



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Governor Chris Sununu
2018 STATE OF THE STATE
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Mr. Speaker, Mr. Senate President, honorable members of the House, the Senate, the Executive Council, Commissioners, and of course members of the Supreme Court, my fellow citizens, Welcome:

I first want to give a special thanks to a few people without whom I'd still be loading lifts in the mountains. Two people who instilled my appreciation of public service, My mom and dad who have joined us today.

My kids, (Leo) and of course the person who has sacrificed so much for me and this state... Valerie.

I want to take a moment to thank Chief Linda Dalianis for her many years of service on the Supreme Court.

And finally, I do want to thank god – who continues to show me a path of compassion and gratitude.

WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN!

I ran for Governor because I knew that with good management, New Hampshire could become the gold standard for civic engagement, community service, and entrepreneurial opportunity.

Today in New Hampshire, businesses have lower taxes, fewer regulations, and a stronger workforce, allowing them to reinvest in their communities.

Today in New Hampshire, a family's educational opportunities are growing. Whether its access to a full-day kindergarten program or whether a family is seeking an alternative education for their kids, a family's zip-code no longer limits their opportunity to succeed.

Today in New Hampshire, the rights of crime victims are stronger than ever before.

And today in New Hampshire, whether you are driving to work or on your way to ski in the White Mountains, none of you have to worry about paying more at the tolls...You're welcome!

Simply put, "Life in New Hampshire is better today than it was one year ago – and that's no accident."

As we look back on this past year and recognize our milestones and achievements, we cannot lose sight of New Hampshire's future.

We need to make sure we are planning for the long term, and appreciate the steps that got us here.

Whether Republican or Democrat, we share a passion for making our communities the strongest they can be. A commitment to making sure that New Hampshire remains the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

Let us remember that supporting and embracing policies that put people first is why our citizens sent us to Concord.

Despite Washington's dysfunction, here in New Hampshire, We're finally focused on the individual, not just the system. We're putting people above politics.

And we understand that how we work together and treat one another is just as important as the results we achieve.

We have worked hard from day one, to manage government to drive better results for every single person in the Granite State. We must be positive, constructive, and while we don't ask anyone to waver from their philosophical beliefs, I do ask to find areas of agreement when it can result in better outcomes for our citizens.

When I addressed this chamber one year ago, I laid out what I believed to be critical priorities that we needed to address together. Last year's budget was a true New Hampshire budget, one without gimmicks or empty promises, and one that delivered for the people of New Hampshire without raising a single tax or fee.

We grew the Rainy Day Fund to \$100 million dollars, and reinvested our surplus funds, not into bigger government, but into property tax relief for our citizens.

For years, we heard how the state could not control local property taxes, but WE used infrastructure grants to give our towns more financial flexibility to target key areas of need.

Every town, from Pittsburg to Portsmouth, received a check from the State of New Hampshire for critical infrastructure improvements.

That's something we can all be proud of.

And as a parent of three young children, and given yesterday's senseless tragedy in Florida, I know that if we can't put our kids on the school bus and know they are safe, nothing else matters.

I advocated for a new Public School Infrastructure Fund – which is investing nearly \$20million in state funds directly to communities in making long overdue infrastructure upgrades and security upgrades.

For example, WE provided funding directly to Berlin Public Schools to secure the main entrance of the high school and the preschool program.

In Salem, the middle school will now have exterior door card readers installed to secure the rear and side entrance of the building.

And in Dover, a new surveillance system will allow the school's main office to monitor all points of entry and the playground area.

In the end, close to 300 schools across the state will receive security funding grants.

Our goal is simple – to make New Hampshire's schools the safest in the nation.

Our commitment to ensuring the wellbeing of New Hampshire's children goes beyond the four walls of a classroom.

Last year, I proposed the Governor's Scholarship Fund – a scholarship program built around the students, not the institutions. This scholarship program is designed not to help just 10, 20, or 100 students, but up to 1,000 students each year and will open workforce gateways for the next generation.

Never before has an opportunity like this been offered to New Hampshire students.

But we didn't stop there – After I took office, I sat down with FIRST Robotics Founder Dean Kamen – and we talked about what could be done at the state level to promote STEM in schools. Dean founded FIRST 26 years ago, right here in New Hampshire, but support had never been provided at the state level.

So we changed that, and put nearly \$1million into a transformative initiative – the Robotics Education Fund – so that every public school in New Hampshire has the same opportunity to inspire the next generation of engineers.

And to quote Dean: The kids don't build the robots, the robots build the kids.

FIRST Robotics is a perfect example of driving innovative school programs today to create the workforce of tomorrow

[I WAS REMINDED...]

So today, building on the momentum we've created with our STEM initiatives, I am proud to announce The Governor's Cup – a collaborative partnership between The University System of New Hampshire, the Community College System, and FIRST Robotics

This competitive annual Robotics Competition will be open to students and teams from across the state for college credit, and each senior on the winning team will receive a tuition free semester at a school of their choosing within the University or Community College System.

We need to send a signal to budding engineers, scientists, and mathematicians across the state that their passion is a priority that we all share.

Programs like these build upon what our world-class public schools can offer students.

Surprisingly, I am the first Governor in the past 25 years to come up through New Hampshire's public schools. Our schools are ranked the best in the country, because they deliver results. I believe in Teachers. I believe in the students.

However, I think we can all agree that a one-size-fits all system doesn't always work for each student, which is why our education system must give parents choice and flexibility.

Education Savings Accounts will be our most significant step yet, in giving parents and children the ability to choose the education path that is best suited for them.

Joining us in the gallery today are Shalimar and Angel Encarnacion of Manchester. Like many families, Angel started in public school – and even had an individualized education plan – but it just wasn't for him.

Shalimar and Angel were frustrated as Angel struggled.

Shalimar decided Angel needed to try a different learning environment. With the help of an educational scholarship grant, Angel was given the opportunity to try a different school – and he thrived.

Today, Angel is at the top of his class, exploring college opportunities, and aspires to a distinguished military career in the United States Naval Special Forces.

Shalimar and Angel are trailblazers for the state. Thank you both for being here today. Proof positive that choice works.

Over the course of this past year as I have traveled the state, I have met with people, I've heard their stories. Stories of courage. Stories of tragedy. Stories that inspire.

One family whose courage has moved us all, is no stranger to many of you.

Bob and Melissa Marriott.

Bob and Melissa have been on the forefront of advocating for the rights of crime victims and their families.

By sharing their family's story, and through relentless leadership and advocacy, Bob has fundamentally improved the rights of crime victims throughout state of New Hampshire.

Last year, through the incredible work of the Marriott Family and others who bravely testified before our legislature – we passed and enacted four bipartisan bills into law that protected the rights of victims of crime.

We are all united in this fight – across party lines – and will keep working together to ensure that every Granite Stater in crisis has the help and legal protections they need.

Bob and Melissa –thank you for being here today, and thank you for your courage.

And we're not done.

When victims of crime find the strength to come forward and engage in the criminal justice process we must ensure that they have basic rights and protections in place.

Victims of crime deserve equal constitutional rights – the same rights as defendants. No more, no less. That's why Marsy's Law is so important.

Working together, Marsy's Law will pass through these chambers, and go before you, the voters this November in a rare, but critical constitutional amendment initiative. We need your support.

Victims and survivors of crimes, and their families, have done their part. Now, we, the citizens of New Hampshire need to turn out this November, and get the job done.

In times of economic prosperity, we cannot forget that there are still those struggling. We have a mental health crisis, and as I have often said – it is the unspoken crisis of our state.

Working together, with the legislature and the Department of Health and Human Services, we have taken real strides in addressing New Hampshire's mental health system.

Throughout all of this, there is one individual who I would like to publicly thank, and to who I would like to express my deep gratitude on behalf of the entire State of New Hampshire.

Ken Norton, the Director of New Hampshire's chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, led my working group on mental health, and met with my administration immediately upon taking office to help identify the crisis that we were in.

One year ago, addressing our mental health system might just have been considered a potential option. I disagreed, and so did Ken Norton, and we cannot thank you enough for your efforts.

This is not to say our job is done. Far from it.

We have tasked Health and Human Services with developing a comprehensive 10 year plan for the mental health system.

We provided funding to establish 60 new beds for community based transitional housing and created a fourth rapid response mobile crisis unit to divert hospitalizations for mental health issues. It is unacceptable for citizens in mental health crises to be waiting for treatment for weeks on end.

The foremost responsibility of Government is to protect and advocate for those who cannot do it themselves. The most vulnerable amongst us deserve dignity and respect by the systems that are there to help them.

When it comes down to advocating on behalf of our most vulnerable children, we must continually strive to do better.

Last year, we increased funding by \$4.4 million to protect New Hampshire's children, ensuring proper advocacy for kids.

We added 20 new case workers across the state, and created an office of the child advocate to provide greater oversight and transparency. I am proud to say the office is now being led by Moira O'Neill, who will work tirelessly to improve New Hampshire's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our children.

Moira, thank you for being here today.

There is more to do. That's why this year, we need to pass SB 592 – which expands home visiting services, adds 16 child protective service workers, and increases Foster care rates by over one million dollars.

Moving forward, we will have a New Hampshire designed plan for Medicaid. At the moment, we have slightly different ideas about how to get there. We're working through our ideas and working with the federal government to ensure our plan has a viable work requirement while maximizing our flexibilities and options. The people of New Hampshire sent us to Concord to get things done, and that is what we are going to do.

Like many states across the country, the opioid crisis in New Hampshire remains our state's most serious challenge – one that demands great attention and proactive leadership.

Our mission to reverse the terrible effects of this epidemic rests on our ability as leaders to embrace a spirit of cooperation, innovation, and compassion when we craft the solutions to meet the needs of our families and neighbors.

Last year, we made significant strides forward by doubling the alcohol fund, which went directly to prevention, treatment, and recovery services. This July, we will be opening the only youth addiction treatment center in our state.

This crisis touches every corner of our community. We see the impact of addiction in our schools, churches, and at work. As Governor, it is my belief that we need to expand the focus of recovery programs, specifically, in the workforce.

We must fully engage employers as allies in the battle against the opioid epidemic.

I am proud to say, that on March 1st – we will officially launch – from the State of New Hampshire, a statewide effort to create Recovery Friendly Workplaces.

This initiative will help businesses attain greater safety, productivity, and profitability by addressing addiction 'head on' in the workplace.

This is an opportunity for New Hampshire to help change the culture around addiction by engaging employers in being a proactive part of the conversation by providing tools, resources, and opening up access to treatment like never before.

Government cannot guarantee much, but it can and should guarantee freedom of opportunity. The opportunities to live, work, and raise a family. The opportunity to find meaningful employment on the pathway to recovery.

As we continue to explore and advance innovative ways to increase our state's prosperity, it is important to reflect on our successes to understand the next steps we must embark on.

We have the fastest growing economy in New England.

We are the number one state in the nation for economic freedom, and the number one state to raise a family.

We have the second lowest unemployment rate in the country – a true testament to our thriving business climate.

Our workforce is only as strong as our people, and in New Hampshire, we are blessed with many workers who have lifetimes of experience.

Our state's aging population contributes immensely to the economy. They donate thousands of volunteer hours, and train the workforce of tomorrow.

Last year, we created a one-stop-shop for all of our business needs when we formed the Department of Business and Economic Affairs – which is driving our economy and making business development a top priority again.

There is a saying that those of us who are born in New Hampshire are lucky, and those of you who moved here are smart.

We have no income tax, we have no sales tax, and now, we have lower business taxes and fewer regulations. Let's keep it that way.

Joining with us today, are folks who recognized the New Hampshire Advantage, and chose to relocate and expand their business here – Karleen and Dani Seybold from Digital Skin Imaging (DermSpectra). Karleen moved her business across the country from Arizona to the New Hampshire Seacoast. She's created partnerships with other businesses, integrated with the University system, and we look forward to great things to come from her medical imaging technology.

Karleen and Dani, we appreciate you choosing New Hampshire. Welcome Home.

There are hundreds more opportunities like DermSpectra out there, it's up to us to go find them.

Make no mistake – Reducing taxes and returning money to citizens promotes economic growth. So too, does eliminating burdensome regulations.

When I took office last year, we were one of the most over-regulated states in the Country.

Therefore, I initiated a three phase approach to deregulation. Last summer, as part of phase one, we wiped over 1600 regulations off the books by executive order.

I then created a Regulatory Reform Steering Committee to review the State's current regulatory structure and propose reforms to streamline government and reduce the burden on citizens and businesses.

A few weeks ago, that Committee released a report on Phase 2 that proposed some of the most comprehensive regulatory reform efforts that this State has ever seen. House Bill 1104, when it is complete and signed into law, will streamline permitting processes, modernize our corporate filing systems, reduce confusion and inconsistencies in local regulations, and stimulate our workforce development efforts by making it easier for professionals to move to and work in our great State.

This bill is a game changer for New Hampshire and I call upon this legislature to get it done.

Ronald Reagan once said that “those who say that we’re in a time where there are no heroes, they just don’t know where to look.” Our veterans ARE our heroes. We can never repay them for their selfless service, but we will do all we can to ensure they have the support that they have earned, especially when it comes to access and choice in health care.

Last summer, in response to a crisis at the Manchester VA, I was proud to sign an executive order making NH the first state in the country to lift licensing restrictions for VA Doctors and allowing them to practice at any medical facility in New Hampshire. This allowed the VA to partner with private hospitals around the State to deliver top quality care to our veterans. A new model now being replicated around the country.

Going forward, we must recognize a fundamental truth, that once a person signs those enlistment papers, they are a soldier for life. Which means as civilians we carry the obligation of ensuring we will be there for them just as they stood for us.

And that means a simplified system of care with clear and direct accountability, something not currently available in New Hampshire. This legislature took on my call to create a single entity in New Hampshire that could give Veterans a stronger voice and better access to services. Unfortunately, while the bill fell short, I have confidence the Legislature will return in the next session to find a better solution.

But In the meantime I don’t believe we can continually ask our Veterans to wait and hope.

Therefore, this afternoon, I will sign an Executive Order that will continue and expand the Fort New Hampshire concept. My efforts will bring coordinated veterans services under one roof in New Hampshire, which putting resources together to streamline services for one simple goal: better outcomes for our veterans.

This is a team effort with General Mikolaities, the Veterans Council, and Office of Veterans Services, our Commissioners, and veterans groups across the State, many of whom are here with us today.

To our Veterans, I ask you Please stand, so we can thank you for your service. You are counting on us, and we will not let you down.

A statistic often cited, and one worthy of appreciation, is the fact that we have the lowest poverty rate in the Nation. By any measure, this a sign of our state’s prosperity, but there are many still living in the shadows.

When we talk about issues of drug misuse, homelessness, and abused children, we must all agree that 1 is too many. The fight can never stop.

This winter's bruising weather highlighted the need for a frank and honest conversation about the challenge of homelessness.

I was inspired by the work of state and local officials and the non-profit community who worked quickly to ensure that those without a home found shelter during last month's cold snap.

The temporary Rochester Warming Station was a great example of everyone coming together, from the National Guard, emergency management officials, Fire Fighters and non-profits to create a life saving full service facility in a matter of hours. Community spirit and determination overcame barriers and simply got the job done.

And that's the attitude we are going to need to help address homelessness. It remains a critical health and safety issue for our state and we can't ignore it.

Last year, I made a promise to Borja Alvarez De Toledo, the President of Child and Family Services of New Hampshire – that I would join in their efforts, and participate in the 2018 SleepOUT, which raises money and awareness for New Hampshire's homeless youth.

On Friday, March 23rd, I will be spending the night outside in downtown Manchester, participating in the 2018 Child and Family Services SleepOUT. But like any good governor, I have learned that when you see an opportunity to highlight a need in the state, to shine a light on a cause that deserves our utmost attention, you don't do it alone – So I am calling on all of my commissioners and their teams to join me in supporting this incredibly moving event.

Bundle up, Bring your sleeping bags, and let's raise awareness to get these kids the help they deserve.

If New Hampshire is truly to be the live free or die state, we must ensure that New Hampshire is a place where every person, regardless of their background, has an equal and full opportunity to pursue their dreams and to make a better life for themselves and their families.

This past December I was proud to join with Attorney General Gordon MacDonald to establish a Civil Rights Unit within the New Hampshire Department of Justice. This unit is the first of its kind in the history of this State, and it is long overdue.

We are a nation of laws, yet we have an obligation to enforce our laws fairly and sensibly. Our immigration laws are no exception.

Joining us today from Dover are Elvis Sepang, Ester Arina, and their children.

They have made an honest attempt to navigate the legal process, have a valid legal claim for asylum, and have come forward to work with authorities. They should not be on the front line for deportation.

Their children, who ARE American citizens, should not be forced to return to a country they have never known, to learn a language they do not speak, and to conform to a society that will not allow them or their parents the freedom to practice their faith as they choose.

Families like Elvis and Ester's have become an integral part of our neighborhoods, schools, and churches. They seek to practice their Christian Faith without fear of persecution.

While I firmly believe that action must be taken to curb illegal immigration, it is also imperative that the process for legal immigration becomes more streamlined and practical.

To Elvis, Ester -- Thank you for your courage and your pursuit of the American dream.

We are proud to call you our neighbors.

As we look back on the commitments we made to the people of New Hampshire last year, we can be proud of the results we achieved. It's these successes that set the tone for tomorrow's actions.

We left no stone-unturned, and no issue untouched, we saved a few bears, and even pardoned a turkey.

And we are working to ensure that the horrendous treatment of the Great-Dane's from Wolfeboro never happens again by passing SB 569. This is a critical piece of legislation, and you need to get it on my desk.

We are at a critical point in our states future. Will we build upon the foundations we've laid, or will we let politics impede on progress?

We've made great strides, but:

We cannot let the negativity of Washington politics define who we are as Granite Staters.

We cannot let up on our momentum. We owe it to the people of New Hampshire.

Let's work together to get the job done.

Thank you, god bless you, and god bless the great State of New Hampshire.

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