

Young people want a life in NH, but it isn't easy

YOUNG PEOPLE want to live in New Hampshire. They just can't afford to. Such was the message Stay Work Play heard loud and clear during our recent Policy & Pints Pop-up Series, which saw us talk to 231 young people at eight craft breweries across the state.

We asked these young people what they love about their region and what might lead them to one day leave. They shared stories of both their joys and their struggles living here in the Granite State, as well as those of their young friends, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers.

From the North Country to Nashua, and from the Monadnock Region and the Upper Valley to the Seacoast, young people spoke about how New Hampshire offers so much of what they want. They spoke of access to both world-class outdoor recreation and breathtaking natural areas along with proximity to the amenities found in the state's more urban areas. They spoke of a strong sense of community and the ability to get involved and make a difference here. They spoke of strong public schools and of New Hampshire being a great place to raise a family.

But they also spoke of their struggles just to get by here, to say nothing of being able to take advantage of our state's vaunted quality of life. The phrase "high cost of living" was mentioned over and over again in all corners of the state we visited.

Housing affordability was, hands down, the number one concern heard across the state. In each region, the top concerns voiced and voted upon by participants were:



Your Turn, NH

Will Stewart

North Country

- Cost/lack of housing
- Lack of job opportunities
- Political climate

Monadnock

- High cost of living
- Lack of child care access
- Property taxes

Upper Valley

- Lack of affordable housing
- Cost of living
- Lack of cultural diversity

Greater Nashua

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of higher wage jobs
- Lack of adequate public transit

Greater Manchester

- Unaffordable housing
- Lack of public transit
- Lack of BIPOC representation

Greater Concord

- Unaffordable housing
- Low salaries
- Lack of young people in office

Lakes Region

- Unaffordable housing
- Lack of higher paying jobs
- Dismal dating scene

Seacoast

- Expensive housing
- Overall cost of living
- Lack of public transit

What we heard via the Policy & Pints series — both the positive and the negative — was very much in line with (and gave a very real human face to) the results of a quality of life survey of Granite Staters ages 20 to 40 commissioned last year by Stay Work Play and conducted by the Saint Anselm College Survey Center.

New Hampshire is an expensive place for everyone, younger and older. But our younger residents are especially cost burdened. For starters, just by virtue of their youth and limited professional experience, young people generally earn less than their more experienced colleagues. And while both younger and older people must grapple with costs like car payments, food and utility costs, and increasing rents, young people often have additional strains on their monthly budgets.

Due to the state's inadequate funding of higher education, young Granite Staters have the highest average student debt load in the country, meaning a payment of hundreds of dollars each month for many. And for those who have young children, there's also the high cost of child care, as-

suming it can be found.

For too many of our younger residents in too many of our communities, the math simply doesn't work. This is a big problem for all of us, younger and older. As the second oldest state in the nation by average age with one of the lowest unemployment rates, New Hampshire needs all the talent we can get in general and all the young talent we can get in particular. This will assure employers have the people they need to tend to our medical needs, to sell us our groceries, to maintain the electric system that keeps our homes and businesses running, or just to unclog our drains.

Here in New Hampshire we run pretty lean. We rely on volunteers to do so much of what makes our state function, from those who fill the board, committee, and membership ranks of the nonprofits, civic clubs, and faith-based organizations we rely on to close gaps, to those who contribute their time and talents as elected and appointed officials to ensure our communities, especially our smallest ones, are able to operate.

For 15 years, Stay Work Play has worked to position our state as a place of opportunity for young people. This has not changed. But what has evolved is our vision: making New Hampshire a place where young people not just want to — but can — stay, work, and play. Our future depends on it.

Manchester's Will Stewart is executive director of Stay Work Play New Hampshire, a statewide nonprofit with the mission to attract and retain more young Granite Staters. Learn more at stayworkplay.org.

Bipartisan expansion of Medicaid a roadmap

TEN YEARS ago, during my time as governor and thanks to the provisions in the Affordable Care Act, New Hampshire approved Medicaid Expansion, which made health care affordable for thousands of Granite Staters. Now in 2024 — at a time when faith in American democracy is being challenged — New Hampshire's bipartisan expansion of Medicaid serves as an important reminder of how our democracy is capable of delivering long-lasting change.

It is easy to forget just how groundbreaking Medicaid Expansion was. Prior to it, for many, losing a job meant losing access to any affordable health insurance. Granite Staters living with chronic illnesses often found themselves in a vicious spiral of being too ill to work but unable to be treated without access to affordable insurance. Even for Granite Staters with private insurance, those who were contending with mental health challenges or addiction often found that their treatments were not even covered.

Granite Staters from across the political spectrum knew that something had to change. Thanks to their determined advocacy, we were able to find a way forward even at a time when different political parties controlled the state's two legislative chambers and passed Medicaid Expansion. In the first five years after that milestone, the uninsured rate in New Hampshire fell by more than 40 percent.

People like a woman named Ashley received life-changing addiction treatment after struggling with heroin addiction for nearly a decade. Ashley is now in recovery and helps others get there too.

In the years since Medicaid Expansion became a reality, I've heard story after story — sometimes from doctors, sometimes from people with chronic conditions themselves — of the difference that finally getting steady treatment for diabetes, high blood pressure, or asthma made in their lives. Medicaid Expansion made people healthier, saved lives, helped people return to the workforce, and gave more people the freedom to achieve their full potential.

Success expanding Medicaid provides important lessons for addressing today's challenges. We are living in a polarized political moment, where it is easy to become discouraged, and doubt that progress is even possible. To be sure, we have made significant advancements during the last few years, enacting laws to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, strengthen



Another View

Sen. Maggie Hassan

manufacturing, and lower prescription drug costs. But even as these laws are implemented, many Americans have yet to feel their full benefits — and I know some Americans wonder whether our democracy can meaningfully deliver for them.

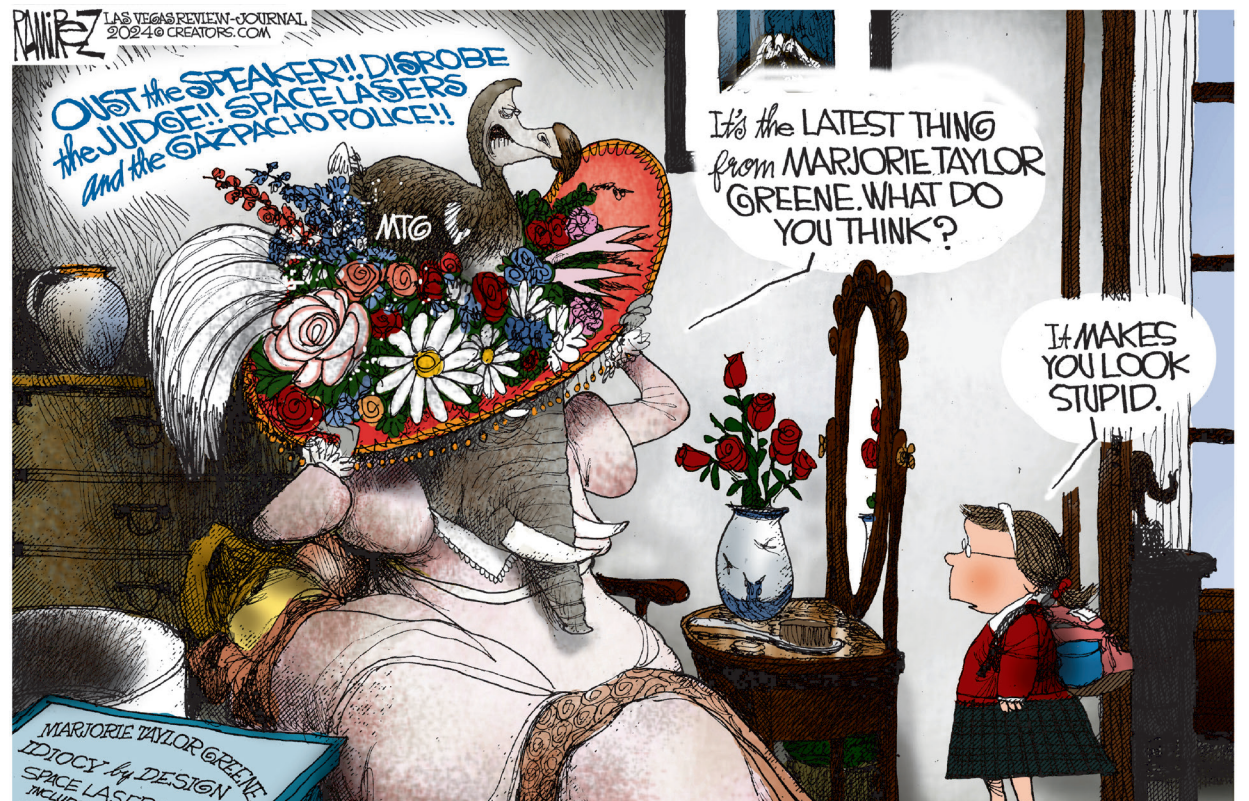
New Hampshire's Medicaid Expansion serves as an example of how our democracy can deliver long-lasting change and provides a roadmap for future success. At the time of its passage, Medicaid Expansion was at the center of one of the most polarizing debates in the country. But as it was implemented and began to make a real difference in people's lives, it became an essential part of our health care system. Ten years on, it enjoys broad support on both sides of the aisle in New Hampshire and has been adopted by 40 states, both red and blue.

Progress is not easy, nor does it happen overnight, but Medicaid Expansion reminds us that the best policies aim for enduring change. If we were able to do this for an issue as divisive as health care reform, then perhaps we can apply these same lessons to issues like bringing down housing costs, making child care affordable, or even securing the southern border.

Medicaid Expansion didn't solve all the challenges of our health care system, of course, and there is more work to do to protect and strengthen Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act. We must continue to stand strong against the efforts of some who are trying to repeal this law. For families who recently lost Medicaid coverage after pandemic-era measures expired, we need to get the word out about how they can re-apply for Medicaid or get affordable health insurance on the ACA marketplace.

Ultimately, what was true when we passed Medicaid Expansion is true today: Our democracy is not perfect, but it is the surest means of making impactful, enduring change. New Hampshire's Medicaid Expansion reminds us that when everyday Americans speak out, and when we listen to each other and engage in the democratic process, we can make substantial and just progress, getting closer to the aspirations of our founders as we do.

Sen. Maggie Hassan (D) lives in Newfields.



Biden's impossible dream: Any car you want, so long as it's an EV

GOVERNMENT'S LANGUAGE often radiates contempt for the governed, as when the Environmental Protection Agency recently said limits on automobile emissions in model years 2027-2032 will "give drivers more clean vehicle choices." The regulations are, of course, explicitly intended to restrict consumers' choices by forcing manufacturers to produce fewer cars that have tailpipe emissions. Drivers will be able to choose any vehicle they want — from the "clean" category government prefers. As Henry Ford reportedly said, the Model T would be available in "any color" the customer wants, "as long as it's black."

The Biden administration's costly and coercive crusade to replace internal combustion vehicles (ICVs) with electric vehicles (EVs) is disproportionate to its minuscule climate impact. The American Enterprise Institute's Benjamin Zycher says the EPA's own assumptions project that the new regulations will mitigate global warming by 0.023 degrees Celsius by 2100. Because the standard deviation of the Earth's surface temperature record is 0.11 degrees Celsius, "that effect would not be detectable."

Each half-ton battery for "clean" vehicles requires, reports Mark P. Mills in City Journal, digging and processing 50 to 250 tons of earth for copper, nickel, aluminum, graphite and lithium, the prices of which will increase (as will the vehicles' prices) when the easily accessed supplies decrease. All existing and planned mines can meet "only a small fraction" of the needed increase of those materials. The International Energy Agency says hundreds of huge new mines will be needed, each taking a decade or more to open.

EPA emissions standards for heavy-duty trucks will require more of them to be EVs (currently, 99 percent are not). Electric semis are



George F. Will

heavy (because of their batteries), damage roadways and generate particulate-matter pollution from roads and their necessarily special tires. The Wall Street Journal reports that "an electric semi consumes about seven times as much electricity on a single charge as a typical home does in a day." They require frequent recharges (95 minutes to charge the battery from 25 percent capacity to 93 percent), as well as multiple time-consuming, load-delivering trips because their weight limits load sizes.

Consumer Reports finds that EVs have 79 percent more problems than ICVs. This is one reason Hertz, having preened about its plans to purchase 100,000 Teslas, is selling 20,000 of those it has. Other reasons include: Hertz cycles its fleet into the used-car market, where an EV glut caused prices to plummet 33 percent between 2022 and 2023. Hertz's Teslas are involved in four times more accidents than its ICVs. (Teslas' braking and acceleration require getting used to.) Tesla's complex electronics make them substantially more expensive than ICVs to repair. Consumer resistance to EVs has pushed down their prices, which has slashed the value of Hertz's multibillion-dollar investment in them.

Vehicle manufacturers, which are losing serious money on every EV they build, are compensating by raising prices on the ICVs that customers actually want. Manufacturers begging government for ever-more multibillion-dollar subsidies resemble 9-year-old Oliver Twist holding out his gruel bowl:

"Please, sir, I want some more." Vehicle manufacturers, having become government appendages, also want government to provide more charging stations to combat potential customers' "range anxiety." What could go wrong?

In 1920, there were only 9.2 million U.S. passenger cars and commercial vehicles; by 1930, that number had nearly tripled. And there were more than 121,000 filling stations provided by the private sector. A miracle, like the multiplication of the loaves and fishes? No, just the market working. In the two years since Congress allocated \$7.5 billion for government-built charging stations, seven have been built.

This glacial pace is partly because government regulations about implementing government regulations cause government to congeal. "Equity" considerations (charging-station money is skewed toward "marginalized" communities) and vote-buying (electricians unions are favored) converge.

Businesses relying on electric pickup trucks find that time (which is money) is squandered on charging. When the trucks are used as, well, trucks — loaded, and towing things — batteries sag even faster.

Winter is unkind to EVs: Cold slows the batteries' chemical reactions. Some drivers who joined lines at charging stations with (supposedly) ample miles of remaining battery capacity had to be pushed, after long waits (high-speed chargers are slow — 30 to 60 minutes — compared with five-minute gas fill-ups), to the chargers. Hot weather, too, makes the chemical reactions less efficient.

Spring, however, is Goldilocks season for EVs — neither too hot nor too cold. And soon, perhaps, government regulations will require temperatures to be mild, always and everywhere.

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