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Welcome - January 14, 2013

It's a new year, and with it comes the start of another legislative session in Concord. Your Chamber is proud of its long and rich history of representing business interests in Concord. Those efforts include a special legislative eblast we send you each Friday afternoon, entitled "The Advocate." While today's message is arriving in your inbox on a Monday, receiving and reading this piece each Friday will provide you an opportunity to keep tabs on what is happening in Concord with regard to business interests, and what your Chamber is doing to represent southern NH on those issues. The following information is your first eblast of the 2013 session...so, enjoy!

We wish to give a big thank-you to [Devine Millimet & Branch](#), who generously sponsors and helps manage this weekly eblast. We also wish to thank [ActiveEdge](#), a local marketing agency that does the technical work needed to format and send out this eblast to you.

[Back On Track: Rail Study Resurrected!](#)

Some intense lobbying by your Chamber and its allies paid off on Wednesday when the Capital Budget Overview Committee voted to give its approval to the use of toll tax credits that will, in turn, allow for the expenditure of \$1.9 million in federal and state money to complete a study of the viability of rail in the Capitol Corridor from Nashua to Concord.

This is not "the end of the line" on this issue (or, for that matter, on the almost unlimited array of rail-related metaphors/clichés which we could employ here). There still needs to be a vote by the Executive Council, and that will likely come toward the end of February. As our readers will recall, the rail study was blocked by a vote of the Executive Council last spring, when Councilor David Wheeler, representing the Greater Nashua region at that time, cast the deciding vote *against* spending the funds for the study. But Councilor Wheeler was defeated in the last election by our new Councilor, Debora Pignatelli, who is an avowed supporter of the study. So we think that the study will get a much more favorable review in the Council this time

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around.

This study is really a no-brainer, from our perspective. Ninety percent of the funding for this study is coming from the federal government. The private sector itself raised the money needed to even apply for that federal funding in the first place, which meant the State didn't even need to spend money on that phase. Why wouldn't we want to determine the facts so that we can know whether rail is a viable option which is worth pursuing, or whether it is a concept that should be laid aside?

We want to especially thank Representative David Campbell and Mayor Donnalee Lozeau, for their instrumental leadership and advocacy on this issue, and also thank our friends and allies in the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. Capital Budget Committee member Representative John Graham of Bedford told Kevin Landrigan of The Telegraph that the proponents of the study "obviously had done their homework."

[Update on Medicaid Managed Care](#)

One of the issues you are going to be hearing a lot about this year is Medicaid Managed Care. Last year, the State signed agreements with three managed care organizations to provide Medicaid services in New Hampshire. The implementation of those contracts is divided into three phases: so-called Step 1, which would cover acute care and mental health; Step 2, which covers items like developmental disabilities and long-term elder care; and Step 3, which would be the addition of about 55,000 new people to the Medicaid rolls (this group is essentially the working poor, and although the Federal Affordable Care Act mandated their inclusion in Medicaid, whether they end up on Medicaid is an issue now to be determined by the legislature, because the US Supreme Court ruled that the federal government cannot force the respective states to do this).

Later today, the Lewin Group, a consulting firm hired by the Department of Health and Human Services to provide New Hampshire with information concerning the impact of this Medicaid expansion, will be releasing a report concerning the economic impacts to the state if Medicaid is expanded. We will be looking forward to reviewing that report and we'll let you know what it says.

Although Medicaid expansion is going to be one of the most highly visible issues of this coming session, Medicaid Managed Care as a whole will also be a major topic of attention. Medicaid Managed Care has not yet been able to get off the ground in New Hampshire because the managed care organizations have not been able to sign contracts with enough health care providers to create an adequate provider network. So there are lots of moving parts here.

Later this month, Commissioner Nick Toumpas of DHHS will be meeting with our State Advocacy Committee, and we are looking forward to getting Commissioner Toumpas' up-to-the-minute perspective on where things stand.

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Thanks to all who participated in the Chamber's annual Legislative Symposium last Monday. This was the best one ever – we had 45 House members and Senators, over 50 business leaders, and Mayor Lozeau, in attendance. Over the course of the afternoon, we had some very enlightening discussions concerning energy, health care, and business taxes. This is an event unique to the Nashua Chamber that is made possible by the commitment of our Nashua-area legislators. This is a good opportunity for us to thank all of our local House members and Senators for their service and dedication. As you know, they're not in it for the money!

[Acknowledgements](#)

This weekly update is made possible by the generous support of [Devine Millimet & Branch](#), one of the state's top law firms and our Chamber's contracted representative in Concord. If your business has a legislative or local issue that needs strategic consulting and attention, they are a valuable resource that can help navigate you through both local and state processes.

This weekly update is designed and maintained by our friends at [ActiveEdge](#), and we thank them for their help in delivering this piece to your inbox every Friday!

If you have questions about this update, or comments to share with us about other issues in Concord, please email Chris Williams at cwilliams@nashuachamber.com. We want to be sure we're representing you to the best of our ability, so do not hesitate to reach out to us!

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