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## Press Release



### For Immediate Release

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### Governor Hassan's Veto Message Regarding SB 324

CONCORD – Governor Maggie Hassan released the following message after today vetoing Senate Bill 324:

"By the authority vested in me, pursuant to part II, Article 44 of the New Hampshire Constitution, on June 21, 2016, I have vetoed Senate Bill 324, eliminating the land use board and requiring approval of federal land acquisitions by the governor and executive council.

"While this bill's repeal of the obsolete Land Use Board would be a common-sense step to take, I have grave concerns about the constitutionality of other provisions of Senate Bill 324 and the impact those provisions would have on land conservation and on the rights of private property owners. In addition, this bill would create difficulties for municipalities in appraising properties, which could lead to increased costs to local taxpayers.

"The New Hampshire Department of Justice has expressed concerns about the constitutionality of Senate Bill 324, and I share those concerns. This bill would also infringe upon the rights of private property owners to sell their land to willing buyers by forcing the Executive Council, the Department of Resources of Economic and Development and town meetings into private land transactions.

"Certain provisions of this bill, such as its language adding easements under the definition of federal land acquisitions, would make conservation more difficult and stall ongoing efforts, such as our work to protect our New England cottontail rabbit population. It would also threaten the State's ability to receive federal funding under the Land and Water Conservation Act and other programs that are critical to supporting conservation and our state's working landscape. New Hampshire's natural resources are critical to our economy and our way of life, and we must continue working to conserve and protect our most treasured places, which Senate Bill 324 would make more difficult.

"Moreover, Senate Bill 324 would create several issues for municipalities. It would limit the ability of municipal conservation commissions to protect natural resources, creating a new appraisal process that includes a requirement that certain lands be appraised at 'highest and best use.' This language would be problematic for local governments and assessors to interpret and implement, creating confusion and unnecessary work for municipalities that would also increase costs to local taxpayers.

"There is widespread opposition to Senate Bill 324 from conservation groups, including the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the Nature Conservancy, the Appalachian Mountain Club, the New Hampshire Audubon, the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions and the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, as well as the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association and the New Hampshire Land Trust Coalition.

"Due to constitutionality concerns and the bill's potential to threaten conservation efforts, to infringe upon the rights of private property owners, and its negative impact on municipalities, I have vetoed Senate Bill 324."

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