

Legislators in Violation of Mask Ordinance

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To: 'presidents.office@unh.edu' <presidents.office@unh.edu>

President Dean,

Thank you for the University's hospitality and the assistance by University staff over the course of our meetings this year. We are blessed to have been accommodated by the University and had this magnificent facility to meet in during these challenging times.

I learned today by reading the news that you have received correspondence from Speaker Shurtleff regarding the behavior of some legislators. I wanted to provide some clarification as it pertains to the mask ordinance.

As I'm sure you know, as the House Minority Leader, I had nothing to do with the session planning or sending out official instructions to House members. The Speaker's Office had several opportunities to inform members and staff about the mask ordinance, but failed to do so. The Speaker owns this failure to properly communicate.

The session day logistics information sent out by the Speaker's office did not mention to legislators that the town or the University had a mask mandate. It said only that masks would be provided at the point of entrance to the arena, not to bring your own for your walk over.

See pages marked 33 and 34 of the official House Calendar here:

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/caljournals/calendars/2020/HC_33.pdf

Additionally, there appears to have been no separate communication that contained any notice. His letter to you failed to acknowledge these omissions of information regarding the mask ordinance.

The Speaker's letter failed to explain that legislators have a constitutional right to be present at a House session, representing their constituents, and that his own policy was that he would accommodate those without a mask, and no one would be turned away.

His letter also did not point out the health screeners who were taking member's temperatures and asking health and travel related questions outside of the arena, did not stop people without masks, supply masks to those that had none, or inform them of the mask ordinance.

I, too, take decorum very seriously and agree that the actions of a few do not represent the New Hampshire House of Representatives as a whole. However, I believe the Speaker should take responsibility and should have disclosed to you his total failure to inform House members and staff about the mask ordinance. He should have disclosed to you that his own policies may be in conflict with the University's policies.

It is possible that had more detailed communication occurred, more of our visitors would have complied, especially when outside the arena, and you would have had advanced knowledge that he planned to accommodate non-mask-wearers.

I hope that through this clarification, any future event planning will include better information dissemination, and less deflection of responsibility.

Thank you, once again, for your service and assistance to the New Hampshire House.

Very Respectfully,

Rep. Richard "Dick" Hinch
House Republican Leader
New Hampshire House of Representatives