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Bonds and Ballots: Four Years of Experience with 'SB2' in New Hampshire

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Abstract

The “official ballot law,” or “SB2” as it is commonly known, has greatly increased the number of people voting on bond articles in municipalities and school districts in New Hampshire and, in general, increased the number of people voting “no.” In 1998 and 1999, official-ballot jurisdictions rejected a much larger percentage of bond proposals than did their traditional-meeting counterparts. The New Hampshire Legislature substantially reduced that difference when it passed legislation, effective in late 1999, reducing the size of the supermajority needed to pass a bond article in official-ballot jurisdictions from two-thirds to three-fifths.

Acknowledgment

The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies thanks the Department of Revenue Administration for its generosity in making the municipal and school-district files available to the Center. The authors are especially indebted to Barbara Robinson and her staff for their tolerance of our intrusion on their busy schedule.

1. The 60-Percent Majority

While most Americans were awaiting the outcome of the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on Florida’s count of ballots for the presidency in December 2000, residents in a handful of New Hampshire towns were awaiting a decision by the state’s Supreme Court on a curiously related issue. In Exeter, Durham, Peterborough, Winchester, and Sunapee, among others, eight school-construction projects and three municipal projects were on hold because earlier in the year, the jurisdictions had approved bond articles in accordance with a new state law whose constitutionality was being challenged.¹ In New Hampshire, as in Florida, the underlying issue was how jurisdictions in America make public decisions: who votes, how, and when—and what it takes to win.

On January 19, 2001, the New Hampshire Supreme Court ruled that the projects could go forward, that the state’s constitution did not preclude the legislature’s decision to let one class of jurisdictions pass bond articles with a 60-percent majority while all others require a 66.67-percent majority.²

The legislature’s action, which the court recently affirmed, resulted in more communities passing more bonds than would have happened otherwise. The data presented in this report demonstrate that the structure of governance—the rules authorized by the legislature and adopted by local jurisdictions—affects not only *where* and *when* people vote but *who* votes, *how* their votes count, and ultimately, *what* the law recognizes as the democratically expressed will of the community.

This paper focuses on New Hampshire’s recent experience with school and municipal bond articles and how the *way* districts and towns vote on them influences the outcome. The paper analyzes all of the bond articles that have gone to voters since 1998, updating a report the Center published in February 2000³, 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.

In **official ballot-meeting jurisdictions**, residents vote on articles, including bond articles, in the privacy of a voting booth at any convenient time on election day, just as they vote on candidates in an election. In **traditional open-meeting jurisdictions**, residents use secret ballots—often in

¹ School districts with bond issues held up by the court challenge were: John Stark, Exeter Regional, Oyster River (two bond issues), Winchester, and Conval (three bond issues). Municipalities with bond issues on hold were: Sunapee, Hampton, and Milford.

² New Hampshire Supreme Court, *Richard McGraw v. Exeter Region Cooperative School District & a.* January 19, 2001. The ruling upheld the provisions of 1999 amendments to RSA 33:8, which had reduced the size of the majority needed to pass bond articles from 2/3 to 3/5 in official-ballot jurisdictions.

³ 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).

the form of pre-printed “yes” and “no” cards—to vote on bond articles, but only if they are in attendance at the town or district meeting during the hour after the question is called for a vote. The paper ballots in traditional-meeting jurisdictions provide privacy to voters and ensure a more accurate count of the “yeas and nays” than could be achieved with a voice vote or show of hands.

State law (RSA 33:8) had required that bond articles could be legally adopted only when at least two-thirds (approximately 66.67 percent) of those voting cast ballots in favor of the bond article. In 1999, the legislature passed HB 487, amending the law so that in jurisdictions using the official-ballot process, bond articles would be considered adopted if they received a three-fifths majority (60 percent) of the votes cast rather than the two-thirds majority required in jurisdictions holding traditional open meetings. That change became effective on August 17, 1999, and began to have an impact on votes taken at special school district meetings held in the fall of 1999. A voter in the Exeter Region Cooperative School District tried to overturn the district’s approval in early 2000 of a bond article to renovate Exeter High School because the bond passed with only a 60.8-percent majority. The court ultimately decided that having two different standards for passage of a bond article is constitutional in New Hampshire because everyone within each jurisdiction is treated the same, even if people in neighboring jurisdictions are treated differently. For almost a year, however, towns and school districts that had passed bond articles with a majority between three-fifths (60 percent) and two-thirds (66.67 percent) had had to wait for the court’s permission before implementing the public’s will. The issue is now in federal court and the towns and school districts are still waiting.

A. Findings

- In 1998 and 1999, jurisdictions using the “official ballot” process were much more likely to reject bond articles than were jurisdictions using traditional town meetings.
- In 2000, much of that difference disappeared, but only because the legislature had lowered the size of the majority required for passing bond articles in official-ballot jurisdictions.
- Larger proportions of registered voters voted on bond articles in official-ballot jurisdictions than in traditional-meeting jurisdictions. That was true in both school districts and municipalities, and in small, medium, and large jurisdictions.
- Towns with low equalized tax rates were no more likely to approve (or reject) a bond article than were towns with high equalized tax rates. A jurisdiction’s relative property wealth was not a good predictor of its willingness to raise taxes to finance a capital project.
- The average bond-expenditure per capita that towns approved in 2000 was substantially higher than in either 1998 or 1999, particularly among official-ballot towns. Among school districts, the average bond-expenditure per capita rose substantially in official-ballot districts but fell slightly in 2000 in traditional-meeting districts.
- In 1999 and 2000, voters approved bonded municipal projects totaling \$24 million and \$50 million respectively and school projects totaling \$132 million and \$149 million respectively. In 2000, voters in school districts rejected almost \$195 million in proposed bonded projects.
- The propensity of a town or school district to adopt the official-ballot process grows with the population of the jurisdiction. Conversely, the only jurisdictions to have repealed the official-ballot were two very small towns.

- The rate of conversion to the official-ballot process has slowed for both towns and school districts.
- Although the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) maintains records of appropriations and expenditures of towns and school districts, including warrants, meeting minutes, and ballot results, neither the department nor the Secretary of State's Office has assembled or analyzed that data in ways that would shed light on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches to governance available to jurisdictions in the state.

The tallies of votes and spending available from town records and DRA do not answer some of the more subtle and essential questions about how governance in New Hampshire is changing or ought to change. For example, the data in this report offer little insight into how voters learn about, debate, and modify bond articles; what happens at informational meetings and deliberative sessions in official-ballot jurisdictions; or how officials and voters are adapting their expectations and tactics in light of their experience with either official ballots or traditional meetings.

The legislature continues to take an active interest in fine-tuning the rules of local government. SB 365, introduced in 2000, would have set three-fifths as the majority required for passage of bond articles at *all* cities, towns, school, and village districts. On January 19, 2001, the New Hampshire Supreme Court not only ruled that the three-fifths majority was constitutional for official-ballot jurisdictions, but also issued an opinion, in response to a question posed by the Senate, that SB 365 would be constitutional, as well. SB 29, proposed early in the current session, would require official-ballot jurisdictions to present multiple versions of any amended articles on their ballot, making it more difficult for any version to win a majority.

B. Recommendations

1. The legislature should require all jurisdictions to report on the number of registered voters present at deliberative meetings and traditional annual meetings, in addition to the current requirement that jurisdictions report vote tallies for all secret ballots.
2. The legislature should designate and fund an existing institution within state government to compile data from towns and school districts so that the legislature will have access to reliable information about the operations of local government. For example, the institution should gather and analyze data about the differences in voter participation and decisions in official-ballot jurisdictions and traditional-meeting jurisdictions.
3. The Secretary of State's Office should work with towns and school districts to identify, evaluate, and publicize successful approaches for engaging residents in decisionmaking.

C. Research Methods and Data Sources

State law requires every town and school district to file with 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 years 1999 and 2000 to determine whether it had included one or more articles to authorize borrowing. We found 127 municipal articles and 104 school articles proposing a bond issue. 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

To determine each town or school district's per-capita spending rates, the Center used the N.H. Office of State Planning's population estimates for the years 1997 through 1999.⁶ To determine the percentage of registered voters casting ballots on the bond articles, the Center used the February 2000 count of registered voters compiled by the N.H. Secretary of State's Office.

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

Readers interested in working with the Center's data set should contact the Center for a free copy of the Excel file, which is available via e-mail or on a mailed diskette or CD ROM.

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. In the Center's previous publication on SB2, 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. Four Years of Experience with ‘Official Ballots’

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

Percentage of State Population⁹ by Form of Governance: 2000			
	No Meeting	Traditional Meeting	Official Ballot
Municipalities			
Count of Municipalities	15	171	48
Percent of State Population	37%	33%	30%
School Districts			
Count of Districts	10	107	59
Percent of State Population	27%	25%	48%

Roughly a third of New Hampshire’s population lives in towns that still use traditional open meetings (see 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 a third of the state’s population lives in those

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.

“no-meeting” jurisdictions. The remaining third of the population lives in towns that have adopted the official-ballot process.¹⁰

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 last year. 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.¹¹ 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. The only jurisdictions to have repealed the official-ballot and returned to traditional meetings were the towns of Orange and Dorchester in 1999.

Three school districts voted in 2000 to adopt the official ballot so this year 48 towns and 62 school districts are operating under the official- ballot process. The majority of those jurisdictions 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.)

¹⁰ One school district and three towns have adopted rules in a statute referred to as HB 141, as opposed to those codified as SB2. The differences between those rules are small. This paper lumps them all together in its references to official-ballot towns and districts. Hanover is part of a unique interstate school district, the Dresden School District with Norwich, Vermont; it is governed by a unique charter which had to be approved by Congress. Because of its unique status, Dresden is not included in the calculations that follow.

¹¹ RSA 40:14 prescribes the method of adopting the official-ballot form of meeting.

Figure 1M

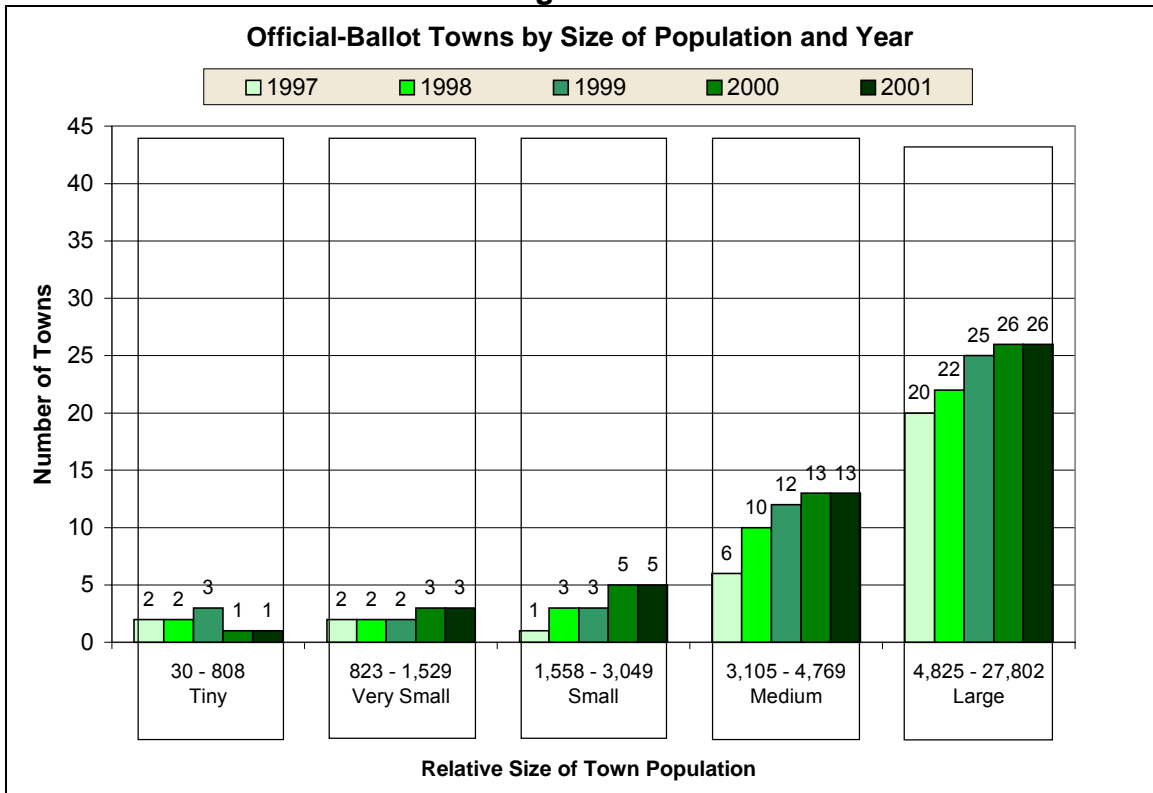
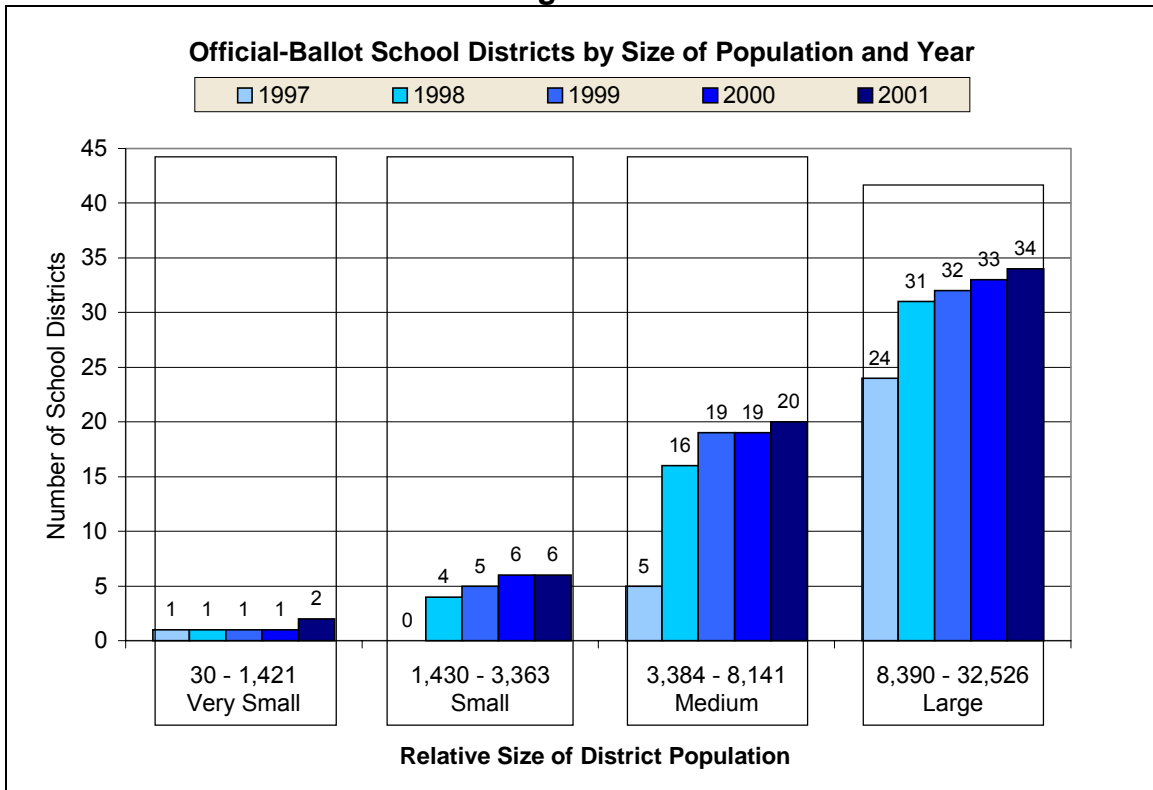


Figure 1S



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.¹²

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. 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 and the gap would have persisted.

Among school districts, the impact of the 60-percent majority is even more pronounced, as illustrated in Figure 2S: because of the change, official-ballot districts approved 47 percent of the bond articles on their warrants, while traditional-meeting districts approved just 41 percent. For the first time, official-ballot jurisdictions 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.

¹² In Vermont, school and municipal bond articles require only a simple majority (50 percent) to pass. Bond articles in the Dresden School District (which includes Hanover, New Hampshire) are covered by that statute.

Figure 2M

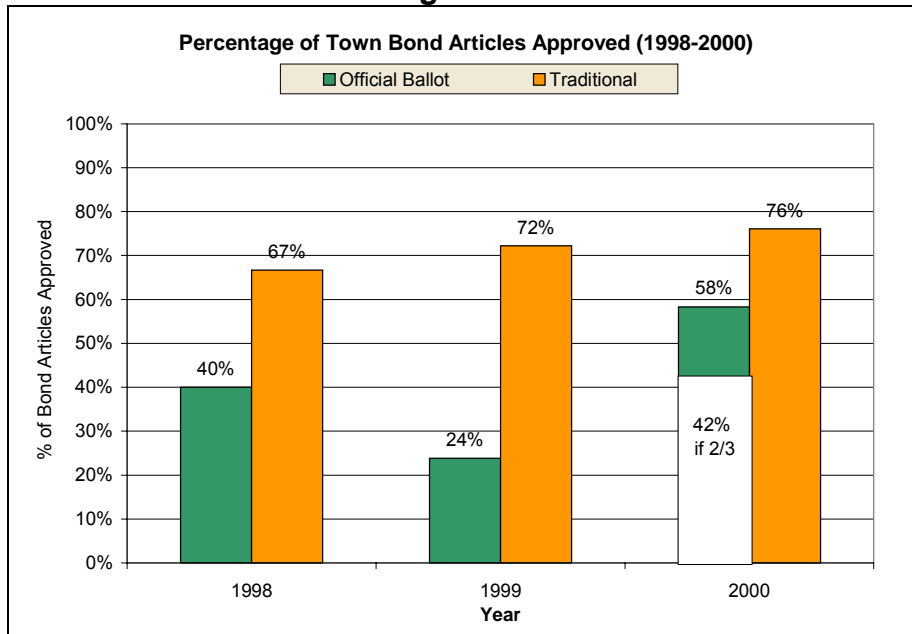


Figure 2S

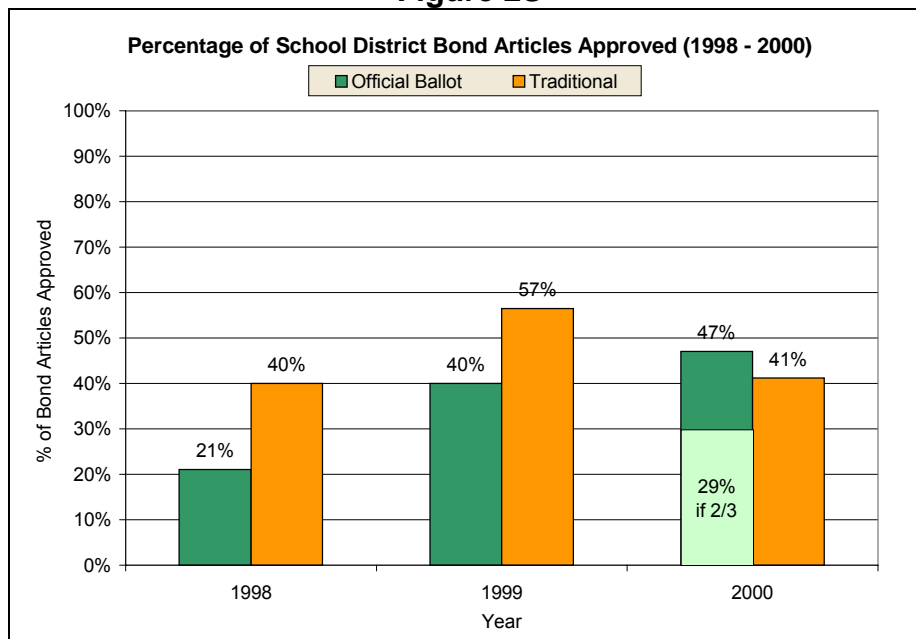


Table 2 helps answer a number of “what-if” questions about the impact of changing the standard for a winning majority on bond articles. The table shows the number of bond articles on warrants in 1999 and 2000 and how many of them received two-thirds majorities, 60-percent majorities, or less than 60 percent. Figures 3M and 3S add those two years together and graph the distribution of votes to show the relative size of the group receiving between three-fifths and two-thirds of the votes cast. Although that group is relatively small, it did account for the greater parity achieved in 2000 between official-ballot and traditional-meeting jurisdictions. With a

two-thirds majority, only 34 percent of the bond articles in official ballot jurisdictions would have passed. The graphs also illustrate the fact that the vast majority of bond articles 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. They also show that voters in official-ballot jurisdictions tend to vote “no” on bond issues more often than those who attend traditional town and district meetings.

Table 2

Voting Patterns for Municipal Bond Articles (1999 & 2000)				
	1999		2000	
	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional
Number of Bond Articles Proposed	21	36	24	46
2/3 or more voting yes	5	26	10	35
3/5 to 2/3 voting yes	6	3	4	3
1/2 to 3/5	5	5	7	4
Fewer than 1/2	4	1	3	3
Other Action*	1	1	-	1
% with 2/3 or more	24%	72%	42%	76%
% with 3/5 or more	52%	81%	58%	83%
Voting Patterns for School District Bond Articles (1999 & 2000)				
	1999		2000	
	Official Ballot	Traditional	Official Ballot	Traditional
Number of Bond Articles Proposed	30	23	34	17
2/3 or more voting yes	12	13	10	7
3/5 to 2/3 voting yes	7	3	6	2
1/2 to 3/5	6	2	6	2
Fewer than 1/2	5	5	10	4
Other Action*	-	-	2	2
% with 2/3 or more	40%	57%	29%	41%
% with 3/5 or more	63%	70%	47%	53%
* Amended to "0"; tabled; passed over				

Table 3 shows that in each of the three years, between 37 percent and 42 percent of the official-ballot jurisdictions had bond articles on their warrants, a range almost twice as high as for traditional-meeting jurisdictions. In 2000, for example, 38 percent of the official ballot towns had bond articles on the warrant, compared with only 22 percent of the traditional-meeting towns. For school districts in 2000, the difference was even greater: 42 percent compared with 15 percent. There are two plausible explanations for those differences: official-ballot jurisdictions tend to be growing faster than traditional-meeting jurisdictions and thus may require more capital projects; and the lower approval rates for bond articles in 1998 and 1999 in official-ballot jurisdictions may have created a backlog of projects that town and district boards have put before voters several times.

Figure 3M

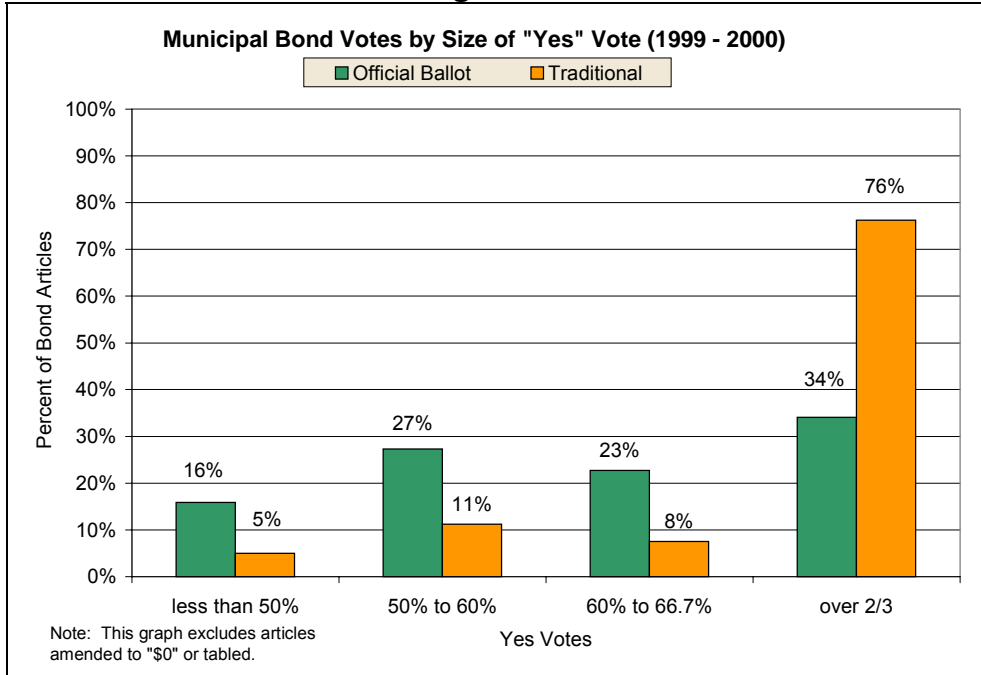


Figure 3S

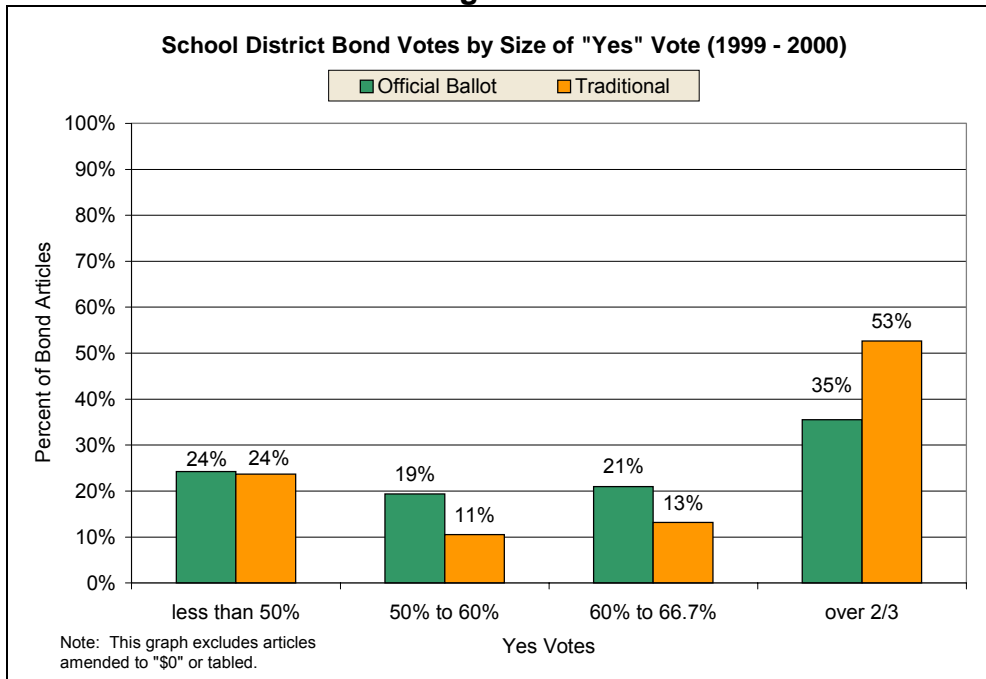


Table 3

Number of Bond Articles Proposed and Approved in Municipalities										
		1998			1999			2000		
		Official Ballot	Traditional	Total	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total
Towns	Count	39	181	220	45	175	220	48	172	220
	with Bond Articles	15	47	62	17	31	48	18	38	56
	% with Bond Articles	38%	26%	28%	38%	18%	22%	38%	22%	25%
Articles	Proposed	15	47	62	21	36	57	24	46	70
	Approved	6	33	39	5	26	31	14	34	48
	% Approved	40%	70%	63%	24%	72%	54%	58%	74%	69%
Number of Bond Articles Proposed and Approved in School Districts										
		1998			1999			2000		
		Official Ballot	Traditional	Total	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total
Districts	Count	52	114	166	57	110	167	59	108	167
	with Bond Articles	19	15	34	22	21	43	25	16	41
	% with Bond Articles	37%	13%	20%	39%	19%	26%	42%	15%	25%
Articles	Proposed	19	15	34	30	23	53	34	17	51
	Approved	4	6	10	12	13	25	16	7	23
	% Approved	21%	40%	29%	40%	57%	47%	47%	41%	45%

C. Cost and Tax Rates Appear Not to Matter

New Hampshire towns' and school districts' decisions on bond articles have shown very little relationship to either the cost of the bond (in per-capita terms) or the jurisdictions' tax rate. Official-ballot and traditional meeting jurisdictions show no consistent difference in those regards.

Table 4 and Figures 4M and 4S aggregate the financial details of the bond votes. The population figures are the sum of the residents¹³ in all the jurisdictions with bond articles on their warrants and the "proposed cost" line sums the dollar values of the bond articles as they appeared on the jurisdictions' warrants. The next line shows the sum of the bond articles ultimately approved by voters. The per-capita figures divide the total proposed and approved costs by the total population in those jurisdictions.

¹³ The population figures here exclude those living in group quarters. See note 6. In a comparable analysis in the 2000 report, the Center included the population of all of the jurisdictions, not just those with bond articles.

Figure 4M

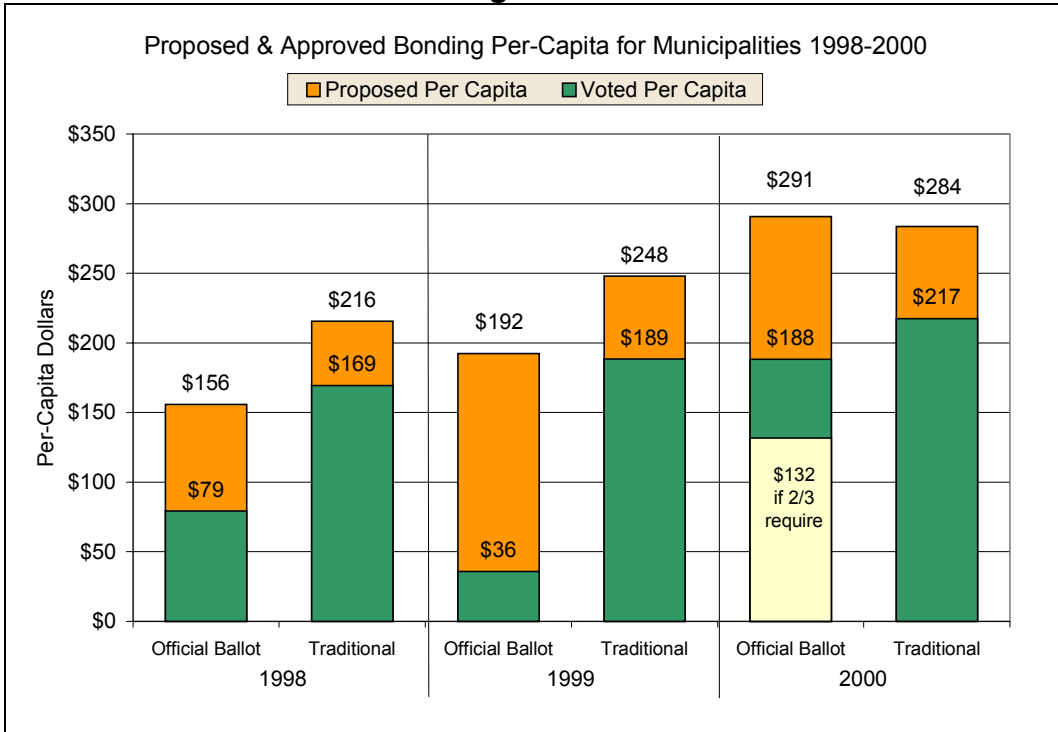


Figure 4S

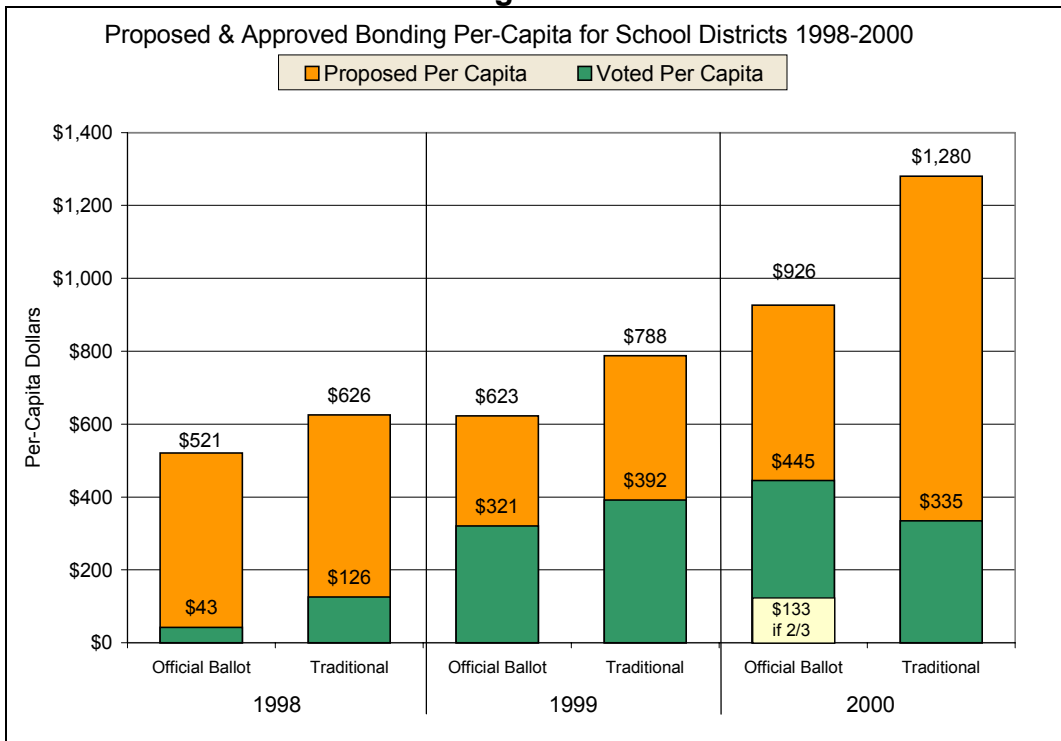


Table 4

Bond Articles in Municipalities									
	1998			1999			2000		
	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total
Towns with Bond Articles	15	48	63	17	31	48	18	38	56
# of Bond Articles	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	21	36	57	24	46	70
Population	158,693	163,992	322,685	153,502	95,977	249,479	135,661	112,583	248,244
Proposed \$	\$24,730,164	\$35,375,453	\$60,105,617	\$29,505,780	\$23,797,522	\$53,303,302	\$39,461,341	\$31,947,049	\$71,408,390
Approved \$	\$12,591,164	\$27,762,910	\$40,354,074	\$5,496,425	\$18,093,399	\$23,589,824	\$25,520,371	\$24,476,491	\$49,996,862
% of \$ approved	51%	78%	67%	19%	76%	44%	65%	77%	70%
Proposed/Capita	\$155.84	\$215.71	\$186.27	\$192.22	\$247.95	\$213.66	\$290.88	\$283.76	\$287.65
Approved/Capita	\$79.34	\$169.29	\$125.06	\$35.81	\$188.52	\$94.56	\$188.12	\$217.41	\$201.40
Rejected/Capita	\$(76.49)	\$(46.42)	\$(61.21)	\$(156.41)	\$(59.43)	\$(119.10)	\$(102.76)	\$(66.36)	\$(86.25)
Bond Articles in School Districts									
	1998			1999			2000		
	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total
Districts with Bond Articles	19	15	34	22	21	43	25	16	41
# of Bond Articles	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	30	23	53	33	18	51
Population	260,862	77,103	337,965	285,737	101,994	387,731	290,106	58,403	348,509
Proposed \$	\$135,821,381	\$48,736,801	\$184,558,182	\$177,902,799	\$80,371,709	\$258,274,508	\$268,776,916	\$74,760,530	\$343,537,446
Approved \$	\$11,115,681	\$9,703,743	\$20,819,424	\$91,626,690	\$39,959,189	\$131,585,879	\$129,128,755	\$19,538,112	\$148,666,867
% of \$ approved	8%	20%	11%	52%	50%	51%	48%	26%	43%
Proposed/Capita	\$520.66	\$625.74	\$544.64	\$622.61	\$788.00	\$666.12	\$926.48	\$1,280.08	\$985.73
Approved/Capita	\$42.61	\$125.85	\$61.60	\$320.67	\$391.78	\$339.37	\$445.11	\$334.54	\$426.58
Rejected/Capita	\$(478.05)	\$(499.89)	\$(483.03)	\$(301.94)	\$(396.22)	\$(326.74)	\$(481.37)	\$(945.54)	\$(559.16)

Figures 4M and 4S graph the contents of Table 4. Three features stand out from the graph of municipal bond values. First, there was relatively little change over the three years for traditional meeting towns, both in terms of the total cost per capita of the proposed bonds and the final cost per capita of the approved bonds. Second, in contrast, the corresponding figures for official-ballot towns fluctuate a great deal: most dramatically, rising from the approved cost of \$36 per capita in 1999 to \$188 per capita in 2000. The third outstanding feature of the graph is that in 2000, for the first time, bonding per capita in official-ballot towns approached the same level as in traditional meeting-towns because of the change to the 60-percent majority. Had the official ballot towns still needed 66.67-percent majorities to pass their bonds, the per-capita bonding in official ballot towns would have been 30 percent less than it was and 39 percent less than in traditional meeting towns.

The graph of the school district bond values tells a very different story.

First the magnitude of proposed borrowing for schools is nearly four times higher than it is for towns. Figure 4M shows that in 1998 official-ballot towns sought to spend \$156 per capita, the lowest of the six groups, while in 2000 they proposed spending \$291, the highest of the six groups. In contrast, official-ballot districts proposed spending \$521 per capita in 1998, and traditional-meeting districts proposed spending \$1,280 per capita in 2000. Second, voters approved a much higher percentage of the proposed amount for towns than for school districts, except in 1999 when voters in official-ballot towns approved only 19 percent of the amount proposed while in official-ballot districts, voters approved 52 percent of the proposed cost.

The traditional-meeting districts saw the cost per capita of bond proposals escalate steadily through the three years, though the approved cost per capita rose in 1999 and then fell back in 2000. Among official-ballot districts, the trend in approved costs was strictly upward. As with the municipal bond issues, the change to the 60-percent majority made a dramatic difference in the value of the bonds passed. In 1998 and 1999, school districts with traditional meetings approved higher per-capita spending on bonds than their official-ballot counterparts. That difference disappeared in 2000 with the amended 60-percent majority. For the first time, voters in official-ballot districts approved more bonded spending per capita than did those in traditional districts.

To determine if voters in towns with higher tax rates would be more or less likely than voters in towns with lower tax rates to approve bond articles, the Center sorted the towns into two equal groups—half with equalized property tax rates below \$20.72 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation, and half with tax rates above that amount. In order to make the analysis as meaningful as possible, the sample includes all *municipal* bond votes since 1997 for which we have information: a total of 221 cases.¹⁴ The results of that analysis are presented in Table 5.

The table reiterates one of the themes of this report: over the years, there has been a 28 percentage-point difference between approval rates in official-ballot and traditional meeting towns. In contrast, there is only a 6 percentage-point difference between the high- and low-tax-rate towns. One might assume that towns with lower tax rates would be more likely to

¹⁴ As noted earlier in this paper, some 1997 bond votes may not be included in the Center's database.

approve borrowing, but the reverse is marginally true. In statistical terms, the evidence of a relationship between bond-article approval rates and underlying tax rates is very weak.

Table 5

Percentage of Bond Articles Approved for Towns by Meeting Type and Equalized Tax Rate (1997 - 2000)			
Equalized Rate	Official Ballot	Traditional	Total
High	52%	72%	67%
Low	38%	73%	61%
Total	45%	73%	64%

One might expect lower-cost bonds to receive higher levels of voter support than higher-cost bonds, but that was not the case over the last two years. Figures 5M and 5S are “scatter graphs” that shows a surprising amount of scatter. Figure 5M contains a point for each municipal bond article considered in 1999 and 2000; 5S does the same for school bond articles. Each point’s position on the graphs is determined by the per-capita cost of the proposed article and the percentage of the vote in favor of the article. If voters were shying away from bond proposals with higher per-capita costs, there would be more points in the lower right quadrant and fewer in the middle and upper right.

Figure 5M

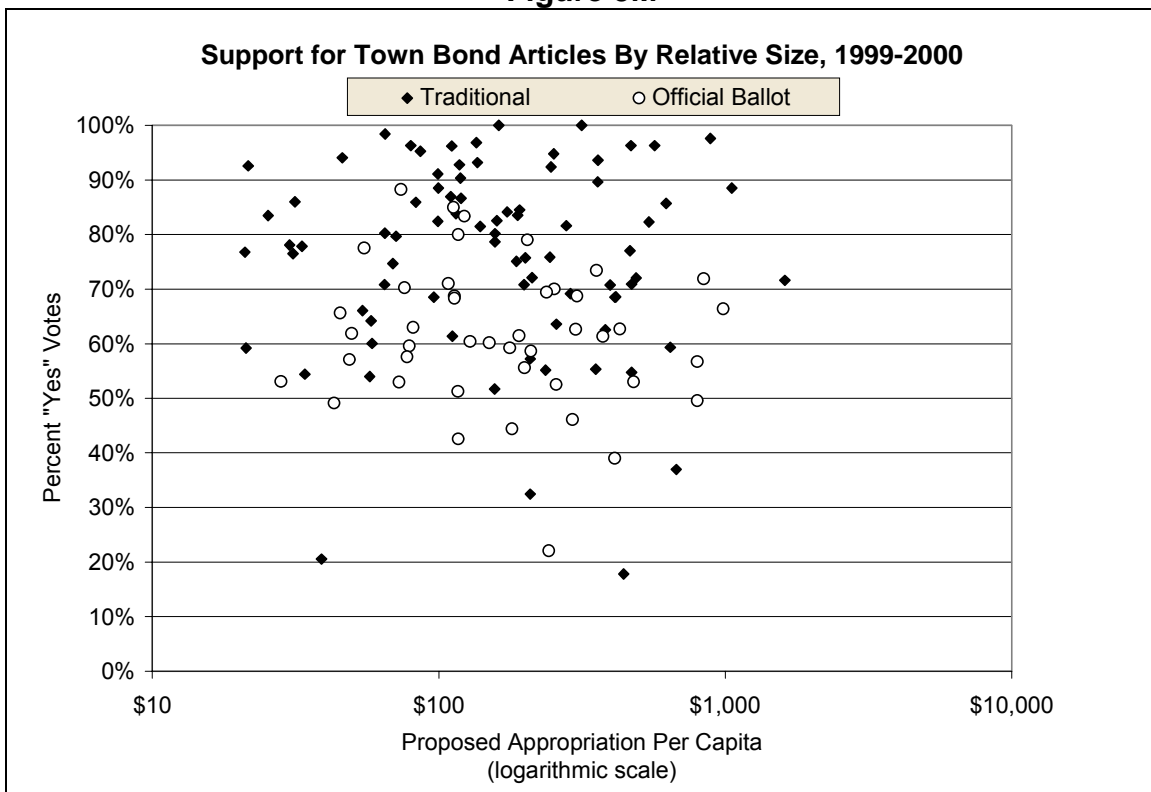
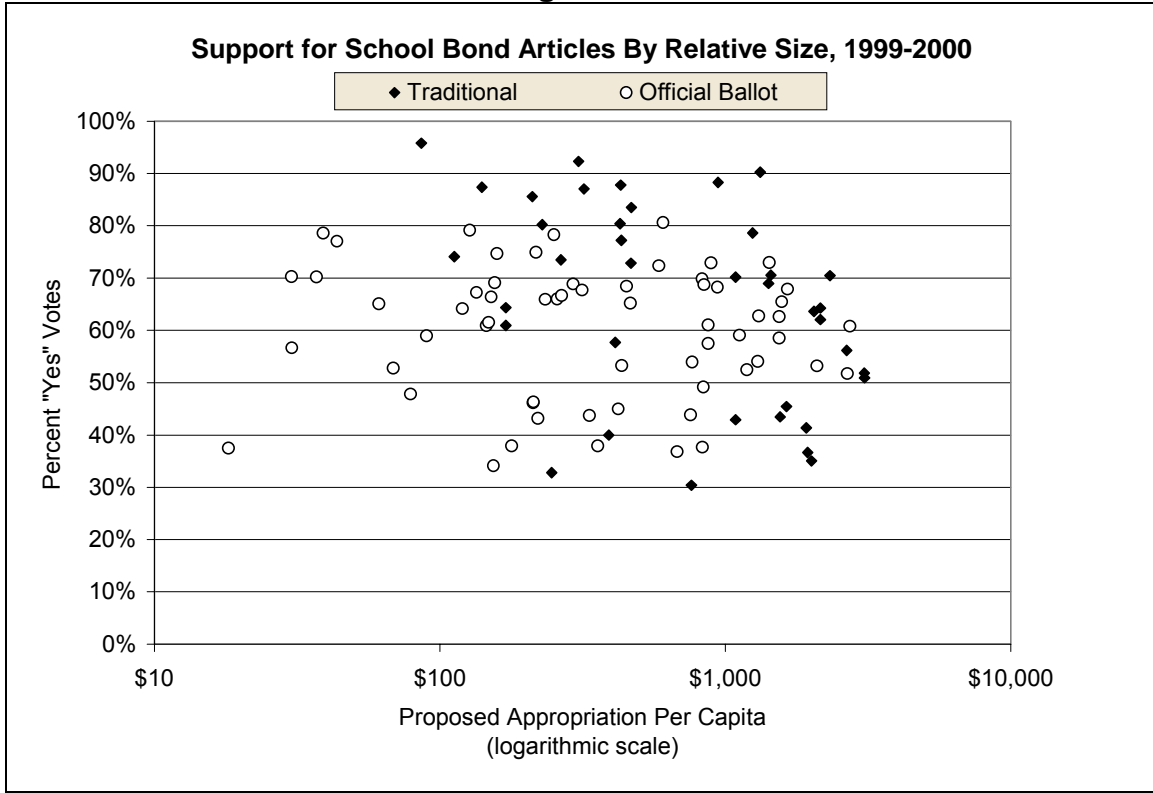


Figure 5S



School boards, boards of selectmen, and other petitioners clearly have a difficult time persuading voters to approve the bond articles they propose, whether in official-ballot or traditional-meeting jurisdictions. The data analyzed here suggest, however, that their primary challenge is to persuade voters that the project is needed; after that, the actual cost per capita or its impact on property taxes may be of secondary importance or seem to be beyond the voters' control. Jurisdictions seem to be acting like the homeowner who puts off patching the roof or replacing the furnace for as long as possible, then, when it finally breaks down, spends what is necessary to fix the problem.

D. Participation Rates and Political Strategies

Official-ballot jurisdictions see a substantially larger percentage of their registered voters casting ballots on bond articles than do traditional-meeting jurisdictions of comparable sizes. Figures 6M and 6S show that in 1999 and 2000 this relationship was true in towns and school districts of all sizes. Generally, participation rates are higher in smaller jurisdictions than in larger ones. The Center's earlier report on the official ballot found this relationship to be true for deliberative sessions as well.¹⁵

¹⁵ See pages 9-12.

Figure 6M

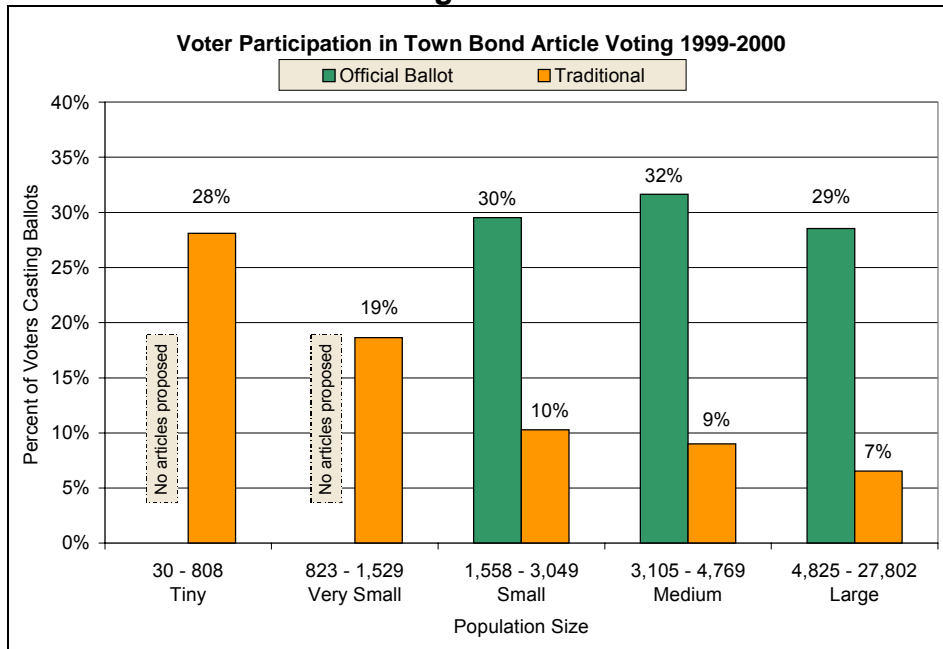
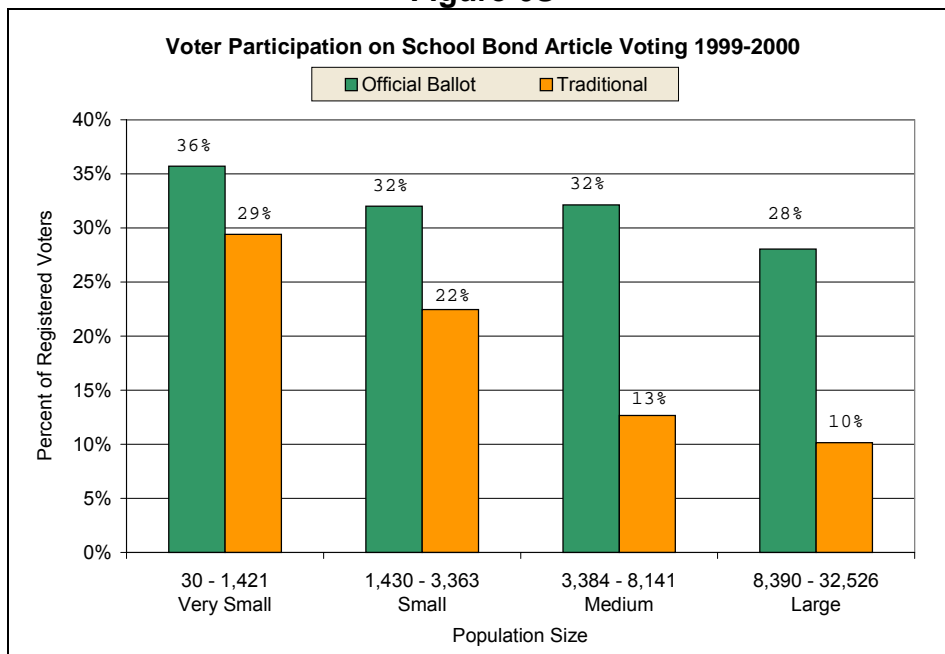


Figure 6S



On the average, the differences in the voter participation rates between official-ballot and traditional-meeting jurisdictions are significant, particularly in the larger jurisdictions. Among large school districts with bond articles in 2000, 30 percent of Merrimack’s 17,715 voters—5,301 people—cast ballots. Merrimack is an official-ballot district and with a 30 percent turnout, it was slightly above the average participation rate of the large official-ballot districts for 1999 and 2000. If 3,530 fewer people had voted on that bond article, Merrimack would have been at the average participation rate for large districts with traditional meetings:

10 percent. The contrast between official-ballot and traditional districts is less extreme among very small school districts. Rumney is one of only two very small school districts in the state that use the official ballot. It overwhelmingly approved a bond article in 1999 when 36 percent of its 955 voters went to the polls. If just 64 of them had stayed home that day, Rumney would have voted at the average rate of the very small districts with traditional meetings: 29 percent.

There is no guarantee that a larger percentage of voters will turn out in official-ballot jurisdictions, of course. Two large official-ballot districts had lower turnouts than several of their counterparts with traditional meetings: the Lebanon School District in 1999 with just 7 percent, and Derry Cooperative in 1999 with 12 percent. One traditional-meeting district had a turnout comparable to most of the official-ballot districts: Hooksett with 28 percent in 1999. Among large municipalities, there were no such surprises. No traditional-meeting jurisdiction saw *more* than 12 percent of its voters turn out for a bond article in 1999 or 2000; and no official-ballot jurisdiction saw *less* than 12 percent cast ballots.

Voter participation rates varied significantly among the individual jurisdictions with bond articles in 1999 and 2000. Among the large school districts, for example, participation rates on bond articles ranged from a high of 55 percent (Exeter Regional Cooperative, an official-ballot district, in 2000) to a low of just 2 percent (Hollis-Brookline Cooperative, a traditional-meeting district, in 1999). When school districts of all sizes are considered, the highest turnout on a bond vote in 2000 was in a (very small) traditional-meeting district: South Hampton, with 61 percent voting.

Participation may also change dramatically from year to year in a single jurisdiction, depending on the level of interest in particular bond articles or other items on the warrant. Although South Hampton had 61 percent of its registered voters engaged in 2000, in 1999, only 37 percent of the district's voters cast ballots on a bond article. The Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative District was one of two districts that switched to the official ballot between 1999 and 2000. (Nottingham was the other district but it had no bond articles in either year.) In 1999, 13 percent of the district's voters voted on a \$19.5 million bond article; 35 percent of them voted in favor of the bond. In 2000, the district used the official-ballot process for the first time. Two articles were proposed, one of which was the \$19.5 million article from the year before. This time, 28 percent of the district's voters participated, and 53 percent of them voted in favor. The participation rate more than doubled and there was an 18-point gain in the percentage of voters voting in favor of the article. Even more people—29 percent of the registered voters—voted for the second article on the ballot in 2000, demonstrating that some voters chose not to vote on the \$19.5 million article. (The second \$1.7 million article received only a 38 percent favorable vote.)

Comparing traditional-meeting and official-ballot jurisdictions on the basis of the percentage of voters casting ballots tells only part of the story. What happens in jurisdictions *before* the final votes are cast is significant as well.

The Center's earlier study of the official ballot showed that traditional-meeting jurisdictions saw much higher rates of voter attendance at their annual school-district and town meetings

than did official-ballot jurisdictions. Annual meetings have two parts: a “deliberative session” and ballot voting. Those parts may occur on the same day, or they may be separated by several weeks as they are in official-ballot towns. Town and school officials report that attendance at deliberative sessions in official-ballot jurisdictions is very low as a percentage of registered voters; most voters believe that they have no particular stake in attending because nothing can happen at those sessions.¹⁶ In fact, however, those who do attend the deliberative sessions may, by simple majority, amend—and effectively kill—warrant articles.

The statute establishing the official-ballot process provides opponents of bond articles unusually strong leverage over decision-making, as long as few voters turn out for deliberative sessions. At a deliberative session with 50 voters present, just 26 of them could effectively kill a bond article by voting to amend its value to zero. Proponents of more generous projects can exploit the rules as well: a small but organized faction could vote to *add* money to the value of a bond article. One could even imagine a scenario at a deliberative session where a minority of voters attending would conclude that their best strategy for defeating a bond article would be to join with bond supporters in adding enough to the proposal’s cost to make its final adoption at the polls less likely. The actions taken at deliberative sessions determine the wording on the final ballots that voters use in official-ballot towns. If the majority at a deliberative session fixes the amount to be raised and appropriated by a bond article at a lesser amount or even zero, that will be the only amount that the jurisdiction’s voters will be able to vote for on the official ballot. Supporters of bond articles have no leverage for assuring adoption comparable to the leverage opponents have for assuring defeat.

In two jurisdictions in 1999 and 2000, participants at deliberative sessions in official-ballot jurisdictions amended bond articles to zero: in the towns of Wakefield in 1999, and in the Hudson school district in 2000. In Hudson, the school board had proposed a \$19.6 million bond to build one new school and renovate another. Petitioners had put two other bond articles on the ballot, dividing the board’s proposal into two separate projects. At the deliberative session, proponents of the board’s proposal accused those petitioners of deliberately trying to fragment the vote so that nothing would pass. In support of the board’s proposal, those attending the deliberative session amended the two petition articles to zero, so that voters would have only one clear alternative. Hudson voters ultimately approved the combined bond.

Seabrook’s town charter predated its adoption of the official-ballot law and provides a safeguard against undue influence by a small faction of voters at the town’s deliberative sessions. The charter requires that no binding votes affecting the ballot can be taken unless at least 5 percent of the town’s registered voters (or 125 people, whichever is fewer) are present.

¹⁶ The Center does not have data on attendance at deliberative sessions in 1999 and 2000. The Center’s 2000 report, however, included attendance figures reported by towns and school districts for their annual meetings in 1998 (and partial data for 1997). In 1998, 2.3 percent of the registered voters in official-ballot towns attended the annual meeting, compared to 9.2 percent for traditional-meeting towns. Among school districts in 1998, 2.0 percent of the registered voters in official-ballot districts attended the annual meeting, compared with 6.1 percent in traditional-meeting districts.

Absent a quorum, the board of selectmen's proposed articles must go directly to voters on the official ballot without any amendments.

In traditional-meeting towns and school districts majorities occasionally vote to table or pass over bond articles. In 1999, for example, voters at the town meeting in Lyndeborough tabled a bond article and in 2000, majorities at the school district meetings in Croydon and Tamworth voted to pass over or table bond articles. A simple majority at the 2000 town meeting in Strafford amended a proposed bond article by making it a single-year appropriation rather than a long-term obligation. The appropriation required only a simple majority to pass, which it did.¹⁷

When the legislature changed the law enabling official-ballot communities to pass bond articles with 60-percent majorities, it strengthened the political power of those supporting bond articles. Legislation has been introduced in the Senate which would probably tip the balance back. SB 29, as noted above, would change the rules in official-ballot jurisdictions by requiring warrant articles amended at the deliberative session to appear on the final ballot with the following: the original wording prior to amendment, the wording with the amendment, an option for neither, and the clear notation: "vote for one choice only." The legislation would give voters more choices on the ballot and potentially split the vote in favor of a bond into smaller factions. The legislation would make it harder for any one of the choices to attract a simple majority, let alone the 60-percent majority required to pass a bond article. Currently the bill is silent on the size of the majority or plurality that would be needed to pass one of these amended articles.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

With just four years of experience with the official ballot, and only one year's experience with the 60-percent majority, it is too early to predict how voters in jurisdictions of different sizes will behave under their respective rules of governance. It seems likely, however, that with more experience, voters' behavior will change. Over time, American democracy has shown itself to be wonderfully dynamic, capable of solving problems and facilitating the ability of communities to express their will and achieve their collective purpose.

What remains to be seen is how well larger communities relying on direct voter participation (whether at traditional open meetings or, in official-ballot jurisdictions, at the ballot box) can function without some forum for a sustained dialogue among voters. When solving a problem requires many individuals' affirmative vote, those people will need an opportunity to come to a shared understanding of the problem and consensus on a pragmatic solution. That work does not have to happen at a town meeting or a formal public hearing, but it does need to happen. Perhaps the internet, e-mail, local-access television, and other new information technologies will help communities sort through their options and agree on solutions; perhaps community leaders will find new ways to build coalitions and mobilize resources. And perhaps those communities that outgrow the traditional-meeting process will find other ways

¹⁷ The tables and graphs in this report have not included this Strafford appropriation among the proposed or approved bond articles.

to make democracy work for them: through the adoption of town councils (as Derry has), city councils, some form of representative town meeting (a popular system in other New England states and authorized by New Hampshire statute), or some as yet untried system.

Deciding among those forms of government requires communities to decide which they value more: increasing the number of people voting on issues by making it easier for them to cast ballots, or providing those who do vote with opportunities for give-and-take, for on-the-spot problem solving.

The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies believes that democracy works best when decisionmakers have access to accurate information about the problems they are trying to solve. That is why the Center has prepared this report and why the Center encourages the legislature to direct an existing institution within state government to gather, analyze, and disseminate information about the effectiveness of the various forms of municipal and school-district government. The Secretary of State's Office is currently responsible for ensuring that election laws are carried out properly around the state, and the Department of Revenue Administration reviews all municipal and school district actions for their impact on taxes, but neither institution's mission—nor any other's in state government—has included tracking the changing effectiveness of local government. That gap has weakened the state's capacity to keep its rules of governance tuned to changes in population, technology, and attitudes about fairness.

The Center hopes that this report will help inform voters considering adopting or repealing the official ballot, as well as legislators wondering about the impact of the change to the 60-percent majority.

The Center makes the following recommendations:

1. The legislature should require all jurisdictions to report on the number of registered voters present at deliberative meetings and traditional annual meetings, in addition to the current requirement that jurisdictions report vote tallies for all secret ballots.
2. The legislature should designate and fund an existing institution within state government to compile data from towns and school districts so that the legislature will have access to reliable information about the operations of local government. For example, the institution should gather and analyze data about the differences in voter participation and decisions in official-ballot jurisdictions and traditional-meeting jurisdictions.
3. The Secretary of State's Office should work with towns and school districts to identify, evaluate, and publicize successful approaches for engaging residents in decisionmaking.

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
Allenstown		■	■	■	■
Alstead	■	■	■	■	■
Amherst			■	■	■
Ashland				■	■
Atkinson	■	■	■	■	■
Barrington		■	■	■	■
Bennington	■	■	■	■	■
Canaan	■	■	■	■	■
Carroll			■	■	■
Charlestown	■	■	■	■	■
Conway	■	■	■	■	■
Danville	■	■	■	■	■
Dorchester	■	■	■		
Enfield	■	■	■	■	■
Epsom		■	■	■	■
Exeter	■	■	■	■	■
Goffstown	■	■	■	■	■
Grafton	■	■	■	■	■
Hampstead	■	■	■	■	■
Hampton	■	■	■	■	■
Hooksett	■	■	■	■	■
Hudson	■	■	■	■	■
Kensington		■	■	■	■
Kingston	■	■	■	■	■
Litchfield			■	■	■

Towns Operating with Official Ballot	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Littleton	■	■	■	■	■
Londonderry	■	■	■	■	■
Mason				■	■
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
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		■	■	■	■
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
Mascenic Regional	■	■	■	■	■
Mascoma Valley Regional	■	■	■	■	■
Merrimack	■	■	■	■	■
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 1999-2000

Town	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
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%
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%
Belmont	1999		\$160,000	\$160,000	91	18	83.5%
Brentwood	2000		\$525,000	\$525,000	60	11	84.5%
Brookline	2000		\$75,000		164	113	59.2%
Brookline	2000		\$250,000	\$250,000	161	41	79.7%
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%
Charlestown	2000	■	\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000	679	265	71.9%
Conway	1999	■	\$1,671,500		958	765	55.6%
Conway	2000	■	\$1,485,859		1,044	719	59.2%
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%
Dublin	1999		\$684,885	\$684,885	161	48	77.0%
Enfield	1999	■	\$500,000	\$50,000	456	114	80.0%
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%
Fitzwilliam	1999		\$95,000	\$95,000	175	11	94.1%
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%
Grantham	1999		\$360,000	\$360,000	163	9	94.8%

Town	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
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 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%
Hooksett	2000	■	\$2,600,000		561	507	52.5%
Hudson	1999	■	\$1,000,000		1,630	854	65.6%
Jaffrey	2000		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	120	27	81.6%
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%
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%
Littleton	2000	■	\$450,000	\$450,000	993	132	88.3%
Littleton	2000	■	\$750,000	\$750,000	938	187	83.4%
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%
Merrimack	1999	■	\$4,379,764		1,677	2,098	44.4%
Milan	2000		\$155,000	\$155,000	83	16	83.8%
Milford	2000	■	\$1,400,000	\$1,400,000	1,318	538	71.0%
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%
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%
Newport	2000		\$1,020,000		Tabled		
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%
Peterborough	1999		\$550,000	\$550,000	225	22	91.1%

Town	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Peterborough	2000		\$750,000	\$750,000	123	4	96.9%
Plaistow	1999	■	\$345,000		917	949	49.1%
Plaistow	1999	■	\$1,900,000	\$1,900,000	1,318	580	69.4%
Raymond	2000		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	104	22	82.5%
Sanbornton	1999		\$148,000	\$148,000	153	63	70.8%
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%
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%
Sutton	1999		\$297,500	\$297,500	80	33	70.8%
Swanzy	1999		\$395,000		170	113	60.1%
Swanzy	1999		\$3,300,000	\$3,300,000	191	74	72.1%
Swanzy	2000		\$225,000	\$225,000	288	82	77.8%
Swanzy	2000		\$750,000	\$750,000	358	14	96.2%
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%
Wakefield	1999	■	\$950,000		Amended to 0		
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%
Whitefield	1999		\$165,000	\$165,000	121	6	95.3%
Windham	1999		\$708,000	\$708,000	452	153	74.7%
Windham	1999		\$1,913,000	\$1,913,000	404	134	75.1%
Windsor	2000		\$37,500	\$37,500	28	0	100.0%
Wolfeboro	2000	■	\$578,500	\$578,500	1,568	278	84.9%

Table A4: School District Bond Articles 1999-2000

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%
Auburn	2000		\$7,180,000		240	312	43.5%
Barnstead	2000		\$10,100,000		393	365	51.8%
Bow	1999		\$5,047,385		250	573	30.4%
Bow	1999		\$1,634,277		258	529	32.8%
Brookline	1999		\$5,087,912	\$5,087,912	595	248	70.6%
Candia	1999		\$660,000		220	122	64.3%
Candia	2000		\$660,000		192	123	61.0%
Chichester	1999		\$303,000	\$303,000	83	12	87.4%
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%
Croydon	2000		\$275,000		40	60	40.0%
Croydon	2000		\$50,000		Passed over		
Deerfield	1999		\$935,000	\$935,000	255	92	73.5%
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%
East Kingston	1999		\$715,765	\$715,765	119	29	80.4%
Epping	1999		\$1,185,663	\$1,185,663	243	41	85.6%
Exeter	1999	■	\$1,930,000		1,149	720	61.5%
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%
Freedom	1999		\$1,600,000		100	120	45.5%
Gilford	1999		\$1,926,127	\$1,926,127	175	26	87.1%
Goffstown	2000	■	\$10,850,000		1,096	1,403	43.9%
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%
Hampstead	1999	■	\$5,988,000		1,108	946	53.9%
Hampstead	2000	■	\$6,495,000		850	1,409	37.6%
Hampton Falls	2000	■	\$382,200		291	337	46.3%
Hill	2000		\$1,705,500		44	76	36.7%
Hillsboro-Deering Coop	2000	■	\$2,700,000		694	849	45.0%
Hillsboro-Deering Coop	2000	■	\$17,100,000		782	730	51.7%
Hinsdale	1999		\$464,400	\$464,400	83	29	74.1%
Hollis	1999		\$1,582,180	\$1,582,180	429	106	80.2%
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%
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		
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	1999		\$19,113,440		293	543	35.0%

School District	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	2000	■	\$1,700,000		700	1,147	37.9%
Jaffrey-Rindge Coop	2000	■	\$19,950,000		976	860	53.2%
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%
Lebanon	1999	■	\$872,000		292	261	52.8%
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%
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 Valley	2000		\$9,900,000	\$9,900,000	656	87	88.3%
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	1,844	34.1%
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%
Northumberland	1999		\$5,651,918		356	198	64.3%
Northumberland	2000		\$5,651,918		363	222	62.1%
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%
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%
Rumney	1999	■	\$862,000	\$862,000	275	66	80.6%
Salem	1999	■	\$2,195,755		1,682	1,836	47.8%
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%

School District	Year	Official Ballot	Proposed Amount	Approved Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	% Yes
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%