

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

May 5, 2006

Issue #16

**THE WEEK JUST PAST...** It was a marathon couple of days in the New Hampshire House and Senate. What happened? Much passed, many were killed and more than usual tabled.

The Senate alone this week addressed upwards of 120 pieces of legislation and only finally recessed at the stroke of midnight. Here is a glimpse of what happened.

### **KILLED:**

**HB 1289.** New rules to protect the purity of Pennichuck Brook and its watershed were killed unanimously by the Senate.

**HB 1534.** Construction and demolition debris be designated and regulated as a solid waste. Dead by a 16-7 vote.

**SB 131.** Business tax credits for school vouchers - not this year!

**SB 380.** R&D tax credit for business will have to wait for another day. There was a HUGE floor fight on this bill. Interestingly, it was not partisan. Rep. Peyton Hinkle of Merrimack, one of our regional delegation, led the charge to pass the R&D credit. He did a fabulous job advocating for our NH businesses, but unfortunately at the end of the day the bill failed 192 to 107.

**SB 397.** A one-time temporary energy tax credit of \$500 died on a voice vote. No debate on spending this \$18 million.

### **PASSED:**

**HB 678** Reduces the premium tax for property and casualty companies from the present 2% to 1% and spreads it over a four year period. It requires the Insurance Commissioner and the Commissioner of the Department of Resources and Economic Development to "develop and implement" a plan to retain insurers and attract new ones. And, a bit problematic for some insurers, the bill now requires all carriers to annually prepay the premium tax bill. This is the case for the health carriers, left out on the reduction side because their inclusion would have "pinched" off more revenue that would have been palatable to lawmakers.

**HB 1167.** LCHIP, the land and community heritage investment program, was given \$500,000 by the Senate for the rest of the biennium. The House voted \$5 million. For sure there will be a committee of conference.

**HB 1474.** Increases the amount of unemployment compensation available to claimants and adjusts the taxable wage base. Increases the employer's contributions to unemployment compensation. Creates a Commission to look at merging the Department of Labor and the Department of Employment Security.

**HB 1741.** Hospitals have to report on infections to the department of health and human services. Who will establish a statewide database for public reporting of infections

**HB 1756.** The telecommunications industry is competitive. There are landline phones, wireless phones, satellite telecommunications, voice over internet cable, and others. The legislature, recognizing the competitive nature of telecommunications, has allowed the small land line phone companies to loosen their regulation.

**SB 363.** NH days of taxing the internet are limited. Federal law does not allow for taxing the internet, but those states who were taxing without authorization to do so were grandfathered. The grandfathering is about to expire. This bill will not allow the continuation of the internet tax and will set up a commission to help ease the pain for the state.

#### **TABLED:**

**HB 1555.** Establishing a commission to investigate cost drivers in providing health care.

**HB 1570** which, as introduced, would have provided dependent coverage to part time students through age 25. The bill was amended in the House to require that carriers include within the definition of dependent, and "child" who was living at home and unmarried, through age 23, or if a full or part-time student. While the Senate had already given its approval to a much more focused measure requiring carriers to accommodate "medical leave" for full time students over the age of 18 for up to 12 months, there was discomfort with the considerably broader implications of this bill but is likely to come off the table next week because it is one measure that seems poised to provide expanded access to young adults, a cohort most frequently uninsured.

**HB 506.** All employers, including charitable organizations, with 6 or more employees, except religious and fraternal, are now under the protection of the state law against discrimination.

#### **THE WEEK AHEAD...**

We are nearing the end and summer. Hurrah! No public hearings are scheduled. House and Senate Sessions are on May 11, 2006.

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