



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on November 29, 2012

Ex-Con Elected to N.H. House Changes Mind, Won't Resign

Stacie Marie Laughton's election on Nov. 6 drew national and even international headlines, as she became the first openly transgender person to be elected to the New Hampshire House of Representatives. Then came the news, first reported by the [Laconia Daily Sun](#) over the past weekend, that Laughton is a convicted felon, having served time in the Belknap county House of Corrections. In the controversy that followed, the newly elected state representative announced on Tuesday she was resigning the seat. On Wednesday, she said she had reconsidered and would continue with plans to be part of the new House of Representatives in January.



Laughton, when she was Barry Charles, Jr., was convicted in 2008 of credit card fraud, conspiracy to commit credit card fraud, and falsifying physical evidence. He served four and a half months in the county jail and completed two years of probation in 2010, according to the Daily Sun. His release was conditioned on ten years of good behavior. As Barry Charles, Jr., Laughton was also convicted in 2006 of tire slashing and ordered to pay a \$647 restitution. She is still paying restitution for the credit card fraud, having thus far paid \$176 of the \$1,992.

Laughton, a Democrat, was one of three candidates elected as state representatives from Nashua's Ward 4. By Tuesday, Republican State Chairman Wayne McDonald was calling for her resignation, and Raymond Buckley, McDonald's Democratic counterpart, had called Laughton to urge her to consider her options. The question of whether she is legally eligible to serve has been referred to the state attorney general's office and House minority leader Gene Chandler, a Republican, said the House has the power to expel a member.

Laughton announced on Tuesday she would resign the seat to which she had been elected just three weeks earlier. But by Wednesday she had changed her mind and announced she was staying on as representative-elect.

"I'm reconsidering and I'm seeking the advice of professionals and through social media," Laughton said, as quoted in the [New Hampshire Union Leader](#). "It's my intention to take the office that I was elected to." She is awaiting a finding from the attorney general's office as to whether convicted felons are legally permitted to run for office. New Hampshire law bars a person convicted of a crime from voting or running for office between sentencing and final discharge. The question appears to hinge on whether Laughton's time served behind bars and on probation constitutes "final discharge" of her sentence or whether the "good behavior" condition renders her ineligible. In most states, "Stacie would be eligible to be a candidate for, or to hold public office," Nashua City clerk Paul Bergeron told the *Union Leader*. "Whether that definition applies here in New Hampshire I don't know."



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The question also has implications for the office Laughton already holds, that of selectman in the city of Nashua. Selectmen oversee elections, so if Laughton does resign the seat or is forced out as state representative, she would, if she remains a selectman, be in a position to oversee the special election to fill the vacancy.

“There’s been a lot of people that have said, ‘Stay strong, keep your head up, stay in it,’” Laughton said when she announced Tuesday she was resigning the House seat. Apparently, they persuaded her — at least for now.

“It’s my lifelong dream to serve my community,” the Nashua native said, “and what better place to do it than the city that I was born and raised in.”



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