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Welcome to another year of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce's Capitol Insight. Sheehan Phinney Bass + Green and Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group are proud to sponsor this communication and provide the weekly analysis of events. Politics, politics and more politics overwhelmed and mesmerized New Hampshire in the first eight days of January. A walk down Elm Street produced sightings of national media personalities, foreign press and candidates, known and obscure. On the 8th, voters validated the legitimacy of the New Hampshire Primary by turning out in record numbers and confounding many predictions, but no one doubted the careful observation and evaluation of candidates. Victors Clinton and McCain went forth from our state to fight another day, and others tried to explain how they did well, or what the strategy for the future contests was. Attention now turns to other states, after the primary provided a great shot in the arm to New Hampshire, Secretary of State Bill Gardner, and the voters.

Meanwhile, back in Concord, the New Hampshire Legislature returned to Concord on January 2. This is an even numbered year, which means there is a state election in November (with a primary in September), and that there is no budget to pass, the 2-year budget having been passed last year. As all members of the Legislature face the election process, the assumption is they want to complete their business expeditiously. However, the Legislature faces a number of significant issues.

First, the funding and pricing of an "adequate education" that was defined last year, is going to be considered. Depending on what the Legislature determines, there either will be the need for further expenditures, or not. At a meeting in Concord of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Manchester Program on January 10, 2008, Speaker of the House Terrie Norelli said that finding money for kindergarten in all communities and other education spending will be one of the challenges faced.

Next, Governor John Lynch has indicated a continued desire to craft a constitutional amendment concerning education funding, and coordinating that desire with the rules of the House and Senate will be a challenge. CACR 21 and CACR 29 address this issue.

House and Senate members have submitted hundreds of new proposals that will be considered by committees and reported to the floor for action. Among the significant proposals is one concerning the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative compact that was the subject of a hearing in the House chamber on Thursday. This addresses New Hampshire

joining nine other states in the Northeast, but the details of the program are the subject of examination, and New Hampshire has specific options in passing legislation, if it chooses to do so.

Gambling legislation has been introduced once again, as a revenue source, and to restrict and regulate activities of not-for-profits. Further bills are expected to renew the effort to establish video gambling at tracks.

There are scores of bills on environmental, energy, human resources, fiscal policy, economic development, workforce housing, and other matters. Hearings have been scheduled and are taking place and many of the matters of interest to the Government Affairs Committee of the Greater Manchester Chamber are listed elsewhere in this publication.

One of the bills of special note is HB1515 that businesses will want to follow carefully, as it prohibits employers from terminating employees without "just cause." This is an undefined term in the bill, but passage would threaten the traditional rights of employers in the employment relationship.

This is just a general overview of what is coming, and specific matters of concern will be highlighted weekly. The contact people listed welcome your inquiries on specific bills or subjects of interest.

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CHAMBER INSIGHT: 

Welcome to another year of *Capitol Insight!* The Chamber would like to thank Sheehan Phinney Bass + Green and the Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group for their continued support and partnership with the GMCC on this publication. *Capitol Insight* is designed to provide you a weekly update on current legislative issues happening in Concord that impact your business. Each issue will feature two sections. The first section, Sponsor's Insight (see above), will open each article with an overview of current legislative issues happening in Concord and will be written by one of the Government Relations specialists of the Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group. The second section, Chamber Insight, will appear in this space and recap the GMCC Government Affairs Committee's current priorities and views on specific legislation under consideration in Concord. We hope you continue find this publication valuable and please feel free to forward and comments and suggestions to michaels@manchester-chamber.org.

As mentioned above, with the buzz of a historic primary fading the legislature is beginning to kick into high gear for the 2008 session. Here is a sampling of some of the major issues on the Government Affairs Committee radar:

HB 1404-FN – As discussed last year, the GMCC is committed to restoring commuter rail service to the Greater Manchester Region. The GMCC strongly believes it is important to provide New Hampshire citizens with a safe alternative to our congested roads and highways. Furthermore, the GMCC believes the potential economic development impact of a rail system will attract and retain more business and development to Southern New Hampshire. With the creation of the NH Rail Transit Authority in 2007, the foundation for a rail system is in place. HB 1404-FN will aid the Rail Transit Authority in moving forward by allowing the authority to secure and maintain a liability insurance policy for passenger rail

service. The bill caps the Rail Authority's liability at \$75 million per year. Without this measure, the Rail Authority will be faced with astronomical insurance costs that will cripple any proposed rail system's operating budget. While the measure is sure to face scrutiny from the legal community and concerned legislators, the GMCC is certain HB 1404-FN should move forward. Similar policies to HB 1404-FN have been enacted as part of every major rail system across the country. The GMCC strongly supports HB 1404-FN and looks forward to working with the legislature to secure its passage.

Education Funding – As part of our advocacy efforts last year the GMCC endorsed the Governor's constitutional amendment that would have allowed for the targeting of education aid across the state. A coalition of business advocacy groups, including the GMCC, will meet with the Governor in the coming weeks to discuss his proposal for 2008. We will be sure to update you on this issue as it develops in the coming weeks.

Healthcare – While healthcare is a major theme in presidential politics this year, the GMCC plans to monitor and advocate for this issue on the state level in 2008. The 2007 session saw the adoption of several healthcare benefit mandates which the GMCC believe will ultimately lead to increases in premiums. In response, the GMCC has established a position to oppose all healthcare benefit mandates in 2008. The GMCC believes the free market should determine what procedures, illness, or conditions are covered by firms. Overall, the GMCC hopes to work with the legislature and healthcare industry to create new solutions that will provide quality coverage to employees and affordable plans for employers. The Chamber is currently monitoring **SB 391**, which will create a standard wellness plan for all small employers. Expect to hear much more on this issue in the coming weeks.

Please feel free to contact the GMCC with any questions or concerns regarding our government affairs work. Expect to see more issues in the coming week including a comprehensive list of tracked legislation. Thank you for reading and remember the GMCC is here to be your business advocate!

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