



## GREATER MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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### SPONSOR INSIGHT:

As the legislature moves into the second phase of the 2007 session, the heat turns up on some controversial issues which have made the cut and move to the second body. House bills will receive consideration in the Senate and the Senate bills in the House.

The Senate will be looking at HB 802. "The seatbelt bill" as it is generally referred to would make mandatory the use of seatbelts for adults in motor vehicles. This bill would see New Hampshire become the last state in the country (and Canada) to have such a law. A very large coalition led by the New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police is supporting its passage. The group is comprised of thirty-five member organizations including insurance companies, healthcare groups, and public safety officials. Over 130 supporters signed up to speak in the House where it passed on a vote of 153 to 140. In the "Live Free or Die" state, the opponents see this as a major assault on personal freedom.

Another bill with an enormous amount of interest is SB 140 which started off as an attempt to allow Public Service of New Hampshire to once again construct or acquire new generating facilities. Since the restructuring and deregulation of electric utilities a few years ago, new generation development has been left to merchant groups. This is an effort to protect utility ratepayers from the risk of new construction costs and energy spikes. The merchant plant companies and their shareholders have taken that risk. The bill as it went to the House, instead, sought action from the Public Utility Commission to improve transmission and distribution facilities in the North Country and provided for an expedited siting process for renewable energy generating projects. These changes support Governor Lynch's objective for producing twenty-five percent of the state's energy needs from renewables by 2025. The bill goes hand in hand with HB 873 which would establish the standards requiring electric utilities to obtain renewable energy certificates for a certain percentage of the power they serve and is intended as a major incentive for the increase in the development of renewable power. This bill recently passed the House, had a hearing in the Senate and is headed to the Senate floor with a positive recommendation.

### CHAMBER INSIGHT:

Among the many high profile issues being debated in Concord lately, the education funding issue clearly has the most at stake for the business community. To recap, last fall the State Supreme Court upheld previous court decisions require the legislature to define, and cost out and pay for an adequate education. The court set a deadline of June 30 th to

fulfill these criteria. The court's decision also affirmed New Hampshire's inability, under current law, to target aid to the cities and towns that need it most.

Many in the business community believe that without the ability to target aid, the state will ultimately be forced to increase business taxes, or implement a broad based sales or income tax to cover the cost of an adequate education. In response, many business organizations are supporting the Governor's amendment, CACR 18. What does CACR 18 do? The Governor's summary on CACR 18 states that the amendment "allows the state to target aid, sets a floor for state funding responsibility, and maintains judicial review." While debatable, CACR 18 appears to be the best option for those who believe in targeting aid and maintain that education is a shared responsibility of among municipal, state and federal governments.

Such business organizations like the BIA, Greater Portsmouth Chamber, and the NH Lodging and Restaurant Association have signaled their support for CACR 18. They contend that since the New Hampshire business community is already the largest contributor of real dollars to the state Education Trust Fund, that further business tax increases will hurt the economy and damage New Hampshire's low tax competitive advantage over other states.

The GMCC Government Affairs Committee is currently reviewing CACR 18. While education funding is complex and difficult issue, the GMCC feels that because of the potential impact this issue may have on the business community it is imperative that we review and take a position on potential solutions such as CACR 18. If you have feedback concerning this issue please feel free to contact the Chamber at [michaels@manchester-chamber.org](mailto:michaels@manchester-chamber.org).

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#### EYE ON POLITICS:

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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)

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