



GREATER MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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During the last week of May and the first week of June the House and Senate will be taking up some of the most challenging and controversial issues of the Session. Among those are some that have been brought to your attention in this column in recent months due to the potential for impact on the business community.

On May 31st, after a lengthy debate and after several proposed amendments were voted down, SB 42 "Prohibiting smoking in restaurants cocktail lounges and certain public places" passed the House on a vote of 224-117. It will move next to the Governor's desk. Much of the support for this bill came from restaurant employees who felt they were subject to health risks from second hand smoke.

SB 75 was originally titled "Establishing a South Central N.H. rail transit authority that will have responsibility for developing and providing commuter rail transportation services in NH". This bill was scheduled for a vote by the House on May 31. However, due to its complexity and potentially lengthy debate it was made a special order for the next week. When this bill first reached the House Transportation Committee it was presented as a rail system between Nashua and Lowell. The Committee realized the Nashua - Lowell line is a priority but believed the authority should extend to other areas of the State. It was decided to expand the scope of the authority and to rename it The New Hampshire Rail Authority. This authority will have responsibility for developing and providing commuter rail and related public transportation services in New Hampshire. Members have been added from the Manchester area and from communities around the state as far north as Berlin.

In the Senate, on May 31st, HB143 relative to the apportionment of damages in civil suits was tabled. This bill had been opposed by the business community. It is believed that under this bill payment of damages there could result in greater damages paid by lesser parties. There has been a great debate over this bill throughout the session and it is as yet unclear whether the proponents or opponents have the votes. With this bill sitting in the table and amendments being considered, it could be voted on at any time in an upcoming session.

Liz Murphy
Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group

CHAMBER INSIGHT:

Chamber Insight 6-1-07

A big political week in New Hampshire is underway with one Presidential debate in the books and another scheduled for tomorrow night. Education funding, however, is the real political story all New Hampshire citizens should be tuned into this week.

On Wednesday the House of Representatives will vote on a proposed constitutional amendment, CACR 18, relative to education funding. CACR 18 was originally submitted by Governor Lynch, passed the Senate in its original form, and has since been significantly amended by the House Finance Committee. The Committee has recommended CACR 18 as "ought to pass" by a vote of 15 to 10. In order to move forward, CACR 18 will need to receive 2/3 rds vote on the House Floor.

Why is this vote such a big deal? If the legislature does reach a solution this session the state will be forced to comply with NH Supreme Court decisions that require the state to pay the entire share of an "adequate education," the price tag for which is estimated to be anywhere from \$1.2 to \$2 billion. Where would the state look to for additional funding to cover these costs? The business community will likely be forced to pick up the tab in the form of increased business taxes, or a broad based tax. This outcome would permanently damage the "NH Advantage" that makes New Hampshire such a great place to live, and to do business.

With this outcome a distinct possibility, the New Hampshire business community is uniting in support of CACR 18 and asking our legislators to put partisan politics aside and to solve education funding once and for all. CACR 18, as passed by House Finance, represents a fair compromise of language that will allow for the state to efficiently and thoughtfully target aid to the communities that need it the most. Furthermore, by passing CACR 18 the legislature will finally be giving the citizens of New Hampshire a chance to weigh in on this issue. State law requires that all constitutional amendments be ratified on the state ballot. Who better to decide this important issue than the people themselves?

The Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, along with several other business organizations, strongly support CACR 18 and ask you to please contact let your voice be heard on this issue. Please contact your local representative and ask them to support CACR 18 on Wednesday June 6 th . Legislators must be reminded that doing nothing is simply not an option this time. Either we address this issue now or New Hampshire's business climate will change drastically as new or increased taxes will be put into place. Please visit this [link](#) to contact your legislator today.

Michael Skelton
Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

EYE ON POLITICS: ---

NH State Legislature www.state.nh.us

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

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