



## GREATER MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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### SPONSOR INSIGHT:

A couple of things are becoming evident as the legislative session progresses and literally hundreds of bills are heard each week. First, committees are getting used to their routine and pace and holding many hearings. In the process of doing so, the House and Senate Calendars indicate when hearings, sub-committee work sessions and committee votes, called Executive Sessions, are scheduled. This is a change from prior years that has drawn favorable comment. Previously, Executive Sessions could be held at any time a committee chair found a few minutes, and those interested in following legislation had no notice or warning of when the votes would be held. The new system seems to benefit everyone, although it puts committees under more scheduling constraints.

Second, and of growing concern to business groups such as the Chambers of Commerce around the state and their committees that follow public policy, is the fact that there appear to be a large number of bills affecting businesses that would not have had a chance of passage in prior years, that either are getting positive recommendations from committees, or are being "retained" in committee, which means the committee is taking no action at this time, but keeping the bills to consider later, meaning they are still alive. What the legislature with Democratic majorities in each house, and new leadership, will do with these bills will say a lot about the nature of current New Hampshire government. Each bill is the "good idea" of a legislator or his or her constituent who has suggested the bill as the way to solve a perceived problem, but when the price of all proposals is added up, the cost to businesses would be large, were they to become law.

A few examples from this year that have caught the attention of business groups with a large aggregate cost are:

Senate Bill 197, a bill mandating that employers provide health insurance to divorced spouses of employees after a divorce, House Bill 711 that would require insurance coverage for the cost of hormone treatment drugs for transsexuals, HB 78 that extends the time for certain unmarried children to be covered by health insurance to age 24, and HB738 requiring insurance coverage for infertility diagnosis and treatment. Any bill that mandates coverage, no matter how worthy, increases insurance premiums which in turn costs employers or, in the extreme, results in coverage becoming too expensive, leaving a group of employees without coverage.

House Bill 925 is a bill that increases taxes on many things. It reinstates the estate tax on estates of a certain size, imposes a luxury tax on items costing over \$10,000, a sales tax on vehicles costing over \$30,000, changes the beer tax, property taxes and imposes a new "payroll tax" for businesses whose weekly payrolls are greater than \$10,000. This bill

is aimed at providing a mechanism to pay for an “adequate education” and will be retained by the Ways and Means Committee to see what they need to pay for education. Businesses should note that the absence of a general sales or income tax proposal does not mean there is no danger of increased taxes.

Bills concerning the environment and how businesses deal with hazardous materials, regulating large water withdrawal from the ground, restricting how “tracking devices” can be used with the potential to have an impact on credit cards, cell phones, and the like, many human resource proposals including a mandated minimum number of hours employees be paid if called in to work, many bills on education funding and other matters are working their way through the legislative process. Each has a cost, and business would pay it, to a large degree.

As stated above, each particular bill may have a good motive and a minor impact. Taken together, however, they add up to big expenses for business, if passed. It is not too early for an examination of the aggregate impact of the proposals before the General Court, communication with legislative leadership and the Governor’s office expressing concern about the over-all impact. As the measures continue to progress, are passed by the first house in which they are introduced, and go to hearing in the second body, concern needs to be voiced. If and when they get to committees of conference to iron out differences, if any, the business community needs to be ready to express its concern again. Each Chamber member should be alert to the efforts of all business groups to identify these costs and point them out to legislators of both parties, whether in leadership or not.

Otherwise, it may be too late, business costs may be affected, and the business climate of New Hampshire eroded further—all as the result of many, many new laws that were introduced with the best of intentions.

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#### CHAMBER INSIGHT:

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On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber’s Government Affairs Committee, I cordially invite you to join your local elected officials from the region’s legislative delegation to be our guests at the annual Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce Legislative Dinner on Monday, April 9, 2007. The dinner will be held at the Bedford Village Inn from 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

The purpose of this event is to network with your fellow members of the local business community and local legislators in an effort to facilitate communication during the legislative session and beyond. The region’s entire legislative delegation has been invited, including State Representatives, State Senators, Executive Councilors, House Leadership, Senate Leadership, and Governor Lynch.

This year’s program will feature the new party chairs of the State Republican and State Democratic parties. Each new party chair will discuss their respective party platforms, the evolution of these platforms, current issues important to the business community, and how they plan to protect the NH primary. This dinner will also give you the opportunity to learn about the Chamber’s program of work in the area of government affairs and our top strategic legislative and economic development priorities for 2007 and beyond.

I hope you will join us on April 9th for this very important and informative event. Please call the Chamber at 666-6600 or visit [www.manchester-chamber.org](http://www.manchester-chamber.org) to register for this event or if you need more information. The cost for this event is \$75 for GMCC members and \$95 for non-members.

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NH State Legislature [www.state.nh.us](http://www.state.nh.us)

The Union Leader [www.theunionleader.com/primaryindex.html](http://www.theunionleader.com/primaryindex.html)

NH Primary Info [www.nhprimary.com](http://www.nhprimary.com)

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