



State to Main

The Voice of Vermont Business



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[Vermont Chamber to Provide Periodic Legislative Updates](#)

Late May is the time of year when the Legislature would typically adjourn and the Vermont Chamber would temporarily cease publication of our weekly legislative updates. In the weeks ahead, the Vermont Chamber will continue to publish Friday updates on an as-needed basis, depending on legislative activity. Now more than ever, it is essential that the business community have a voice in the State House. We are committed to ensuring you remain informed and impactful.

[Legislature Turns to Sidelined Bills](#)

The House and Senate advanced and deliberated on several bills unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic or state government operations. The House Ways and Means Committee also recently contemplated mandating additional administrative requirements for businesses that collect meals and rooms tax revenue, as well as \$50 million in new taxes on software as a service, certain beverages, candy, and luxury goods. To the greatest extent possible, the Vermont Chamber will continue to convey to legislators the reality that businesses require immediate legislative assistance in the form of relief funds and have very little or no capacity to absorb additional mandates and costs.

[Vermont Chamber Testifies in Senate on Tourism Impacts](#)

Vermont Chamber Vice President of Tourism Amy Spear testified on the current state of the hospitality industry. Vermont's restaurants and lodges were some of the first businesses forced to close after statewide restrictions were implemented in March. The testimony made clear that while some of the hospitality industry has benefited from federal relief programs, current need far exceeds available resources. Specifically, the testimony included requests that the Legislature work with the Administration to establish a grant program to provide resources to businesses impacted by mandated closures and reduced economic activity, maintain and enhance investment in marketing Vermont, and provide support for broadband buildout to the 23% percent of Vermont with limited or no connectivity.

[Legislature Continues Review of Broadband Proposal](#)

The House Committee on Energy and Technology and the Senate Committee on Finance heard from a variety of public and private stakeholders this week on a recent broadband proposal created by the Department of Public Service (DPS). If implemented, the DPS plan would deliver emergency broadband access to areas with limited or no connectivity. In April, Vermont Chamber President Betsy Bishop published an op-ed that called for reimagining Vermont as a work-from-home capital. One of the barriers to achieving this goal, also identified in the op-ed, is the lack of broadband connectivity in many towns. Broadband access is essential to the resiliency and economic wellbeing of rural communities and the Vermont Chamber remains supportive of the DPS proposal.

[Senate Committee Ready to Provide \\$300 Million in Economic Relief](#)

The Chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs indicated his Committee's willingness to provide up to \$300 million in relief for Vermont businesses. Funding for the relief program would likely be drawn from the \$1.25 billion provided to Vermont in the CARES Act. The proposal was discussed during testimony delivered to the Committee by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, and other industry representatives. Over the last several weeks the Vermont Chamber has pushed state leaders to provide additional relief resources for businesses.

[Federal Relief Package Introduced in U.S. House](#)

The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act was introduced in the House of Representatives. The bill would provide \$3 trillion in additional relief resources, including support and expansion of PPP so that it could be accessed by local chambers of commerce and other trade organizations involved in economic recovery efforts. In an April letter sent to Senator Leahy and Congressman Welch, the Vermont Chamber requested additional PPP resources and expansion of the program to include 501c(6) organizations. While the bill is expected to pass in the House, there are early indications it will face opposition in the Senate.

[Evictions Bill Becomes Law](#)

Governor Scott signed a law that temporarily bans certain foreclosure and eviction proceedings. S.333 largely mirrors a string of similar actions by county courts following the Vermont Supreme Court's Judicial Emergency Declaration on March 16. Under the new law, foreclosure evictions would be restricted during and for up to 30 days after the conclusion of the State of Emergency. Prior to this legislative action being taken, financial institutions and landlords throughout Vermont proactively indicated they would not be proceeding on foreclosure orders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[State Budgets in Flux](#)

Governor Scott called on state agency leaders to draft reduced budgets for the first quarter of fiscal year 2021. Reductions would amount to a decrease of 8% from regular operating budgets and was ordered as a response to losses brought on by COVID-19. The Administration's order was followed by the House advancing H.953, an additional budget adjustment bill for fiscal year 2020 created in response to COVID-19 impacts. The bill addresses shortfalls and makes funds available to cover other COVID-19 response expenses. Appropriations committees are also currently debating their own "skinny budget" that would fund the state for the first quarter of fiscal year 2021.

[Resource Roundup](#)

The Vermont Chamber staff has spent hundreds of hours on COVID-19 Zoom calls, conference calls, and webinars learning so that we can answer your questions in this ever-changing time. Collectively, we have had thousands of individual communications with members and non-members during the crisis. It is likely we can help you, too. [Contact us](#) with questions and we will get you answers. We have also seen excellent content from our members and Vermont agencies, which we are compiling weekly in our *Resource Roundup*. If you have content to include, send links to news@vtchamber.com. Thank you for your continued support. We are in this together.

[In Case You Missed It](#)

[**Scott Extends Vermont's State of Emergency Into June**](#)

[**Comcast Expands Service to 430 Addresses**](#)

[**Booze Blues: Liquor Sales Are Up, but Vermont's Alcohol Industry Is Struggling**](#)

[**Business Leaders Remain Cautious**](#)

[**New Survey Shows Many Vermonters in Favor of Telecommuting**](#)

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In business since 1912, the Vermont Chamber of Commerce is a private, not-for-profit business organization with 1,500 members employing 45,000 people and representing all sectors of the state's economy. Our mission is to create an economic climate conducive to business growth and the preservation of the Vermont quality of life. Copyright ©2018 The Vermont Chamber of Commerce. All Rights Reserved.

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