

HB 558 - AS INTRODUCED

2021 SESSION

21-0783

10/05

HOUSE BILL **558**

AN ACT establishing a committee to study the use of information technology in the legislative process.

SPONSORS: Rep. Wilhelm, Hills. 42; Rep. Alexander Jr., Hills. 6; Rep. Griffith, Hills. 18; Sen. Whitley, Dist 15

COMMITTEE: Legislative Administration

ANALYSIS

 This bill establishes a committee to review and study the use of information technology in the legislative process.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
 Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough]~~
 Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty One

AN ACT establishing a committee to study the use of information technology in the legislative process.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 1 Purpose. The general court finds that: The COVID-19 pandemic, which challenged New
2 Hampshire throughout 2020 and into 2021, forced both houses of the state legislature to adopt
3 information technology to conduct remote committee hearings and meetings. The use of video
4 conferencing technologies, among others, enabled legislators to participate in hearings from their
5 homes or other remote locations, and eliminated barriers for members of the public, for whom it can
6 often be costly, time-consuming, and logistically challenging to attend committee hearings in-person
7 at the state capitol.

8 2 Legislative Committee Established; Use of Information Technology in the Legislative Process.

9 I. There is established a committee to review and study the use of information technology in
10 the legislative process.

11 II. The members of the committee shall be as follows:

12 (a) Four members of the house of representatives, one of whom shall be from the
13 minority party, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives.

14 (b) One member of the senate, appointed by the president of the senate.

15 III. Members of the committee shall receive mileage at the legislative rate when attending
16 to the duties of the committee.

17 IV. The committee shall study information technology in the legislative process and shall:

18 (a) Review the use of information technology in the legislative process including, but not
19 limited to, public hearings, committee and subcommittee meetings, and communications, prior to
20 and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

21 (b) Develop a training needs assessment for legislators and staff to effectively utilize the
22 currently available online office suite, video conferencing programs, or other similar commercial
23 software applications for legislative work.

24 (c) Evaluate the technical, staffing, and logistical needs to continue the use of video
25 conferencing and other information technologies for committee and subcommittee meetings and
26 hearings.

27 (d) Explore any technical, staffing, and logistical needs and costs facing local
28 communities to access meetings and hearings over videoconferencing technology.

29 (e) Determine the administrative costs anticipated to sustain the use of
30 videoconferencing and other information technologies in the legislative process.

1 (f) Review the rules of the house of representatives and the senate to identify what uses
2 of information technology are currently permitted and what changes are required to further
3 authorize the use of video conferencing for public hearings, committee and subcommittee work, and
4 communications.

5 (g) Research laws and programs enacted in other states, counties, or municipalities
6 authorizing and supporting the use of video conferencing and other information technologies in the
7 legislative process.

8 (h) Study any other issue that the committee determines is relevant to its objective.

9 V. The committee shall solicit information from any individual or entity the committee
10 deems relevant to its study, including but not limited to:

11 (a) The clerk of the New Hampshire house of representatives.

12 (b) The clerk of the New Hampshire senate.

13 (c) The attorney general.

14 (d) The university system and community college system of New Hampshire.

15 (e) The New Hampshire association of regional planning commissions.

16 (f) Municipal and community leaders from Coos County and other remote areas of New
17 Hampshire.

18 (g) The New Hampshire Disability Rights Center, New Hampshire Council on
19 Developmental Disabilities, Community Support Network, Inc., and other organizations supporting
20 individuals and families with mental, physical, and developmental challenges.

21 (h) New Futures and other health and civic advocacy organizations.

22 VI. The members of the study committee shall elect a chairperson from among the members.
23 The first meeting of the committee shall be called by the first-named house member. The first
24 meeting of the committee shall be held within 45 days of the effective date of this section. Three
25 members of the committee shall constitute a quorum.

26 VII. The committee shall report its findings and any recommendations for proposed
27 legislation and rule changes to the speaker of the house of representatives, the president of the
28 senate, the house clerk, the senate clerk, the governor, and the state library on or before November
29 1, 2021.

30 3 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.