

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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Issue 10

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WEEK 10

We are at the halfway point in the legislative session and both the House and Senate have passed only 9 bills. There were over 500 bills introduced this year, it will be interesting to see how many are passed by the end of the session.

If you would like to visit the statehouse please feel free to contact me anytime. I can arrange a meeting or set-up an opportunity to testify on a certain bill.

WATER QUALITY

S-260 An act relating to funding the cleanup of State waters

As I have said before the Senate Agriculture and the Senate Natural Resources committees have spent many hours discussing and taking testimony on **S-260**. The end result is two rather different bills. On Thursday afternoon Senator Lyons introduced a third version of **S-260** to Senate Finance. Senator Lyon's version of **S-260** deals only with creating a funding system for clean water.

I am not really sure what **S-260** will look like in the end.

S-276 An act relating to rural economic development

The Senate Finance committee took testimony on the fiscal impact of **S-276** from Joint Fiscal. The estimates from Joint Fiscal on Sections 5-9 of **S-276** were over \$470,000 the first year and over a \$1,000,000 in future years. The Senate Finance committee decided to remove Sections 5-9. Sections 5-9 dealt with advanced wood boiler sales tax exemptions, income tax credit. The bill does still include the following language: *motor vehicles used for timber cutting, timber removal, and processing of timber or other solid wood forest products intended to be sold ultimately at retail: skidders with grapple and cable, feller bunchers, cut-to-length processors, forwarders, delimiters, loader slashers, log loaders, whole-tree chippers, stationary screening systems, portable sawmills, and firewood processors, elevators, and screens will be tax exempt.* **S-276** is now in Senate Appropriations.

S-255 An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects

S-255 seems to have hit a wall. The bill passed out of the Senate Agriculture committee and then went to Senate Natural Resources. The Senate Natural Resources committee had some concerns with the bill. At the same time Senate Finance and then Senate Government Operations were also looking at the bill. At this point it look like the bill will not make it out of committee and will miss the crossover deadline, meaning it probably won't be taken up again this year.

As you remember **S-255** contained language dealing with:

- Agriculture water quality complaints
- Nutrient Management Plan and public access
- Annual submission of Nutrient Management Plans
- Tile Drainage mapping
- ANR and the Wetland Program Enhancements

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

H-903 An act relating to regenerative farming

This bill proposes to establish the Vermont Environmental Stewardship Program to provide technical and financial assistance to Vermont farmers to adopt and implement regenerative farming practices and achieve certification as an outstanding environmental steward.

This bill has passed the House and will go to the Senate Agriculture committee next week.

TOXICS BILL

S-197 An act relating to liability for toxic substance exposures or releases

This bill proposes to hold any person who releases a toxic substance strictly, jointly, and severally liable for any harm resulting from the release. The bill also proposes to establish a private right of action for medical monitoring damages incurred due to exposure to a toxic substance.

As I have indicated previously this bill has a very broad reach. The bill has been postponed until next Tuesday to be voted on by the Senate.

H-922 An act relating to making numerous revenue changes

This bill proposes to make numerous substantive and administrative changes to Vermont's tax laws. The bill permits the creation of merged property assessment districts to match merged school districts. The bill moves the collection and administration of the

fire safety insurance tax, the direct placement insurance tax, and the surplus lines tax from the Department of Financial Regulation to the Department of Taxes. The bill makes numerous other changes, including changes to the current use lien system, the definitions of household income and homestead, tobacco taxes, higher education investment plans, the downtown and village center tax credit, the affordable housing tax credit, and the meals and rooms tax. This bill further proposes to revise the formula under which the Green Mountain Care Board assesses regulated health care industries for certain costs associated with their regulation and to revise municipal stormwater fees.

This is the miscellaneous tax bill from the House Ways and Means committee. I will keep you updated as to the progress and or changes to this bill.

FROM LAKE CHAMPLAIN REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Insurance Rates to Drop

In two separate press releases, the Scott administration announced that workers' compensation and unemployment insurance tax rates will be reduced over the coming year. On Friday, March 2nd, the Department of Labor announced three changes to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program that will ultimately reduce tax rates for employers beginning July 1, 2018. Commissioner of Labor Lindsay Kurrle stated that, "Our unemployment trust fund has been steadily recovering from the impacts of the recession and is currently funded at an amount that is considered healthy."

Last week, Governor Scott announced that workers' compensation rates will drop for the second year in a row when the new rates are approved effective April 1st. The Governor mentioned that, "this is good news for Vermont employers and the overall Vermont job market. These considerable savings will contribute to making Vermont a more affordable place to do business and creates more opportunity for businesses to thrive and grow their operations and support more workers."

Below is the link to the Vermont Legislative website
Legislature.vermont.gov

EVENTS OF INTEREST

DAIRY RECEPTION

CELEBRATE
The 2 + 2 Program at VTC and UVM
Tuesday April 10, 2018
4:00 TO 6:00
CEDAR CREEK ROOM
STATEHOUSE

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A Legislative Concierge Service

Providing Information, Education and Communication

Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, staying together is success”

- Henry Ford

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