



GREATER MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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The New Hampshire Legislature has finished its business for the 2007 Legislative Session. Barring any crisis which might cause them to come back into Session, legislators won't return until January 2008. Committees will work on bills this summer and fall, but action by the full House and Senate is done for this year.

State Operating Budget: This past Wednesday, the House and Senate approved a State Operating Budget for fiscal years 2008 and 2009. Major components include:

- A new allocation of costs between the counties and the State that will have the State shift costs for all nursing home and elderly home-care costs onto counties, while the state picks up juvenile services costs.
- \$12 million for the Land & Community Heritage Investment Program, and a new \$25 fee on documents filed with the Register of Deeds to help fund this program.
- A new research and development tax credit for businesses.
- Funding to eliminate in three years the waiting list for services to developmentally disabled young adults.
- A 28-cent increase in the tobacco tax.
- Increase in fees for registering cars and light trucks by \$6 a year and for heavy trucks by \$200 a year.

Defining and Costing and Adequate Education: The House and Senate approved legislation defining an "adequate" education, meeting the NH Supreme Court deadline to do so by June 30, 2007. The definition in House Bill 927 focuses on the minimum standards for school approval as they pertain to nine areas of instruction, including kindergarten. The next step for the legislature is to take this definition and put a price tag on it. HB 927 creates a committee comprised of 5 House members and 5 Senators charged with coming up with a cost of an adequate education; developing and proposing criteria for identifying schools with enhanced needs, and identifying and proposing any resources these schools may need. The Committee has a February 1, 2008 deadline to complete its task. Once an adequate education is priced, the legislature will need to figure out how to pay for it. Depending on its cost, talk of an income tax, casino gambling, any number of other sources of revenue, or another attempt at a constitutional amendment will heat up.

NH Conservation and Housing Planning Program: The House and Senate gave final approval to SB 217, which will establish a "New Hampshire housing and conservation

planning program.” This legislation is the product of the “Growth Development Roundtable,” of which the Chamber was a participant. In a nutshell, the program will provide a grant program to be administered at the state level that will offer technical planning grants to New Hampshire’s communities. Many of our smaller towns lack the resources and staff to engage in comprehensive planning. The technical grants provided by this program will allow interested communities the ability to integrate conservation, economic development, and housing development into a comprehensive master planning strategy. The program recognizes the each community will have their own unique vision of how they want to see their community develop thus maintaining the New Hampshire tradition of local control. The legislature has provided \$400,000 in the budget to fund this program.

Task Force on Work and Family: Final approval was given to legislation establishing a task force on work and family. The task force will be charged with “collecting data and information concerning work-family issues, including employer policies and practices that enable employees to balance work responsibilities with family commitments.” It will also “examine possible incentives that could be initiated by the state to encourage the successful policies which have been identified as effective.” In addition, it will “consider changes to statutes or rules which would allow for greater flexibility on the part of businesses to accommodate the changing needs of employees and their families.” The task force is directed to file an interim report by November 1, 2007, and a final report by November 1, 2008.

Henry Veilleux
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CHAMBER INSIGHT:

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With last week’s recap of the Chamber’s 2007 legislative accomplishments, it is now time to turn our focus to the 2008 legislative session. The Chamber Government Affairs Committee and Chamber Board of Directors will begin planning and establishing our strategic goals this fall. However, in order to fully develop our goals, we need your input.

Please take a moment and consider the policy items below. Please rank them in order of importance and send the Chamber your thoughts at michaels@manchester-chamber.org.

- The threat of new or increased taxes.
- The increase of the cost of doing business due to new or expanded regulatory procedures.
- The rising cost of healthcare.
- The decay of state infrastructure (roads, highways, bridges, waste water systems)
- The need for multi-modal transportation (rail, expanded public transportation)
- Energy
- The shrinking of a qualified, educated, and trained workforce. More specifically, the loss of New Hampshire’s “young professionals.”
- Education Funding
- Other issues?

Please send us your thoughts on these issues and others that are not listed. Your participation will help shape a policy agenda that is truly reflective of the needs of the

Greater Manchester region's business community.

Michael Skelton
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EYE ON POLITICS:

NH State Legislature www.state.nh.us

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

NH Primary Info www.nhprimary.com

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