



State to Main

The Voice of Vermont Business



May 29, 2020

In This Issue:

- [Vermont Chamber Submits Letter of Support for Broadband Infrastructure Grant](#)
- [Vermont Chamber Pushing for Changes in Economic Relief Package](#)
- [Priorities Surface at Lodging Town Hall with Congressman Welch](#)
- [Campaign Season Begins](#)
- [U.S. Chamber Prioritizes Investment in Childcare](#)
- [Report Details Impacts of Short-Term Rentals](#)
- [Congress Advances Paycheck Protection Program Changes](#)
- [Vote on Personal Care Products Bill Postponed](#)
- [Solutions Hub Ideas Sent to Governor Scott](#)
- [Resource Roundup](#)
- [In Case You Missed It](#)

[Vermont Chamber Submits Letter of Support for Broadband Infrastructure Grant](#)

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce submitted a letter supporting the Department of Public Service's application for a \$1 million Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC) infrastructure grant. If awarded, the funds will be used to meet the match requirement for a Vermont Economic Development Authority Broadband Expansion Loan. The Vermont Chamber believes Vermont is well positioned to be a work-from-home capital and our team will continue working with state officials and the congressional delegation to advocate for the funding necessary for realizing this goal.

[Vermont Chamber Pushing for Changes in Economic Relief Package](#)

House and Senate Economic Development Committees continued review of the Scott Administration's recent economic relief proposal. The relief package proposed by the Administration includes \$310 million in immediate relief. The Vermont Chamber is pushing for several changes, including ensuring businesses that have received PPP or EIDL funds are not disqualified from accessing the funds, lifting of the trigger that limits use of portions of the relief package to businesses with a gross annual revenue of \$2.5 million or less, and removal of the full-time employee (FTE) requirement (many small lodging establishments are under the existing five FTE requirement). The Vermont Chamber is also urging legislative leaders to swiftly advance the relief funds.

[Priorities Surface at Lodging Town Hall with Congressman Welch](#)

Congressman Peter Welch heard from over 80 businesses in the state's lodging sector during a virtual Vermont Chamber Lodging Town Hall this week. There was a resounding consensus among lodging proprietors that the industry has been decimated by the economic downturn resulting from the health crisis and that more needs to be done to help businesses survive. Lodging industry representatives urged Congressman Welch to advocate for changes to the Paycheck Protection Program and unemployment insurance. They also asked for consideration of tax credits, and liability protections. The Vermont Chamber will continue to advocate for financial and regulatory relief to keep the lodging industry on solid ground.

[Campaign Season Begins](#)

May 28 marked the deadline for major party candidates to file consent of candidate forms and financial disclosures for the primary election on August 11. This date would also generally fall outside of the legislative session. With the Legislature continuing to meet, this summer's campaign season will have incumbent lawmakers splitting their time between policymaking and campaign work. Several high-profile sitting House legislators will not seek reelection in the Fall. Senate President Pro Tempore Tim Ashe and Senator Debbie Ingram are pursuing Lt. Governor David Zuckerman's seat, which will become available in January as a result of the Lt. Governor's own campaign in pursuit of the governorship.

[U.S. Chamber Prioritizes Investment in Childcare](#)

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is exploring the economic impacts of childcare issues on working parents. A recently issued report by the U.S. Chamber shows that of states examined, losses averaged \$1 billion annually in economic activity due to breakdowns in childcare. The report also provides solutions policymakers could consider to address shortfalls in childcare availability and early education. The Vermont Chamber is supportive of initiatives that maximize the workforce potential of Vermont's existing population and of efforts that attract new families to live and work in Vermont. Bolstering the State's childcare resources will be a vital component of restarting the economy and is essential to the economic future of Vermont.

[Report Details Impacts of Short-Term Rentals](#)

The Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs received a report on the disparities in the taxation and regulation of traditional tourist lodging establishments and the short-term rental (STR) market. The study concludes short-term rentals contribute positively to the Vermont tourism industry but are not regulated in an equivalent manner to the traditional hotel and restaurant industry. Findings also show the state does not possess a comprehensive list of short-term rentals. Possible solutions included a recommendation for mandatory registration of STRs and statewide uniformity of regulation. The Vermont Chamber supports uniform and consistent regulation for lodging properties hosting visitors overnight and we look forward to working with the Legislature to implement some of the report's recommended policy solutions.

[Congress Advances Paycheck Protection Program Changes](#)

The U.S. House passed the Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act (PPFPA), which would enact changes to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). If passed into law, the bill would extend the eight-week period businesses have to use PPP money to qualify for loan forgiveness to 24 weeks and also change the requirement that at least 75 percent of PPP funds be used for payroll expenses. The new ratio would enable businesses to use up to 40 percent of PPP funds on costs unrelated to payroll. The Vermont Chamber has pushed for the changes included in the PPFPA in our advocacy with the congressional delegation.

[Vote on Personal Care Products Bill Postponed](#)

The Senate Committee on Finance reviewed S.227, a bill that would prohibit lodging establishments from providing personal use products in single-use bottles. With many establishments closed or operating in a limited manner, the possibility of being forced to invest additional funds in retrofitting rooms with multiple-use dispensers is a daunting prospect for lodging operators. The Committee appeared sympathetic to industry concerns when it postponed a possible vote on the bill. The Vermont Chamber will continue to convey to legislators that businesses require immediate action to advance relief funds, and that at this time lodging establishments in particular have little or no capacity to absorb additional administrative mandates, costs, or safety risks.

[Solutions Hub Ideas Sent to Governor Scott](#)

Vermont Chamber President Betsy Bishop sent a letter this week to Governor Scott with relief ideas collected from the business community through our Solutions Hub. The ideas were also shared with the State of Vermont Economic Mitigation and Recovery Task Force action teams. The Vermont Chamber Solutions Hub is an online suggestion box for members of the business community to propose policy solutions for economic recovery. As the letter indicates, the Chamber recognizes the Governor has already proposed and implemented policies to address many of the suggestions, but hopes some of the ideas will aid in the development of future relief. Please contact Vermont Chamber Government Affairs Director [Charles Martin](#) with questions.

[Resource Roundup](#)

As our state responds to COVID-19, the Vermont Chamber has seen excellent content from our members and Vermont agencies, which we are compiling weekly in our Resource Roundup. Additionally, the Vermont Chamber is pleased to announce the creation of our upcoming "Passport to Recovery: Forging a Way Forward" portal.

This new virtual resource will be dedicated to the Vermont community and will host timely webinars with content to help businesses, employers, and employees across the state. If you have a recorded webinar you would like us to consider for inclusion, please send it to news@vtchamber.com.

[In Case You Missed It](#)

[Scott Runs for Reelection, but Won't Campaign for Now](#)

[House Cancels Meetings, Senate Goes Ahead After Zoom Glitch](#)

[In New Age of Remote Work, Vt. Businesses Consider Office Space Needs](#)

[Final Reading: Senators Grasp for Revenue Alternatives to Fill Budget Holes](#)



The Voice of Vermont Business

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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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