

GREATER NASHUA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

THE CHAMBER

THE "BOTTOM LINE" LEGISLATIVE REPORT

A Weekly Report From the Chamber on Issues Affecting You in the State Capital

January 24, 2005

Issue #2

A LOOK AT GRANITE CARE

MINING THE DEPTHS OF GRANITE CARE. Over the coming months, you can watch in this space for updates and insights on Granite Care and the Medicaid reform debate. Why is this important for business? What is at stake is the largest single piece of the state budget. The possible shortfalls in Medicaid funding over the next several years extend into the hundreds of millions of dollars. Consequently, how the state decides to fund Medicaid is going to have a more dramatic impact on the state budget, and on state taxation and revenue systems, than school funding currently does.

On Monday, Governor Lynch began what he is calling a series of "public conversations" regarding Medicaid reform. Notably, the Governor's press release announcing these events does not mention by name the Department of Health and Human Services' "Granite Care" proposal. Don't think for a second that that was merely an oversight. This is shaping up to be an interesting debate not just between the various groups following Medicaid reform, but also between the Governor and his own HHS Commissioner (whose term does not end for another two years and who says that he will serve out his term).

At the same time, a subcommittee of the House Health and Human Services Committee has begun reviewing aspects of Granite Care which will later be proposed in legislation. And in just a couple of weeks the Governor will be submitting a proposed state budget which will be scrutinized first in the House Finance Committee. This budget year promises to be one of the most momentous ever. We will be following it closely.

Next week, we will give you a primer on the main points of dispute in Medicaid reform. Stay tuned.

THE WEEK JUST PAST ... A summary of the issues the Chamber is working on, on behalf of your business.

HB 137 (Allowing Part-time Employees To Seek Unemployment Compensation If They Cannot Obtain Part-time Work). This one never runs out of work. **HB 137** is another salvo in the long-running controversy over whether and to what extent a part-time employee should be allowed to collect unemployment benefits. The House Labor Committee began its review on Wednesday.

HB 167 (Mail-in Rebates). This bill, which the House Commerce Committee heard on Wednesday, would require all merchants to immediately honor mail-in rebate coupons at the time of

sale. The Chamber thinks that this is a bad idea because the rebate programs are offered by manufacturers, not the retailer. The retailer traditionally keeps the entire retail price and the rebate is given to the customer directly by the manufacturer. This bill would force the retailer to apply for the rebate. There are huge potential fraud issues, and we don't think it makes sense to create yet another reason for people to bring lawsuits.

HB 91 (Exemption From Property Taxation For Telephone Poles And Conduits). Stringing this issue which was solved in 2004 out into 2005, this bill proves that there is no such thing as long distance when it comes to the issue presented here. Once again, for the third time in the last three years, the legislature is being asked to remove the property tax exemption which currently extends to telephone poles and conduits. This legislation, which is one of the Chamber's priorities this year, has consistently been opposed by the Chamber for years because of its disproportionate impact on businesses. If the telephone pole exemption is lifted, and cities and towns are free to assess property taxes on telephone poles and wires, the costs undoubtedly will be passed along to the customers of landline companies, which, in many cases, are small businesses. If the bill passes, it surely is going to result in small businesses paying more money to their telephone company, and their local city or town property taxes will not decrease.

THIS WEEK'S WORK

- January 25, 2005 **HB 69** (property rights and large groundwater withdrawals) – Subcommittee Work Session – 10:00 a.m., LOB 305
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2005/HB0069.html>
- HB 126** (grounds for termination of employment) – Subcommittee Work Session – 10:00 a.m., LOB 307
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2005/HB0126.html>
- HB 176** (provision of rental and lease information of commercial and industrial property to assessing officials) – Hearing – 11:30 a.m., LOB 301
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2005/HB0176.html>
- HB 141** (planning board's authority to limit building permits) – Hearing – 1:30 p.m., LOB 301
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2005/HB0141.html>
- January 26, 2005 **HB 78** (state funding of regional vocational education centers) – Subcommittee Work Session – 10:00 a.m., LOB 201
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2005/HB0078.html>
- February 1, 2005 **HB 159** (insurance coverage for persons having deafness and hearing loss) – Hearing – 10:00 a.m., LOB 302
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2005/HB0159.html>
- HB 226** (provision of loss information to employers) – Hearing – 11:00 a.m., LOB 302
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2005/HB0226.html>

Please contact Teresa Rosenberger, Devine, Millimet - (603) 226-1000, or Chris Hodgdon, Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce - (603) 881-8333, if you have any questions.