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## Welcome - March 15, 2013

This electronic publication, known as **The Advocate**, is brought to you each Friday by your Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with our friends at [Devine Millimet & Branch](#), and [ActiveEdge](#). Please use this piece to review what has happened in Concord this past week, read about our Chamber's lobbying efforts relating to those activities, and preview what we are doing on behalf of our Chamber members in the coming week.

### [This Week](#)

#### [Research & Development Tax Credit Passes House; On to Governor \(SB 1\)](#)

Wish it was always this fast! The House passed **SB 1** on Wednesday, and then the Senate quickly concurred with the minor House amendments yesterday, which finishes off the review of SB 1 by the Legislature and sends the bill off to the Governor for her signature. This will presumably become Chapter 1 of the 2013 laws of New Hampshire, and we applaud the House, Senate and the Governor for making this a top priority this year.

Let's not kid ourselves that this is an economic development cure-all. While the credit has been doubled, the new cap of \$2 million is still a pretty limited amount. But as we have been saying throughout the last several years as the issue of the credit has been considered by the Legislature, the passage of this law sends a strong pro-business message to the businesses already in New Hampshire and businesses that might be considering coming here. Great work by all involved.

#### [House Passes State Minimum Wage Law \(HB 501\)](#)

Also on Wednesday, the House passed **HB 501**, which establishes a State minimum wage law. Two years ago, the House and Senate repealed the state

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minimum wage, making it the case that the amount set in federal law would be the only applicable minimum wage provision in New Hampshire. HB 501 is really only a symbolic piece of legislation, because the minimum wage that it establishes for New Hampshire is \$7.25 an hour, the same amount which the federal law mandates. If HB 501 passes the Senate, there would be no further increases without the enactment of a new law.

[Ponders Reduction in Gas Tax Proposal](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

## [Chris Williams Meets with Governor Hassan](#)

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Your Chamber president traveled to Concord this past Wednesday morning to meet with Governor Hassan and a number of other top state business leaders to discuss strategies for keeping and attracting young workers in New Hampshire. Many of you know Williams has been deeply engaged in conversations and activities on this issue for the past five years, having helped found two young professionals groups in the state (Nashua's iUGO and Manchester's young professional network), while also co-chairing Governor Lynch's task force on this issue and also sitting on the board of the statewide Stay Work Play initiative.

### **Useful Links**

[Find contact info for your local State Representative](#)

[Find contact info for your local State Senator](#)

Wednesday's meeting, hosted by the aforementioned Stay Work Play, was the first opportunity since her election for Williams and his fellow board directors to directly discuss strategies on which they and the Governor can collaborate.

[Conduct your own search for legislation](#)

[Read The Telegraph's latest weekly column on state political happenings](#)

Williams is optimistic there will be some strategies specifically relating to finding workers to fill the very high number of software development jobs that are available in NH. You might be surprised to know that, while the jobs economy has been anemic the last several years, the availability of software development positions in NH has continued to increase and is becoming an acute point of concern for high tech companies across NH.

[Read The Union Leader's latest weekly column on state legislative happenings](#)

Stay tuned for more developments coming out of this meeting, in the coming months. And, feed your ideas and comments to Williams, since he is on the forefront of this issue on our behalf!

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## [House Finance Committee Holds Public Hearing in Nashua on State Budget](#)

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On Monday night, the House Finance Committee traveled to Nashua as part of its series of state-wide public hearings on the Governor's proposed state budget. The folks testifying at the three-hour Nashua Community College hearing largely spoke to health care issues, the largest single part of the State's biennial operating budget.

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The House Finance Committee is in the final weeks of its review of the budget, and it has to complete its work and issue a recommendation to the full House by April 4. Realistically, that deadline falls even sooner, because the subcommittees of the Finance Committee that review the individual segments of the budget have to be done with their work by March 28, and what those subcommittees say invariably goes as far as the final full committee vote.

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The House picture is pretty bleak for health care businesses like hospitals and

nursing homes that provide Medicaid services for the State but whom the State reimburses at only a fraction of the cost to provide that care. As the fact that the hospitals are in the midst of litigation with the State over Medicaid reimbursement would indicate, the Medicaid funding situation is reaching dire levels. On the nursing home side, the budget that DHHS proposed back in the fall said that the State would need to increase the Medicaid appropriation for nursing homes by about 50% more than the current appropriation level just to get to a point where those businesses are paid Medicaid rates which the State's rate system says they should be paid (and that rate is not even near the full cost of providing that Medicaid care).

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Revenue is a big issue here. As you will remember, the Governor's budget relied upon over \$80 million in casino revenue. When Representative Mary Jane Wallner, the Chair of the House Finance Committee, started things off a few weeks ago by announcing that the House was likely not going to pass a casino bill and that the House Finance Committee would therefore not plan on the \$80 million which would be produced from the licensing fees for the casino, it created a situation where the House is going to have to largely keep in place some of the significant budget cuts which were made by the Republican House two years ago.

The Senate on Thursday passed its casino bill (SB 152) by a margin of 16-8, and thus the Senate will be working with a higher revenue number than the House has been when the Senate gets the budget in a couple of weeks. This sets up the possibility of a truly "bizarro world" conclusion to the budget season in June. If the Republican-dominated Senate passes a budget that restores some of the social service cuts that seem to be about to happen in the Democratic-majority House, then the budget Committee of Conference could see the Democratic House having to defend the sorts of cuts that many Democratic legislators condemned two years ago, while the Republican Senate (probably with the support of the Democratic Governor) could be perceived as the champion of social service recipients and providers. Who knows?

## [House Ways and Means Committee Ponders Reduction in Gas Tax Proposal](#)

On Thursday, the House Ways and Means Committee reviewed **HB 617**, Representative Campbell's proposed 15 cent gas tax increase bill. From the discussions in the Committee yesterday, it looks like the Committee might end up recommending to the full House a reduced version of the proposed gas tax increase. Rep. Campbell agreed before the Committee that he could accept a proposal made by Ways and Means vice-chair Patricia Lovejoy to do a 12-cent increase instead.

The Chamber's State Advocacy Committee will be discussing the Chamber's position on the gas tax increase, as well the Chamber's position on the proposed Medicaid expansion, at the upcoming meeting of the Committee on March 25th. Please let us know your thoughts on those important issues if you would like to weigh in as a Chamber member.

## [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](mailto: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!

**J. Christopher Williams**  
**President & CEO**  
**Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce**  
**142 Main St.**  
**Nashua, NH 03060**  
**Phone: 603.881.8333**  
**Fax: 603.881.7323**