups: half with lower tax rates, and half with higher tax rates. (In 2001 the dividing point was \$20.27 per thousand dollars of equalized assessed valuation, based on the Department of Revenue Administration’s most recent data.) In order to make the analysis as meaningful as possible, the sample includes *all municipal* bond votes since 1997 for which the Center has information: a total of 309 cases. The results of that analysis are presented in Table 4.

Overall, there has been only a two-percentage-point difference between the adoption rates for the higher-tax and lower-tax towns. In contrast, there has been a 26-percentage-point difference between the bond-adoption rates of official-ballot towns and official-meeting towns.

Table 4: Tax Rates Show Little Impact on Bond Decisions

Percentage of Bond Articles Approved for Towns by Meeting Type and Equalized Tax Rate (1997-2001)			
Equalized Rate	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total
High	49%	67%	62%
Low	40%	76%	64%
Total	45%	71%	63%

D. Participation Rates and the Problems with SB2’s Deliberative Session

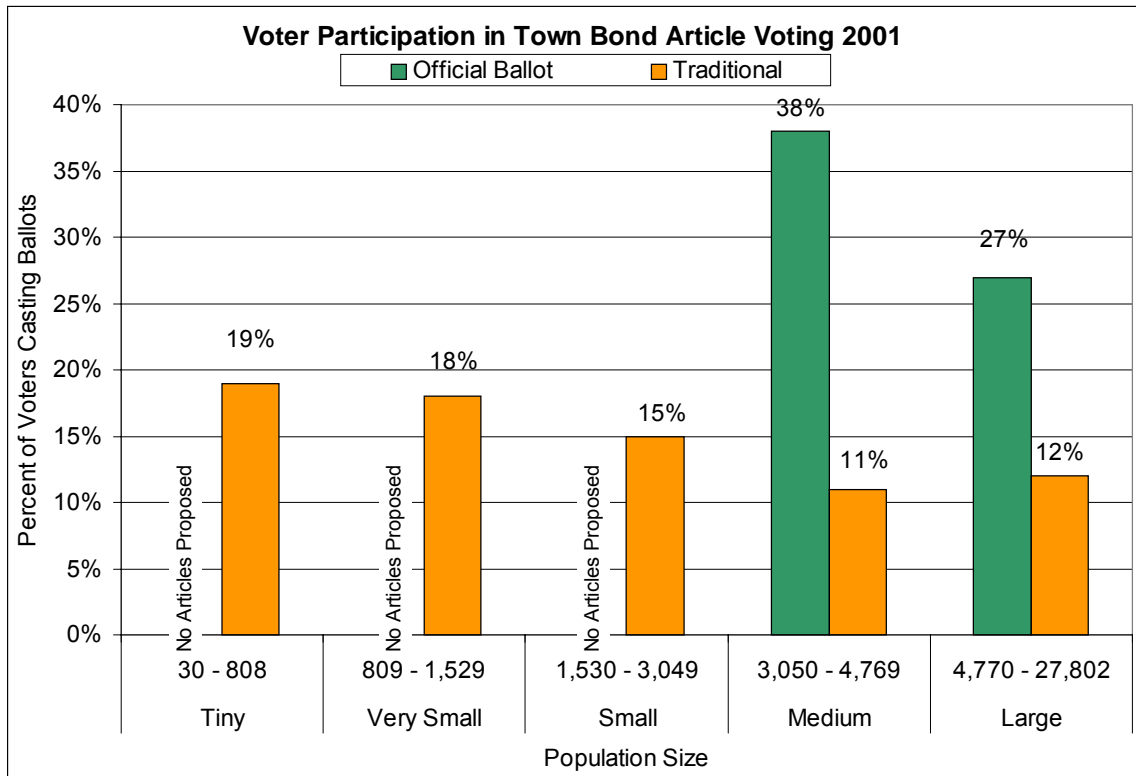
The official-ballot process has succeeded in raising the percentage of registered voters casting ballots on bond issues, and presumably, operating budgets and the full range of other business

¹³ The population figures here exclude those living in group quarters. See note 6.

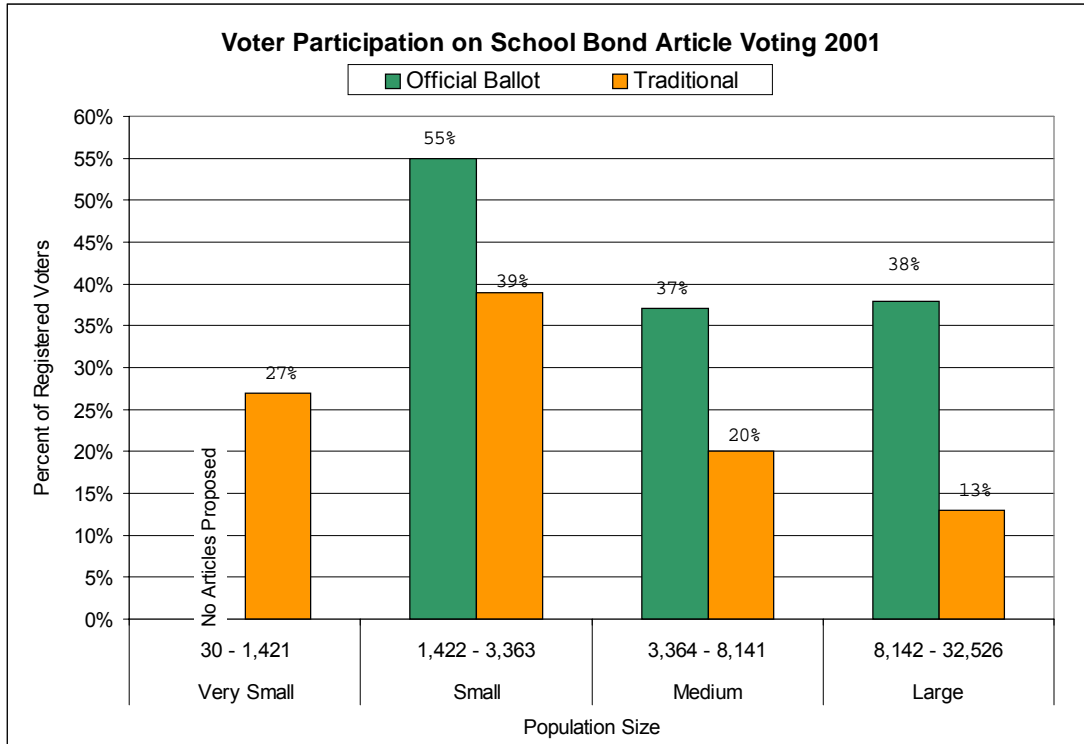
that comes before towns and school districts. The two figures below show that voter-participation rates tend to drop off as the size of the jurisdiction increases, and that participation rates in official-ballot jurisdictions tend to be higher than in traditional-meeting jurisdictions.¹⁴ The 2001 data presented here are consistent with the data the Center has published for 1999 and 2000. The statewide purge of voter checklists in 2001 makes it inappropriate to put all three years on the same graph, however.

Voter participation in local governance extends beyond casting ballots on bond issues; it also includes framing the questions that are put before voters, debating those questions, attempting to resolve differences of opinion, and learning about the underlying issues. The most frequently made argument in favor of the traditional-meeting form of government is that it encourages debate, learning, and compromise. Those who vote on issues at a town or school district meeting have had to listen to the arguments before making up their own mind. There are clear benefits to such an approach. There are also clear benefits to making it easier for more people to vote, and jurisdictions using the official ballot—whether under SB2 or HB 141—by allowing voters to cast a ballot at any time on election day (or in absentia) without sitting through a long meeting, have brought more people into the decision-making process than traditional meetings have.

Figure 4 (M&S): Voting Rates on Bond Articles, 2001



¹⁴ The participation rates are an average of the turnouts among each grouping. Within each grouping, rates varied considerably.



Individuals and jurisdictions place different values on the two kinds of participation embodied in the two forms of governance. The Center recognizes the legitimacy of each approach.

The trouble with SB2 as written is that it leaves open the possibility that very small unelected and unaccountable groups at a jurisdiction’s deliberative session can amend warrant articles in ways that constrain the will of the majority. A simple majority of those present at the deliberative session can amend any article on the draft warrant, and the articles that emerge from the deliberative session are the only ones upon which voters will be able to vote. Even if deliberative sessions were reasonably well attended, this possibility is a “fatal flaw.” As a matter of principle, the ballot should be set by an elected body or by a sufficiently large quorum of the jurisdictions’ registered voters to ensure that the ballot fairly presents the choices that most people in town would like to consider.

State law already provides small groups a simple process to put articles on the warrant by petition, ensuring that a school board of board of selectmen cannot prevent unpopular options from going before voters for a decision. SB2 perversely allows small groups to do the opposite: a small group can amend a spending article to zero, making it impossible for the larger electorate to cast a vote on the substance of the article. At the deliberative session, all articles are subject to such manipulation, whether they are proposed by an elected board or by petitioners. It is inconceivable that the legislature would pass a law authorizing a group of 25 petitioners to *remove* an article from the warrant of a city of 20,000 people, yet SB2 opens the possibility that a group of that size could amend an article to zero and effectively remove the article’s meaning. Recent actions in Hudson and Nottingham offer illustrations.

In 2000, the Hudson school board presented a \$19.6 million bond article on the warrant to build a new school and renovate another one. Petitioners presented two competing articles to split the project—and possibly the vote—in two. Because of the controversy, some 300 people attended the deliberative session, and a majority of those present amended the petitioned articles to zero, thus enhancing the chances of the board’s original bond article. (Hudson voters ultimately approved the board’s proposal.) There were a few controversial items on the warrant the next year and fewer than 100 people attended the deliberative session, according to the district moderator. In 2002 there were no controversial articles on the warrant and just 35 voters, excluding school-board members, attended the deliberative session. Hudson had a population of 22,068 in 2000 and 10,198 registered voters in 2001. The relatively heavy turnout at the 2000 deliberative session was 2.9 percent of the registered voters; the slim turnout in 2002 represented just 0.3 percent of the registered votes. In a group that small, it would take fewer than two dozen like-minded people to out-vote the board and amend any of the proposed articles—including the operating budget—up or down. It so happened that there were no surprises—or amendments—at the 2002 session.

That was not the case last year at the Nottingham school district’s deliberative session. Roughly 70 people attended the session, or about 3.4 percent of the district’s registered voters. According to the district superintendent, the school board presented an article asking voters to appropriate \$124,243 to increase teacher salaries to implement a newly negotiated collective bargaining agreement. Those present amended the article to zero. They also amended an article for a \$5,000 generator to \$1, and an article to spend \$77,500 for a baseball field to \$1, and an article for a \$27,000 phone system to \$1,000. An attempt to amend an article for \$30,578 for health insurance for support staff to \$1 failed. District voters apparently did not appreciate having the outcome of so many articles determined by a small group at the deliberative session. This year, roughly 300 people—14.5 percent of the registered voters—attended the deliberative session and supported the board’s proposed articles, including a new salary package for the teachers.

The Center has been unable to gather comprehensive data about the participation rates at deliberative sessions in official-ballot communities because jurisdictions do not have to report that information to the state. Anecdotal reports are consistent and plausible: attendance is usually small; occasionally, as in Hudson in 2000, attendance is substantially larger. Small turnouts can create problems in traditional town and school-district meetings as well. Mischief seems most likely toward the end of very long, late meetings when most voters have left. Traditional meetings can be adjourned to another day, of course.

New Hampshire statutes allow jurisdictions to adopt charters that avoid the problems with the deliberative session described above. Towns and districts may establish a quorum for action at the deliberative session, or they may simply keep the debate at deliberative sessions entirely advisory to the elected officials responsible for presenting the warrant. One New Hampshire town, Londonderry, with a 2000 population of 23,226, uses both of those alternatives.

In the mid-1990s, voters in Londonderry adopted separate charters for their town and school districts; both put bond issues before voters on an official ballot, but both depart from SB2 in several ways. The school district holds a deliberative session to discuss warrant articles,

including bond articles, but requires a quorum of 500 voters in order for those present to amend any proposed bond articles. (That quorum is currently about 4.3 percent of the registered voters in the district.) The municipal charter also puts bond articles on the official ballot following a public hearing or deliberative session, but those attending do not have the authority to amend the town council's proposals.

Existing statutes create one problem for towns like Londonderry, however. The "60-percent" rule applies only to towns or districts that adopt the official ballot under RSA 40:13¹⁵ (SB2). It should apply to jurisdictions using an official ballot adopted through a charter process as well. (In 2001, the Londonderry school district voted on a \$13.1 million bond article that appeared on the official ballot. The article received 66.3 percent of the vote, eight votes too few to pass under the two-thirds majority required. The deliberative session before the vote had failed to attract a quorum of voters.)

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

Traditional town meeting is a great institution, though it is clearly impractical for many jurisdictions, particularly those that are large and growing. New Hampshire communities have struggled to find appropriate ways to manage their business and make critical decisions, balancing efficiency, effectiveness, fairness, predictability, and a host of other values. None of the systems is perfect and none should be expected to be fool-proof or immune to abuse. No matter where they live and what kind of system of governance they live with, voters will best serve themselves and their communities if they are informed, watchful, and engaged participants. That is as true in a traditional-meeting town as it is in an SB2 town or a city.

SB2 is still fairly new and the people in New Hampshire are still learning its strengths and weaknesses. This analysis has shown that SB2 has caused no crisis, either political or economic. Yet the SB2 framework does have problems that towns and school districts can avoid by working through the charter process or that the legislature could address by amending the law itself. The Center recommends the following:

1. Voters in towns or school districts interested in replacing their traditional-meeting forms of government with an official-ballot form should first consider adopting the official ballot under New Hampshire's "home rule" or "local option" charter statutes (RSA 49B and RSA 49D or "HB141") rather than SB2 (RSA 40:13). The charter statute allows jurisdictions to establish procedures for the deliberative session that would prevent very small minorities from exerting undue influence over the final content of the articles on the ballot. Among the options available to jurisdictions under the charter statute are:
 - the form established in SB2, which grants the majority of those attending the deliberative session the authority to amend warrant articles proposed by elected boards and petitioners
 - a form, spelled out in Londonderry and Seabrook's charters, which authorizes a majority of those present to amend warrant articles, provided there is a quorum of the jurisdiction's registered voters present (the jurisdictions set their own quorum requirements as part of the process of drafting their charters)

¹⁵ RSA 33:8.

- a hybrid form, which would be new to New Hampshire, in which the jurisdiction's charter would establish a quorum as in Londonderry or Seabrook, but also authorize the elected board members to decide how to proceed if a quorum is not present; the board could vote to accept or reject specific amendments to articles endorsed by the majority of those attending the deliberative session
- a form that would make the deliberative session advisory only, leaving the jurisdiction's elected selectmen, councilors, or school board members with the final responsibility for placing articles on the ballot.

The charter process authorized by HB 141 provides jurisdictions with a great deal of latitude to tailor their form of government to their particular needs and values. That process is more involved than simply voting to pass SB2, which may be why relatively few jurisdictions have adopted charters.

2. The legislature should amend RSA 40:13 (SB2) to give jurisdictions the option of adopting the alternative deliberative session forms described above.
3. The legislature should allow HB 141 jurisdictions employing the official ballot for bond articles—as well as SB2 jurisdictions—to use three-fifths as the majority required for passage of bond articles.

4. Appendix: Supporting Tables, Graphs, and Data

Table A1: Official-ballot towns with years of implementation

Towns Operating with Official Ballot	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Allenstown		■	■	■	■	■
Alstead	■	■	■	■	■	■
Amherst			■	■	■	■
Ashland				■	■	■
Atkinson	■	■	■	■	■	■
Barrington		■	■	■	■	■
Bennington	■	■	■	■	■	■
Bethlehem						■
Canaan	■	■	■	■	■	■
Carroll			■	■	■	■
Charlestown	■	■	■	■	■	■
Conway	■	■	■	■	■	■
Danville	■	■	■	■	■	■
Dorchester	■	■	■			
Enfield	■	■	■	■	■	
Epping						■
Epsom		■	■	■	■	■
Exeter	■	■	■	■	■	■
Goffstown	■	■	■	■	■	■
Grafton	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hampstead	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hampton	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hooksett	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hudson	■	■	■	■	■	■
Kensington		■	■	■	■	■
Kingston	■	■	■	■	■	■

Towns Operating with Official Ballot	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Litchfield			■	■	■	■
Littleton	■	■	■	■	■	■
Londonderry	■	■	■	■	■	■
Merrimack	■	■	■	■	■	■
Milford	■	■	■	■	■	■
Milton		■	■	■	■	■
New Boston				■	■	■
New Hampton				■	■	■
New Ipswich			■	■	■	■
Newmarket	■	■	■	■	■	■
Newton	■	■	■	■	■	■
North Hampton		■	■	■	■	■
Orange	■	■	■			
Pelham			■	■	■	■
Plaistow	■	■	■	■	■	■
Rye			■	■	■	■
Salem	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sandown	■	■	■	■	■	■
Seabrook	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sunapee		■	■	■	■	■
Wakefield		■	■	■	■	■
Weare	■	■	■	■	■	■
Winchester	■	■	■	■	■	■
Windham				■	■	■
Wolfeboro	■	■	■	■	■	■

Table A2: Official-ballot school districts with years of implementation

School Districts Operating with Official Ballot	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Allenstown		■	■	■	■	■
Alton		■	■	■	■	■
Amherst		■	■	■	■	■
Barrington		■	■	■	■	■
Bedford	■	■	■	■	■	■
Claremont	■	■	■	■	■	■
Contoocook Valley	■	■	■	■	■	■
Conway	■	■	■	■	■	■
Derry Cooperative	■	■	■	■	■	■
Epping					■	■
Epsom		■	■	■	■	■
Exeter	■	■	■	■	■	■
Exeter Regional Coop		■	■	■	■	■
Fall Mountain Regional	■	■	■	■	■	■
Goffstown	■	■	■	■	■	■
Governor Wentworth Reg.	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hampstead	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hampton	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hampton Falls		■	■	■	■	■
Hillsboro-Deering Coop		■	■	■	■	■
Hooksett	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hudson	■	■	■	■	■	■
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop				■	■	■
John Stark Regional	■	■	■	■	■	■
Kearsarge Regional		■	■	■	■	■
Keene	■	■	■	■	■	■
Kensington			■	■	■	■
Lebanon	■	■	■	■	■	■
Litchfield			■	■	■	■
Littleton	■	■	■	■	■	■
Londonderry	■	■	■	■	■	■
Lyndeborough		■	■	■	■	■

School Districts Operating with Official Ballot	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Mascenic Regional	■	■	■	■	■	■
Mascoma Valley Regional	■	■	■	■	■	■
Merrimack	■	■	■	■	■	■
Middleton						■
Milford	■	■	■	■	■	■
Milton		■	■	■	■	■
Monadnock Regional	■	■	■	■	■	■
New Boston		■	■	■	■	■
Newfields					■	■
Newfound Area		■	■	■	■	■
Newmarket		■	■	■	■	■
Newport		■	■	■	■	■
North Hampton		■	■	■	■	■
Nottingham				■	■	■
Oyster River Coop	■	■	■	■	■	■
Pelham		■	■	■	■	■
Pemi-Baker Coop					■	■
Raymond		■	■	■	■	■
Rumney	■	■	■	■	■	■
Rye			■	■	■	■
Salem		■	■	■	■	■
Sanborn Regional	■	■	■	■	■	■
Seabrook	■	■	■	■	■	■
Souhegan Coop			■	■	■	■
Sunapee		■	■	■	■	■
Timberlane Regional	■	■	■	■	■	■
Wakefield		■	■	■	■	■
Weare		■	■	■	■	■
White Mountains Reg.			■	■	■	■
Winchester	■	■	■	■	■	■
Windham	■	■	■	■	■	■
Winnacunnett Coop	■	■	■	■	■	■

Table A3: Municipal Bond Articles 1999-2001

Town	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Alexandria	2001		\$1,075,000		87	64	57.6%
Alexandria	2001		\$1,200,000		40	121	24.8%
Allenstown	1999	■	\$750,000		447	296	60.2%
Alton	2000		\$550,000	\$550,000	140	38	78.7%
Amherst	1999	■	\$768,817		1,536	1,364	53.0%
Amherst	2000	■	\$515,963		1,855	1,394	57.1%
Amherst	2000	■	\$1,238,254		1,406	1,898	42.6%
Antrim	2000		\$937,141	\$937,141	150	62	70.8%
Ashland	2000	■	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	312	158	66.4%
Atkinson	1999	■	\$1,271,425	\$1,271,425	1,497	397	79.0%
Atkinson	2000	■	\$1,825,000		973	1,136	46.1%
Auburn	1999		\$250,000		187	96	66.1%
Auburn	1999		\$925,000	\$925,000	234	75	75.7%
Barnstead	2000		\$697,000	\$697,000	225	87	72.1%
Barnstead	2001		\$155,000	\$155,000	161	40	80.1%
Barrington	1999	■	\$800,000	\$800,000	1,134	526	68.3%
Bartlett	1999		\$250,000	\$250,000	108	23	82.4%
Bartlett	1999		\$300,000	\$300,000	112	12	90.3%
Bartlett	2001		\$85,000	\$85,000	112	20	84.8%
Bedford	2001		\$3,600,000	\$3,600,000	3763	648	85.3%
Belmont	1999		\$160,000	\$160,000	91	18	83.5%
Boscawen	2001		\$2,450,000		41	83	33.1%
Brentwood	2000		\$525,000	\$525,000	60	11	84.5%
Brentwood	2001		\$450,000	\$450,000	223	18	92.5%
Brentwood	2001		\$250,000	\$250,000	212	29	88.0%
Brookfield	2001		\$100,000	\$100,000	50	1	98.0%
Brookline	2000		\$75,000		164	113	59.2%
Brookline	2000		\$250,000	\$250,000	161	41	79.7%
Brookline	2001		\$145,000		Disallowed		
Campton	2000		\$75,850	\$75,850	107	30	78.1%
Campton	2000		\$98,000		29	112	20.6%
Canaan	1999	■	\$1,000,000		512	305	62.7%
Candia	1999		\$808,337		281	210	57.2%
Candia	2000		\$808,337		113	235	32.5%
Candia	2000		\$997,621		220	126	63.6%
Canterbury	2000		\$650,000		145	117	55.3%
Canterbury	2001		\$750,000		183	104	63.8%
Center Harbor	2001		\$600,000	\$600,000	80	13	86.0%
Charlestown	2000	■	\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000	679	265	71.9%
Chester	2001		\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	187	68	73.3%
Conway	1999	■	\$1,671,500		958	765	55.6%
Conway	2000	■	\$1,485,859		1,044	719	59.2%
Conway	2001	■	\$1,571,074	\$1,571,074	978	584	62.6%
Croydon	2001		\$140,000	\$140,000	64	17	79.0%
Danville	2000	■	\$190,000	\$190,000	581	358	61.9%
Danville	2000	■	\$492,575	\$459,000	579	380	60.4%
Deerfield	1999		\$1,555,000		47	217	17.8%

Town	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Deering	2001		\$150,000	\$150,000	88	3	96.7%
Dublin	1999		\$684,885	\$684,885	161	48	77.0%
Easton	2001		\$120,000	\$120,000	26	7	78.8%
Enfield	1999	■	\$500,000	\$50,000	456	114	80.0%
Enfield	2001	■	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	382	249	60.5%
Epping	1999		\$1,374,300	\$1,374,300	251	80	75.8%
Epping	2000		\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	204	5	97.6%
Epsom	1999	■	\$740,000		499	313	61.5%
Epsom	1999	■	\$1,664,274		524	312	62.7%
Epsom	2000	■	\$814,000		573	404	58.6%
Epsom	2000	■	\$1,857,678		526	466	53.0%
Exeter	1999	■	\$1,475,000	\$1,475,000	1,277	581	68.7%
Exeter	2000	■	\$715,000	\$715,000	2,043	591	77.6%
Exeter	2001	■	\$400,000		820	739	52.6%
Exeter	2001	■	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	1208	409	74.7%
Farmington	2001		\$1,624,000		114	65	63.7%
Farmington	2001		\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	144	25	85.2%
Farmington	2001		\$399,000	\$399,000	143	9	94.1%
Farmington	2001		\$100,000	\$100,000	103	47	68.7%
Farmington	2001		\$125,000	\$125,000	98	49	66.7%
Fitzwilliam	1999		\$95,000	\$95,000	175	11	94.1%
Fitzwilliam	2001		\$1,400,000		112	80	58.3%
Fremont	2001		\$1,057,500	\$1,057,500	164	82	66.7%
Gilford	2001		\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	203	13	94.0%
Gilmanton	2000		\$800,000	\$750,000	92	41	69.2%
Gilsum	1999		\$105,000	\$105,000	44	10	81.5%
Gilsum	2000		\$60,000	\$60,000	78	3	96.3%
Goffstown	2000	■	\$3,637,701	\$3,637,701	1,810	776	70.0%
Goffstown	2001	■	\$1,138,835	\$1,138,835	2110	670	75.9%
Grantham	1999		\$360,000	\$360,000	163	9	94.8%
Grantham	2000		\$545,000		117	70	62.6%
Greenfield	2000		\$2,155,000	\$2,155,000	169	67	71.6%
Greenville	1999		\$550,000	\$550,000	73	6	92.4%
Greenville	2000		\$76,000		37	31	54.4%
Greenville	2000		\$925,600	\$925,000	48	22	68.6%
Hampton	1999	■	\$1,090,000		1,872	1,100	63.0%
Hampton	1999	■	\$5,495,000		1,175	1,838	39.0%
Hampton	2000	■	\$4,750,000	\$4,750,000	2,712	981	73.4%
Hampton	2000	■	\$4,999,000	\$4,999,000	2,280	1,436	61.4%
Hampton	2001	■	\$5,900,000		1357	989	57.8%
Hampton Falls	1999		\$200,000		132	83	61.4%
Hampton Falls	2000		\$840,000	\$840,000	207	8	96.3%
Hancock	1999		\$95,000		88	75	54.0%
Hancock	2000		\$165,000	\$165,000	177	23	88.5%
Hancock	2001		\$243,000	\$243,000	149	13	92.0%
Hanover	2001		\$165,000	\$165,000	148	13	91.9%
Hebron	2001		\$235,000	\$235,000	59	23	72.0%
Henniker	2001		\$575,000	\$575,000	125	22	85.0%
Hillsboro	2001		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	172	15	92.0%
Hinsdale	2001		\$246,500		46	127	26.6%

Town	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Hinsdale	2001		\$125,000	\$167,000	133	54	71.1%
Hollis	2001		\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	286	11	96.3%
Hooksett	2000	■	\$2,600,000		561	507	52.5%
Hooksett	2001	■	\$2,600,000	\$2,600,000	1092	675	61.8%
Hooksett	2001	■	\$246,000	\$246,000	1091	664	62.2%
Hudson	1999	■	\$1,000,000		1,630	854	65.6%
Jaffrey	2000		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	120	27	81.6%
Jaffrey	2001		\$3,750,000	\$3,750,000	122	29	80.8%
Jaffrey	2001		\$750,000	\$750,000	143	8	94.7%
Kingston	2001	■	\$1,745,000		634	808	44.0%
Lancaster	2000		\$200,000		113	63	64.2%
Langdon	1999		\$78,000	\$78,000	78	12	86.7%
Lisbon	1999		\$38,000	\$38,000	43	13	76.8%
Lisbon	1999		\$39,000	\$39,000	50	4	92.6%
Lisbon	2000		\$150,000	\$150,000	55	9	85.9%
Lisbon	2001		\$110,000	\$110,000	55	4	93.2%
Litchfield	1999	■	\$550,000		1,262	929	57.6%
Litchfield	2000	■	\$560,000		815	553	59.6%
Litchfield	2000	■	\$826,000		699	665	51.2%
Litchfield	2001	■	\$623,965		720	582	55.3%
Littleton	2000	■	\$450,000	\$450,000	993	132	88.3%
Littleton	2000	■	\$750,000	\$750,000	938	187	83.4%
Londonderry	2001	■	\$650,000		2118	1534	58.0%
Londonderry	2001	■	\$400,000		2275	1534	59.7%
Londonderry	2001	■	\$460,000		1903	1921	49.8%
Lyndeborough	1999		\$300,000		Tabled		
Marlborough	2000		\$280,000	\$280,000	137	10	93.2%
Mason	1999		\$227,500	\$223,714	85	16	84.2%
Meredith	2000		\$325,000	\$325,000	189	3	98.4%
Meredith	2000		\$1,800,000	\$1,800,000	176	12	93.6%
Meredith	2001		\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	129	7	94.9%
Meredith	2001		\$200,000	\$200,000	129	7	94.9%
Merrimack	1999	■	\$4,379,764		1,677	2,098	44.4%
Merrimack	2001	■	\$5,500,000		Amended to \$1		
Milan	2000		\$155,000	\$155,000	83	16	83.8%
Milan	2001		\$696,000		58	87	40.0%
Milan	2001		\$252,000		Tabled		
Milford	2000	■	\$1,400,000	\$1,400,000	1,318	538	71.0%
Milford	2001	■	\$620,000	\$600,000	1457	919	61.3%
Milford	2001	■	\$2,315,000		1160	1272	47.7%
Milford	2001	■	\$862,500		931	1484	38.6%
Monroe	2000		\$470,000	\$470,000	120	20	85.7%
Mont Vernon	1999		\$1,289,000		165	113	59.4%
Mont Vernon	2000		\$1,350,000		115	196	37.0%
Mont Vernon	2001		\$1,340,293		173	112	60.7%
Moultonboro	1999		\$3,500,000	\$3,500,000	216	28	88.5%
New Durham	2000		\$750,000	\$750,000	104	12	89.7%
New London	1999		\$1,650,000	\$1,470,000	214	46	82.3%
Newmarket	2000	■	\$600,000	\$600,000	562	238	70.3%
Newmarket	2001	■	\$600,000		668	451	59.7%

Town	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Newport	2000		\$1,020,000		Tabled		
Newport	2001		\$930,100		Tabled		
Newport	2001		\$348,000	\$348,000	100	5	95.2%
Northfield	2000		\$500,000	\$500,000	113	17	86.9%
Nottingham	1999		\$320,000	\$320,000	157	72	68.6%
Orange	2000		\$106,600	\$106,600	37	17	68.5%
Pelham	1999	■	\$310,000		1,443	1,277	53.1%
Pembroke	1999		\$439,000	\$439,000	252	62	80.3%
Pembroke	2000		\$210,000	\$210,000	397	122	76.5%
Pembroke	2000		\$1,600,000		289	235	55.2%
Pembroke	2001		\$997,000	\$1,392,000	433	176	71.1%
Peterborough	1999		\$550,000	\$550,000	225	22	91.1%
Peterborough	2000		\$750,000	\$750,000	123	4	96.9%
Peterborough	2001		\$650,000	\$650,000	189	6	96.9%
Piermont	2001		\$123,702	\$123,702	59	22	72.8%
Pittsfield	2001		\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	237	11	95.6%
Plainfield	2001		\$1,011,200		125	178	41.3%
Plaistow	1999	■	\$345,000		917	949	49.1%
Plaistow	1999	■	\$1,900,000	\$1,900,000	1,318	580	69.4%
Plymouth	2001		\$1,388,000		48	332	12.6%
Randolph	2001		\$541,300		Tabled		
Raymond	2000		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	104	22	82.5%
Salem	2001	■	\$4,000,000		1336	978	57.7%
Salem	2001	■	\$2,929,000		1103	1236	47.2%
Salem	2001	■	\$533,453	\$533,453	1564	751	67.6%
Sanbornton	1999		\$148,000	\$148,000	153	63	70.8%
Sanbornton	2001		\$600,000	\$600,000	191	12	94.1%
Sanbornton	2001		\$323,000	\$323,000	170	36	82.5%
Shelburne	2000		\$250,000	\$250,000	52	2	96.3%
Stark	1999		\$250,000		86	71	54.8%
Stark	2000		\$250,000	\$250,000	134	55	70.9%
Stratford	2001		\$730,000	\$730,000	34	13	72.3%
Sunapee	1999	■	\$663,000		187	660	22.1%
Sunapee	1999	■	\$2,182,000		478	365	56.7%
Sunapee	2000	■	\$2,184,641		286	291	49.6%
Sunapee	2001	■	\$625,000	\$488,000	520	345	60.1%
Sunapee	2001	■	\$1,984,641		404	463	46.6%
Sutton	1999		\$297,500	\$297,500	80	33	70.8%
Swanzey	1999		\$395,000		170	113	60.1%
Swanzey	1999		\$3,300,000	\$3,300,000	191	74	72.1%
Swanzey	2000		\$225,000	\$225,000	288	82	77.8%
Swanzey	2000		\$750,000	\$750,000	358	14	96.2%
Temple	2001		\$300,000		95	60	61.3%
Thornton	2001		\$100,000		41	48	46.1%
Thornton	2001		\$60,000	\$60,000	59	29	67.0%
Tilton	1999		\$100,000	\$100,000	43	7	86.0%
Tilton	2000		\$500,000	\$500,000	89	22	80.2%
Tilton	2000		\$600,000	\$600,000	86	17	83.5%
Troy	2001		\$25,000		Disallowed		
Wakefield	1999	■	\$950,000		Amended to 0		

Town	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Wakefield	2000	■	\$991,170	\$991,170	530	241	68.7%
Walpole	2000		\$400,000	\$400,000	154	12	92.8%
Warner	1999		\$378,000		120	112	51.7%
Waterville	2000		\$37,400	\$37,400	64	0	100.0%
Weare	2001	■	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	923	590	61.0%
Webster	2001		\$1,150,000		115	124	48.1%
Whitefield	1999		\$165,000	\$165,000	121	6	95.3%
Whitefield	2001		\$400,000		59	86	40.7%
Whitefield	2001		\$275,000		8	113	6.6%
Windham	1999		\$708,000	\$708,000	452	153	74.7%
Windham	1999		\$1,913,000	\$1,913,000	404	134	75.1%
Windham	2001	■	\$99,000		737	739	49.9%
Windham	2001	■	\$144,900	\$144,900	1038	491	67.9%
Windsor	2000		\$37,500	\$37,500	28	0	100.0%
Wolfeboro	2000	■	\$578,500	\$578,500	1,568	278	84.9%
Wolfeboro	2001	■	\$2,246,200	\$2,246,200	956	300	76.1%
Woodstock	2001		\$856,500	\$856,500	95	10	90.5%
Woodstock	2001		\$325,000	\$325,000	104	1	99.0%

Table A4: School District Bond Articles 1999-2001

School District	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Amherst	1999	■	\$9,200,000		1,810	1,157	61.0%
Amherst	2000	■	\$11,838,400		1,951	1,354	59.0%
Amherst	2000	■	\$461,000	\$461,000	2,544	758	77.0%
Amherst	2001	■	\$275,000		1,738	1,492	53.8%
Amherst	2001	■	\$3,799,000	\$3,799,000	2,344	940	71.4%
Auburn	2000		\$7,180,000		240	312	43.5%
Auburn	2001		\$9,000,000		Tabled		
Auburn	2001		\$8,410,000		269	253	51.5%
Barnstead	2000		\$10,100,000		393	365	51.8%
Barnstead	2001		\$11,762,000		410	350	53.9%
Barrington	2001	■	\$15,330,000		1,031	731	58.5%
Bedford	2001	■	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	2,541	1,472	63.3%
Bedford	2001	■	\$245,387	\$245,387	3,815	627	85.9%
Bedford	2001	■	\$550,818	\$550,818	3,489	928	79.0%
Bow	1999		\$5,047,385		250	573	30.4%
Bow	1999		\$1,634,277		258	529	32.8%
Bow	2001		\$6,590,841		666	500	57.1%
Bow	2001		\$645,785		Tabled		
Bow	2001		\$399,392		Tabled		
Brentwood	2001		\$9,975,000		Vote not recorded		
Brentwood	2001		\$7,650,000	\$6,200,000	284	132	68.3%
Brookline	1999		\$5,087,912	\$5,087,912	595	248	70.6%
Brookline	2001		\$90,000		32	24	57.1%
Candia	1999		\$660,000		220	122	64.3%
Candia	2000		\$660,000		192	123	61.0%
Chester	2001		\$1,871,754		270	265	50.5%
Chichester	1999		\$303,000	\$303,000	83	12	87.4%
Colebrook	2001		\$6,600,000	\$5,840,000	297	67	81.6%
Contoocook Valley	1999	■	\$300,000		1,281	2,139	37.5%
Contoocook Valley	1999	■	\$500,000		1,969	1,506	56.7%
Contoocook Valley	1999	■	\$2,400,000		2,107	1,353	60.9%
Contoocook Valley	2000	■	\$4,250,000	\$4,250,000	2,363	1,217	66.0%
Contoocook Valley	2001	■	\$4,750,000	\$4,750,000	2,298	1,256	64.7%
Croydon	2000		\$275,000		40	60	40.0%
Croydon	2000		\$50,000		Passed over		
Deerfield	1999		\$935,000	\$935,000	255	92	73.5%
Deerfield	2001		\$12,650,000		419	488	46.2%
Derry Cooperative	1999	■	\$10,780,000		1,667	2,144	43.7%
Derry Cooperative	1999	■	\$5,115,000	\$5,115,000	1,725	585	74.7%
Derry Cooperative	1999	■	\$4,892,000		2,475	1,253	66.4%
Derry Cooperative	2000	■	\$13,995,000		1,800	1,580	53.3%
Derry Cooperative	2001	■	\$11,675,000		1,720	1,705	50.2%
East Kingston	1999		\$715,765	\$715,765	119	29	80.4%
Epping	1999		\$1,185,663	\$1,185,663	243	41	85.6%
Epping	2001	■	\$726,200		604	542	52.7%
Epping-Fremont	2001		\$15,727,853		1,143	579	66.4%
Exeter	1999	■	\$1,930,000		1,149	720	61.5%

School District	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Exeter Regional Coop	2000	■	\$35,500,000	\$35,500,000	3,523	2,275	60.8%
Fall Mountain Regional	2000	■	\$2,410,176		1,120	1,305	46.2%
Fall Mountain Regional	2000	■	\$1,022,885		1,462	1,017	59.0%
Fall Mountain Regional	2001	■	\$600,000	\$600,000	1,388	821	62.8%
Farmington	2001		\$8,883,120	\$8,883,120	250	101	71.2%
Freedom	1999		\$1,600,000		100	120	45.5%
Freedom	2001		\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	121	40	75.2%
Fremont	2001		\$10,950,000		137	336	29.0%
Fremont	2001		\$1,407,000		146	104	58.4%
Gilford	1999		\$1,926,127	\$1,926,127	175	26	87.1%
Gilford	2001		\$14,789,942		691	808	46.1%
Gilford	2001		1,456,945		820	675	54.8%
Goffstown	2000	■	\$10,850,000		1,096	1,403	43.9%
Goffstown	2001	■	\$11,995,000	\$11,995,000	1,961	823	70.4%
Gov. Wentworth Reg.	1999	■	\$4,954,046		1,318	2,159	37.9%
Gov. Wentworth Reg.	1999	■	\$82,236		1,401	2,077	40.3%
Gov. Wentworth Reg.	2001	■	\$750,000	\$750,000	1,684	872	65.9%
Grantham	2001		\$720,000	\$720,000	204	39	84.0%
Hampstead	1999	■	\$5,988,000		1,108	946	53.9%
Hampstead	2000	■	\$6,495,000		850	1,409	37.6%
Hampstead	2001	■	\$8,328,760		1,144	904	55.9%
Hampton Falls	2000	■	\$382,200		291	337	46.3%
Haverhill Cooperative	2001		\$99,000	\$99,000	135	19	87.7%
Hill	2000		\$1,705,500		44	76	36.7%
Hill	2001		\$1,497,032	\$1,497,032	88	39	69.3%
Hillsboro-Deering Coop	2000	■	\$2,700,000		694	849	45.0%
Hillsboro-Deering Coop	2000	■	\$17,100,000		782	730	51.7%
Hillsboro-Deering Coop	2001	■	\$14,750,000	\$14,750,000	764	360	68.0%
Hinsdale	1999		\$464,400	\$464,400	83	29	74.1%
Hollis	1999		\$1,582,180	\$1,582,180	429	106	80.2%
Hollis	2001		\$60,000	\$60,000	56	15	78.9%
Hollis-Brookline Coop	1999		\$900,000	\$900,000	137	6	95.8%
Hollis-Brookline Coop	2000		\$3,200,000	\$3,200,000	540	45	92.3%
Hollis-Brookline Coop	2001		\$375,000		148	107	58.0%
Hooksett	2000	■	\$19,400,000		584	827	41.4%
Hudson	2000	■	\$19,640,000	\$17,625,000	2,889	1,074	72.9%
Hudson	2000	■	\$10,224,000				Amended to 0
Hudson	2000	■	\$3,442,000				Amended to 0
Interlakes	2001		\$1,361,348	\$1,361,348	171	16	91.4%
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	1999		\$19,113,440		293	543	35.0%
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	2000	■	\$1,700,000		700	1,147	37.9%
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	2000	■	\$19,950,000		976	860	53.2%
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	2001	■	\$19,750,000		1,242	1,250	49.8%
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	2001	■	\$2,700,000		1,221	1,235	49.7%
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	2001	■	\$1,766,000		720	1,692	29.9%
John Stark Regional	2000	■	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	1,735	926	65.2%
Keene	1999	■	\$17,500,000	\$17,500,000	2,477	1,069	69.9%
Kensington	2000	■	\$1,570,000		322	333	49.2%
Kensington	2001	■	\$2,322,000		350	311	53.0%
Lebanon	1999	■	\$872,000		292	261	52.8%

School District	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Litchfield	1999	■	\$11,686,000	\$11,686,000	1,550	734	67.9%
Littleton	2000	■	\$950,000	\$950,000	778	348	69.1%
Littleton	2000	■	\$225,300	\$225,300	787	334	70.2%
Londonderry	2001	■	\$13,100,000	Failed: HB141 requires 2/3	2,551	1,295	66.3%
Madison	1999		\$2,005,500		85	113	42.9%
Madison	2000		\$2,005,500	\$2,005,500	139	59	70.2%
Mascoma Valley Reg.	1999	■	\$2,700,000	\$2,700,000	1,398	633	68.8%
Merrimack	1999	■	\$5,692,593		2,527	1,309	65.9%
Merrimack	2000	■	\$6,100,365	\$6,100,365	4,148	1,153	78.2%
Merrimack	2001	■	\$19,654,092		2,815	1,938	59.2%
Merrimack Valley	2000		\$9,900,000	\$9,900,000	656	87	88.3%
Milan	2001		\$4,098,949		119	235	33.6%
Milford	1999	■	\$1,555,000		1,355	759	64.1%
Milford	1999	■	\$10,895,000	\$10,895,000	1,459	664	68.7%
Milford	2000	■	\$1,998,000		954	890	34.1%
Milford	2001	■	\$2,335,000		1,015	1,423	41.6%
Milford	2001	■	\$2,497,000		1,264	1,230	50.7%
Milton	1999	■	\$512,000	\$512,000	593	289	67.2%
Milton	1999	■	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	595	284	67.7%
Milton	1999	■	\$828,000	\$828,000	660	221	74.9%
Mont Vernon	2000		\$859,864	\$859,864	165	23	87.8%
Mont Vernon	2000	■	\$255,233	\$255,233	148	39	79.1%
New Boston	1999	■	\$1,750,000	\$1,750,000	732	338	68.4%
Newfields	1999		\$570,000		146	107	57.7%
Newfields	2000		\$649,000	\$649,000	202	40	83.5%
Newfound Area	2000	■	\$1,855,500		849	1,118	43.2%
Newport	1999	■	\$384,000		692	371	65.1%
Newport	2000	■	\$190,000	\$190,000	430	182	70.3%
Newport	2000	■	\$245,000	\$245,000	481	131	78.6%
Newport	2001	■	\$150,000	\$150,000	380	188	66.9%
Northumberland	1999		\$5,651,918		356	198	64.3%
Northumberland	2000		\$5,651,918		363	222	62.1%
Northumberland	2001		\$2,165,000		117	81	59.1%
Northumberland	2001		\$400,000	\$400,000	145	11	92.9%
Northwood	2001		\$4,533,000	\$4,408,000	323	83	79.6%
Oyster River Coop	1999	■	\$19,951,897		1,941	1,375	58.5%
Oyster River Coop	2000	■	\$19,951,897	\$19,951,897	1,883	1,124	62.6%
Oyster River Coop	2000	■	\$20,401,960	\$20,401,960	2,168	1,143	65.5%
Oyster River Coop	2001	■	\$22,706,711	\$2,304,751	1,643	633	72.2%
Oyster River Coop	2001	■	\$1,000,000		Amended to 0		
Pelham	1999	■	\$9,598,582		1,616	1,194	57.5%
Pelham	2000	■	\$10,373,000	\$10,373,000	2,267	1,054	68.3%
Pembroke	1999		\$8,448,224	\$8,448,224	456	124	78.6%
Pemi-Baker Coop	1999		\$6,309,143	\$6,309,143	587	173	77.2%
Pittsfield	1999		\$5,625,000	\$5,625,000	209	94	69.0%
Plainfield	2000		\$1,044,860	\$1,044,860	290	108	72.9%
Raymond	2000	■	\$12,200,000		939	798	54.1%
Raymond	2001	■	\$16,014,135		807	990	44.9%
Raymond	2001	■	\$884,199		To Study Committee		

School District	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Rumney	1999	■	\$862,000	\$862,000	275	66	80.6%
Salem	1999	■	\$2,195,755		1,682	1,836	47.8%
Salem	2001	■	\$1,830,000		1,140	1,189	48.9%
Salem	2001	■	\$2,630,000		To Study Committee		
Souhegan Coop	2001	■	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000	2,290	1,496	60.5%
South Hampton	1999		\$2,480,000		111	107	50.9%
South Hampton	1999		\$1,650,000		126	72	63.6%
South Hampton	2000		\$1,878,888	\$1,878,888	255	107	70.4%
Tamworth	2000		\$8,000,000		Tabled		
Timberlane Regional	1999	■	\$32,586,690	\$32,586,690	4,635	1,717	73.0%
Washington	2000		\$2,200,000		91	71	56.2%
Washington	2001		\$1,262,722	\$1,262,722	113	17	86.9%
White Mountains Reg.	2000	■	\$2,100,000	\$2,100,000	242	121	66.7%
Wilton-Lyndeboro Coop	1999		\$6,476,775	\$6,476,775	343	37	90.3%
Winchester	1999	■	\$5,000,000		495	448	52.5%
Winchester	2000	■	\$5,500,000	\$5,500,000	538	319	62.8%
Windham	1999	■	\$5,992,000	\$5,992,000	1,666	638	72.3%
Winnacunnett Coop	2000	■	\$17,900,000		2,499	4,299	36.8%
Winnisquam	2001		\$17,000,000	\$17,000,000	272	125	68.5%

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