

POLITICS

Who’s running: NH House of Representatives



by **Ledger-Transcript Staff**
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About 17 Minutes

1x





The Ledger-Transcript sent surveys to state House of Representatives candidates throughout the region ahead of the Sept. 8 primary election. Here are the candidate profiles of those who responded.

Some responses have been edited for length and clarity. Some districts are not included in this list because no candidates in those districts responded.

Cheshire 13

Towns: Dublin, Jaffrey

Democratic candidate Tom Ahlborn-Hsu of Jaffrey did not respond to the survey.



Credit: Courtesy

Matthew John Santonastaso**Party:** Republican**Age:** 37**Position Sought:** State Representative / Cheshire 13

Relevant Experience: U.S. Army veteran. B.S. in computer science, commercial helicopter pilot, CDL driver. Real-estate investor. Served two terms in the New Hampshire House (2020–2024). Married, four children. Lives in Jaffrey.

Why are you running? I am running to keep longtime residents from being taxed out of their homes. Towns keep raising property taxes, and Concord has stood by. The state must prohibit those increases so working families and seniors can stay in their communities instead of being forced out.

What is your most important issue? New Hampshire is the best place in the world to live. It's got one issue. Property taxes. Higher property taxes are a tool to push out the local population, price out elderly residents, and other undesirable people. The state must step in and prohibit towns from raising property taxes so families and seniors can remain in their homes.

Cheshire 14**Towns:** Rindge



Credit: Courtesy

Gene Andersen

Party: Democrat

Age: 76

Position Sought: State Representative / Cheshire 14

Relevant Experience: Served 3 terms in the legislature from 2005 to 2011 – Representing Lebanon. Served on the Science and Tech Committee; served 3 years as chairman of the floods commission.

Why are you running? New Hampshire has a school funding issue that is exacerbated by our near-total reliance on the property tax. The elimination of the business profits tax has increased reliance on property tax. Our schools are suffering because of this and our children are losing opportunity. We need to include business in supporting the schools – and revise the “NH Advantage” from being a sole advantage for business on the backs of property owners to a shared responsibility.

What is your most important issue? I believe this is described above.



Credit: Courtesy

John B. Hunt

Party: Republican

Age: 69

Position Sought: State Representative / Cheshire 14 (incumbent)

Relevant Experience: I have served for 40 years, mostly as chairman of the Commerce Committee. The Commerce Committee covers consumer activities such as liquor, banking, insurance and consumer products.

Why are you running? I very much enjoy solving problems that all sides can live with; otherwise, I do believe in the state's motto of Live Free or Die by using a basic rule of Less Government is Better Government.

What is your most important issue? Working to ensure health insurance is affordable and fair.

Cheshire 18

Towns: Dublin, Jaffrey, Rindge



Rory Lovett Sherman

Party: Democrat

Age: 47

Position Sought: State Representative / Cheshire 18

Relevant Experience: Born, raised and educated in New Hampshire.

Why are you running? As a blue-collar worker and father of four young children, I am worried about the current and future affordability of small-town living, as expenses rise and costs are downshifted onto our towns and neighbors.

What is your most important issue? An equitable approach to state education funding. Housing access/affordability and the associated utility costs. An economy with wages that allow people to live and lay roots in the communities they work in.



Rita Mattson

Party: Republican

Age: Undisclosed

Position Sought: State Representative / Cheshire 18

Relevant Experience: Incumbent

Why are you running? Limited government, no new taxes.

What is your most important issue? To have citizens answer the ballot question in November to put a cap on property tax. Mattson cited the following law: “Shall the [name of municipality] limit property tax growth for [name(s) of school district(s)] under RSA 32:5-i? If adopted for a two-year period: (1) the local property tax levy may not grow beyond the prior year’s amount, adjusted for inflation and new construction; (2) SAU central office spending may not exceed 6 percent of total school district appropriations; and (3) bonded capital costs are excluded from both limits. These caps apply only to administrative operations of the SAU central office and do not affect classroom instruction, school-based services, or other municipal expenditures. These limits may be overridden as provided in RSA 32:5-i. Adoption requires a three-fifths (3/5) majority vote.”



Credit: Courtesy

Jim Qualey

Party: Republican

Age: 72

Position Sought: State Representative / Cheshire 18 (incumbent)

Relevant Experience: NH State Rep. since 2020, Vice-Chair House Election Law Committee since 2023. Rindge Selectman (2016-19), Alternate Rindge Library trustee (2006-16), 26-year Rindge resident.

Why are you running? I'm running for re-election so I can continue to work hard to keep our communities affordable, protect our constitutional rights, maintain and strengthen the integrity of New Hampshire elections and ensure that government stays within its constitutional limits and accountable to the people of Dublin, Jaffrey and Rindge.

What is your most important issue? Preserving the freedom and prosperity of the people of my district and the rest of New Hampshire. I support parental rights and giving families real choices for their children's education, the 1st and 2nd amendments and election integrity. I oppose any sales tax and any form of income tax.



Credit: Courtesy

Allen Davis

Party: Democrat

Age: 79

Position Sought: State Representative / Cheshire 18

Relevant Experience: I have been the executive director of three nonprofit organizations, including a United Way, and a teacher and administrator at colleges and schools. I am a skilled leader who creates long-lasting solutions by bringing people together who disagree. That's exactly what I will do as your State Representative.

Why are you running? My passion and reason for running is to make life better and more affordable for everyone in Dublin, Jaffrey and Rindge. I commit to increasing state support for public education. I am angry that the state keeps shifting costs to taxpayers and local communities. Now Is The Time to Stop It!

What is your most important issue? As an educator who believes that our democracy depends on an educated citizenry, I support the best possible education for our children. A high-quality education is the key to a successful life. Now is the time for the state to invest heavily in our children.

Hillsborough 30

Towns: Antrim, Bennington

Republican candidate Larry Baker of Hillsborough and Democratic candidate W. Gordon Allen of Antrim did not respond to the survey.



Credit: Courtesy

William Bryk

Party: Democrat

Age: 71

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 30

Relevant Experience: I'm a graduate of Manhattan College and Fordham University Law School, admitted to practice law in New Hampshire and New York. For 30 years, I worked in municipal government in jobs ranging from file clerk to special assistant to the city council president. I've served the town of Antrim as a library trustee and a trustee of trust funds.

Why are you running? I want to apply my experience and common sense to implementing balanced state budgets and sensible state legislation.

What is your most important issue? Decentralizing power from the state to local governments, particularly the power of the purse.



Austin Cottle

Party: Republican

Age: 41

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 30

Relevant Experience: Born and raised in Antrim, member of the Lions Club and Evangelical Faith Formation director for the Knights of Columbus.

Why are you running? I think it is important to serve my community and to have common-sense policies that work for all of New Hampshire.

What is your most important issue? Finding ways to reduce property tax.



Janet McEwen

Party: Democrat

Age: Undisclosed

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 30

Relevant Experience: My early background includes outdoor education and work at the Crotched Mountain School. I am a former registered nurse who focused on working and advocating for individuals with disabilities. In addition, I am a licensed associate real estate broker. Currently, I serve as the Antrim ZBA chair, chair of the Antrim Democrats, and a board member of the Contoocook Housing Trust. My professional and volunteer work has exposed me to a wide range of individuals in my community, allowing me to get to know their concerns.

Why are you running? I want to serve as a voice in Concord to find more equitable ways to address property taxes, fund our public schools, and make policy decisions to improve the quality of life for everyone living in my district, not just a select few.

What is your most important issue? The relationship between the costs of funding our public schools and our property taxes. The state needs to pony up and pay its fair share. We are last in the country in terms of state funding per student. New Hampshire must find solutions for fair and equitable funding and protecting our public schools. Our towns should not have to bear the burden of these costs.



Credit: Courtesy

Tim Morehouse

Party: Republican

Age: 74

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 30

Relevant Experience: I worked as cemetery trustee, park and recreation commissioner and town treasurer in Antrim. I am currently a library trustee.

Why are you running? I am running to defend our freedoms and parental rights, to keep us sales and income tax-free and to keep New Hampshire affordable for the next generation.

What is your most important issue? The rise in property taxes due to school budget increases in each year is alarming. Ensuring a solid education for our students while keeping our SAUs fiscally responsible is extremely important to me.

Hillsborough 32

Towns: New Ipswich, Temple, Wilton

Republican candidates Diane Kelley of Temple and Shane Sirois of New Ipswich, and Democratic candidate Kermit Williams of Wilton, did not respond to the survey.



Jim Kofalt

Party: Republican

Age: 59

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 32 (incumbent)

Relevant Experience: Served three terms as state representative, currently serving as Speaker Pro Tempore of the NH House, business owner, school board member (including one year as chair)

Why are you running? I want to protect our personal freedoms and keep New Hampshire economically strong.

What is your most important issue? I place a very high value on the personal freedoms that our country has traditionally cherished, including economic and medical freedom, parental rights and the 2nd Amendment.



Richard Swanson

Party: Democrat

Age: 69

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 32

Relevant Experience: Served a three-year term as a selectman in Wilton.

Why are you running? I grew up in New Hampshire and always thought I might one day serve in the state legislature. New Hampshire is unique among state legislatures because members represent small, very local populations, and elections don't need to be prohibitively expensive. Legislators can be very responsive to their constituents.

What is your most important issue? Education is my top priority. An adequate education is guaranteed in our state constitution, and it is not fair that the state shifts the education tax burden onto local property taxes. Poorer towns do not get an even shake. Education is the best investment we can make.

Hillsborough 33

Towns: Peterborough, Sharon

Republican candidate Kimberly Thomas and Democratic candidate Peter Leishman, both of Peterborough, did not respond to the survey.



Jonah Wheeler of Peterborough. Credit: Courtesy

Jonah Orion Wheeler

Party: Democrat

Age: 23

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 33 (incumbent)

Relevant Experience: Service on nonprofit boards and as a nonprofit staffer doing education work in the Nashua Public School system. Service on the Zoning Board of Adjustments as an alternate and a full member. Four years in the State House as a member of Criminal Justice and Environment and Agriculture.

Why are you running? New Hampshire is being gutted by oligarchs who seek a world of no regulation, no guardrails; just let us and our business do as we please. I'm running for office to promote a functional, transparent, accountable state government. A good education system, tax system, roads and all.

What is your most important issue? Addressing how the state generates revenue and how it distributes revenue back to municipalities. Whether in education, retirement, infrastructure, or any other major government system, municipalities don't always have the resources to ensure they function properly. The state does. We need to collaborate to find solutions.

Hillsborough 36

Towns: Greenville, Mason

Republican candidate John Suiter of Mason and Democratic candidate Michael Pellerito of Brookline did not respond to the survey.



Credit: Courtesy

Diane Pauer

Party: Republican

Age: 60

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 36 (incumbent)

Relevant Experience: Third term in NH House (2020-present), chair of House Municipal and County Government Committee (vice chair 2022-24, member 2020-22), member of Hillsborough County Delegation (2020-present) and its Nursing Home Subcommittee (2012-15). Retired electrical engineer. Lived in district for more than 30 years.

Why are you running? I am running for re-election because I believe government exists to serve the people and protect individual liberties. I want to continue serving Brookline, Mason and Greenville by protecting constitutional rights, preserving citizen-driven decision-making, promoting transparent, fiscally responsible government and being a strong voice for my constituents in Concord.

What is your most important issue? My most important issue is protecting taxpayers and keeping New Hampshire affordable. I will continue working to limit government spending, address unsustainable property taxes, and support policies that strengthen local communities without imposing unnecessary costs on families and businesses or unfunded mandates on municipalities. For more information visit <https://dianepauer.com>.



Steve Spratt

Party: Democrat

Age: Undisclosed

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 36

Relevant Experience: Former state representative on Commerce and Finance committees, served as assistant majority leader, chair of Hillsborough County Delegation, voted County Legislator of the Year. Locally: currently on the Mascenic School Board and served on the Greenville Planning Board and library Board of Trustees.

Why are you running? I'm running because our communities deserve experienced leadership that listens, protects local control, supports strong public schools, manages taxpayer dollars responsibly and reforms the existing regressive property tax. For example, consider the elimination of the Interest and dividends tax and the \$ 500M-plus loss of revenue that resulted.

What is your most important issue? Affordability. Property taxes fund 70% of education costs. The legislature eliminated the income cap for subsidies (EFAs) for religious, private, charter, homeschool, etc., with no tracking of how that \$70M was spent. Raising property taxes for that shortfall makes many families struggle to afford healthcare, housing, groceries and daily necessities.

Hillsborough 42

Towns: Lyndeborough

Republican candidates Gerald Griffin and Rob Lovett of Mont Vernon and Lisa C.M. Post of Lyndeborough, as well as Democrat candidate Teri Harkins of New Boston, did not respond to the survey.



Lee Nyquist

Party: Democrat

Age: 74

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 42

Relevant Experience: New Boston town moderator (34 years); chair, Unemployment Compensation Advisory Council (21 years); retired attorney; past president of the New Hampshire Trial Lawyers Association and Manchester Bar Association.

Why are you running? I am running to restore constructive, civil and bipartisan leadership to the Legislature. I will listen to the voters and not impose an ideological agenda on them.

What is your most important issue? I want to be part of a historic legislature that finally reverses the downshifting of town and school district costs from the state to the towns. Out-of-state corporations and wealthy investors in out-of-state entities should pay their fair share of NH taxes to relieve property taxpayers of their current onerous burden.

Pete Ryder

(Photo not provided.)

Party: Democrat

Age: 66

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 42

Relevant Experience: An NH native and product of NH public schools. Deep roots in District 42. Successful small business owner. Expert in strategic planning and financial management.

Why are you running? I am running to reverse the 15-year trend of the state passing the buck for its obligations to towns. New Hampshire is becoming unaffordable and property taxes are a big reason why. Public education is the cornerstone of our democracy and is threatened by the current policies.

What is your most important issue? Elected representatives must be accountable to the voters in their district. It is unacceptable for elected officials to further the agenda of the Free State Project over the interests of local voters.

Hillsborough 45

Towns: Greenville, Mason

Democratic candidate Jerry Roche of Brookline did not respond to the survey.

**Jack Flanagan**

Party: Republican

Age: 68

Position Sought: State Representative / Hillsborough 45 (incumbent)

Relevant Experience: Ten years in the NH House. Former Majority Leader and vice chair of the Labor Committee and ranking member of the same committee when Republicans were in the minority. Former selectman, vice chair of Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District and a chairman of Brookline School Board.

Why are you running? Continue being effective for the towns that elect me and make sure their voices are heard in Concord.

What is your most important issue? I am very concerned with the state's judiciary and Department of Justice. I believe the leadership of those departments is mismanaging them and the functions they provide.