



GREATER MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SPONSORED BY:



ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Sheehan Phinney Bass + Green



POWERED BY:



SPONSOR INSIGHT

EYE ON POLITICS

EDITORIAL TEAM

CHAMBER INSIGHT

SPONSOR INSIGHT:

One month into this legislative session we have approximately one third of the proposals printed in bill form. We expect quite a crush in the next few weeks. This has led some committees with bills which are due lengthy consideration to recommend that they not be acted upon this spring but be retained in committee.

One such bill is HB 76-FN. This bill establishes an environmental policy for New Hampshire. It defines an action which may significantly affect the environment and requires state departments, institutions, and agencies to hold a public scoping meeting and prepare an environmental impact statement for actions which may significantly affect the environment. The Department of Environmental Services has stated that there would be a significant, but as yet undetermined, cost to this proposal. "The Department issues approximately 12,000 permits and awards over \$50,000,000 in environmental grants per year. The Department assumes that a large but unknown percentage of these actions would significantly effect the environment, thereby triggering the requirement to conduct a public scoping process and environmental impact evaluation." The Department is only one of many departments which would be forced to comply with these requirements. This bill would appear to bring a significant cost to the State as well as the business community.

The public hearing on the bill was standing room only and attendees poured out into the halls. Businesses, environmental activists and a myriad of concerned groups and individuals were there to determine the true intention of the sponsor and to speak to their concerns.

The subcommittee that was appointed decided almost immediately to retain the HB 76. This gives the committee time to work on the complexities inherent in such a far-reaching proposal. They will work through the fall and make a recommendation to the full House next January.

Of the bills which have recently been heard in committee, business has had a strong, vocal response to HB123. This bill requires the passage of at least ten hours before any employee may be required to work again. The Labor Committee heard opposition from a wide variety of interests, both from the business community and a number of municipalities. The City of Manchester expressed the concern of many municipalities that this bill would prohibit any city employee, including snowplow operators from being called in less than ten hours after their normal shift was over. Businesses and healthcare groups agreed that this would be costly for them and a loss for the many workers who count on

the extra time.

On February 7th at 2:30 the House Commerce Committee will hear HB 481 relative to suspensions of liquor licenses. This bill, filed by Representative Hector Valez of Manchester, authorizes the suspension of a liquor license upon petition by a city or town that the license poses an immediate risk to public health, safety, or welfare.

CHAMBER INSIGHT:

With one month down in the 2007 legislative session, it can be safely said that there is much more action to come. As mentioned in *Sponsor Insight*, only 1/3 of the filed bills have been publicly released. Many of the bills that have been released, however, are of great interest to the business community. Here is an early look at some of the bills the Chamber is monitoring:

HB 311 & S-LSR 0311 – These two pieces of legislation are critical to the Chamber's strategic goal of restoring commuter rail service to NH. HB 311 studies the issue of creating a liability cap on insurance costs and S-LSR 0311 creates a NH Rail Authority that will serve as the administrative and governing body of the rail system. The Chamber strongly supports both of these concepts and looks forward to working with the legislature on their successful passage.

HB81 – This bill as introduced requires that all employees called into work must be paid for at least 4 hours of work. The current statute requires for an employer to only pay for 2 hours of work. While the House Labor committee has signaled interest in amending this bill to lower the proposal to 3 hours, the Chamber Government Affairs Committee (GAC) remains concerned with potential impact of this bill and will monitor its progress closely.

HB99 – This bill as introduced proposes to prohibit youths under the age 17 from working past 9 p.m. during the school year. The House Labor committee intends to amend this bill significantly, and in essence “gut” the bill and remove its original intention. The committee intends to replace the original language with an increase in the fine for violating child labor laws. The Chamber will continue to closely monitor this legislation to ensure the final product is acceptable to the business community.

HB106 – This bill establishes a procedure for legislators to take extended leaves of absences (of up to two years) from employment in order to serve as in the general court. While the latest news suggests this bill will be deemed “inexpedient to legislate” (ITL), the Chamber will continue to monitor this bill because of the potential burden it poses on the business community.

HB143 – This bill deals with the apportionment of damages in civil actions, and specifically defines the term “party” in civil cases. The Chamber is deeply concerned about the potential impact of this bill on business and municipalities, whom often can be subject to cases that award damages.

SB97 – This bill creates a steady stream of funding for the NH's Worker Training Fund. Under the current statute, the fund only receives funding if the Unemployment Trust Fund reaches a certain trigger. This legislation will amend the trigger to ensure a steady stream of funding for the program while providing additional administrative funding to the NH Dept. of Employment Security, the department that oversees the trust fund. The Governor, numerous legislators, NH DRED, and other business groups support this legislation. The GAC looks forward to working with this coalition of supporters and the legislature to see

this proposal passed.

As you can see a wide variety of issues and proposals have come before the business community thus far. *Capitol Insight* will continue to update you on the status of these bills and many more as the session progresses. If you have any questions regarding these proposals, please do not hesitate to contact the Chamber.

Michael Skelton
Director of Economic Development and Advocacy
Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
michaels@manchester-chamber.org

EYE ON POLITICS:

NH State Legislature www.state.nh.us

The Union Leader www.theunionleader.com/primaryindex.html

NH Primary Info www.nhprimary.com

EDITORIAL TEAM:

Brad Cook

Sheehan, Phinney, Bass, + Green, P.A.
1000 Elm Street
Manchester , New Hampshire 03101
bcook@sheehan.com
800-625-SPBG

Valerie Acres

Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group
2 Eagle Square
Concord , New Hampshire 03301
vacres@sheehan.com
603-228-2370

Bruce Berke

Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group
2 Eagle Square
Concord , New Hampshire 03301
bberke@sheehan.com
603-228-2370

Henry Veilleux

Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group
2 Eagle Square
Concord , New Hampshire 03301
hveilleux@sheehan.com
603-228-2370

Liz Murphy

Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group
2 Eagle Square

Concord , New Hampshire 03301
lmurphy@sheehan.com
603-228-2370

Michael Skelton

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
889 Elm Street , Third Floor
Manchester , New Hampshire 03101
michaels@manchester-chamber.org
603-666-6600 ext. 107