

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

April 7, 2006

Issue #12

THE WEEK JUST PAST...

NEW HAMPSHIRE COULD BE THE FIRST STATE TO REGULATE TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT.

Radio Frequency Identification Technology. The legislation dealing with radio frequency identification technology, **HB 203**, is continuing its course through the legislative process, despite a growing conglomeration of businesses opposing the bill. Banking, pharmaceutical, colleges, credit card companies, automobile manufacturers, and telecom interests are all energized in opposition, along with a wide array of manufacturing and retail interests (grocery stores, clothing stores, electronics), both individual companies and associations.

While all involved seem to embrace the establishment of a commission to look into the complexities of the technology and its implications for New Hampshire consumers, the remainder of the bill, despite a delayed effective date, is regulating a promising new technology application. The whole debate has seasoned legislative action followers scratching their heads.

Until the contemplated commission has its say, few have any insight into what might motivate any kind of action. More than a few are concerned that the legislation, which hastily addresses a complex technology without sufficient regard for unintended consequences, sends a negative message about the climate for business and economic development in the state.

SMOKING BAN DOUSED. The Senate voted by the narrowest of margins (12-11) to kill **HB 1177**, the bill which would have banned smoking in New Hampshire bars and restaurants. In an emotional and sometimes bitter debate, both sides pulled out all the stops. Opponents of the ban cited John Adams and Thomas Jefferson and argued that government should not interfere with something which the market can dictate on its own. Senators who supported the ban related stories of loved ones who had died of cancer and cited polls which demonstrate the overwhelming support for the ban from the state's citizens.

You can bet the farm that this will be back next year. We are still live free or die for the moment!

MICHELLE’S LAW PASSES. In contrast to the contentious battle over the cigarette ban, the Senate floor turned into a love fest when it came time to vote on **HB 37**, “Michelle’s Law”. This bill, which the Chamber worked to amend, permits full-time college students to be maintained on a family health insurance plan for up to 12 months if they have an illness which requires that they take a leave of absence from the school. The bill now goes back to the House for concurrence and will be signed by the Governor.

CHAMBER SUPPORTS PRO BUSINESS R&D TAX CREDIT LEGISLATION. The House Ways & Means Committee held a hearing on **SB 380** which had a resounding endorsement by all the key business groups in the state, the Nashua and Manchester Chambers, the BIA, High Tech Council, and BAE. The Governor sent a letter of support. The Department of Revenue Administration was the lone opposition, saying they can’t administer the bill. That can be fixed!

VICTORY FOR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION. The Nashua Chamber has been a steadfast business voice in supporting **HB 657**, the community revitalization incentive. It passed unanimously in the Senate. Off to the Governor for his sure signature. The bill gives municipalities a new tool for inducing developers and property owners to rehabilitate declining buildings in downtowns and town centers. It will give a boost to deteriorated urban centers, rehab historic structures, give new vitality to the economic and social character of towns and cities, combat sprawl, and can be used for building affordable housing.

The bill essentially offers a tax break to developers by freezing property values at the pre-rehab level for 5 years or more after the rehabilitation is done. In most senses, it does not “cost” the tax payers anything, since the taxes would have been deflated anyway if the renovation could not occur without the incentive.

It can only be used in municipalities that vote to empower their officials to use it. So the challenge now is getting this new tool enacted by the city. This new tool could go a long way in beginning to solve our workforce housing issues.

THE WEEKS AHEAD...

April 10, 2006 **HB 689** (jurisdiction of NH commission for human rights over housing discrimination cases) - Hearing - 1:30 p.m., SH 103
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB0689.html>

HJR 25 (encouraging the US Congress to propose an amendment to the Constitution concerning eminent domain) - Hearing - 1:10 p.m., SH 103
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HJR0025.html>

April 11, 2006 **HB 1626** (appropriations for the expenses of certain departments of the state) - Hearing - 3:00 p.m., LOB 102
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB1626.html>

HB 1673 (reduction of mercury emissions) - Hearing - 3:15 p.m., LOB 102
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB1673.html>

HB 1741 (reporting requirements concerning infections in hospitals) -
Hearing - 10:45 a.m., LOB 101
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB1741.html>

SB 265 (workers' compensation requirements for out-of-state employers &
employees) - Public Hearing - 10:00 a.m., LOB 307
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/SB0265.html>

SB 267 (definition of employee & clarifying the criteria for exempting
workers from employee status) - Public Hearing - 11:00 a.m. LOB 307
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/SB0267.html>

SB 273 (reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities) -
Public Hearing - 10:30 a.m., LOB 307
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/SB0273.html>

SB 386 (large groundwater withdrawals) - Public Hearing - 10:00 a.m.,
LOB 305; Full Committee Work Session - 10:30 a.m., LOB 305
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/SB0386.html>

April 12, 2006

CACR 30 (limits on taking of private property by eminent domain) -
Hearing - 11:50 a.m., SH 100
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/CACR0030.html>

SB 287 (changes to the eminent domain statute) - Subcommittee Work
Session - Following House Session 7 Before Executive Session - LOB 208
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/SB0287.html>

April 13, 2006

SB 314 (establishing minimum renewable standards for energy portfolios) -
Public Hearing - 11:00 a.m., LOB 304)
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/SB0314.html>

SB 369 (portability, availability, and renewability of health coverage) -
Subcommittee Work Session - 9:00 a.m., LOB 302
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/SB0369.html>

April 18, 2006

HB 1555 (cost drivers in providing health care) - Hearing - 10:15 a.m.,
LOB 101 <http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB1555.html>

HB 1627 (assessment of open space land) - Hearing - 3:15 p.m., LOB 102
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB1627.html>

HB 1751 (penalties for failure to have workers' compensation coverage) -
Hearing - 10:35 a.m., LOB 102
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB1751.html>

April 19, 2006

HB 1305 (authorizing cities to adopt certain bylaws & ordinances relative to
businesses obtaining city permits) - Hearing - 11:00 a.m., SH 103
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB1305.html>

HB 1474 (unemployment compensation contribution rates and benefits) -
Hearing - 11:50 a.m., SH 100
<http://gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2006/HB1474.html>

Please contact Teresa Rosenberger, Devine, Millimet - (603) 410-1705, or the Greater Nashua Chamber of
Commerce - (603) 881-8333, if you have any questions.