



State to Main

The Voice of Vermont Business



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[House Passes Initial Relief Package](#)

After passing in the Senate last week, the House passed S.350, the Legislature's initial relief bill developed from the economic recovery and relief package proposed by the Scott Administration in late May. As passed, S.350 provides \$70 million in grants, distributed through the Department of Taxes, with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development assisting the Department of Taxes in vetting distribution of the funds. The Chair of the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development acknowledged this first round of funding is far from enough to satisfy current need in the business community. The Chair indicated his committee is now working to advance an additional relief package, which is set to include an additional \$80 million. The Vermont Chamber is working to ensure these and additional funds are advanced expeditiously and are widely accessible to Vermont businesses.

[Legislative Group Calls for Restricting Relief Funds Eligibility](#)

A group of 29 legislators called on the House Committee on Commerce and Community Development to restrict access to the Vermont Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Grant program or similarly enacted programs to businesses that offer their employees between 140 and 160 percent of the current minimum wage and comply with five other qualifying criteria. If enacted the proposal would severely limit eligibility for potential relief funds to a portion of Vermont businesses, including rural small businesses that would experience a disproportionate negative impact if the proposal were to advance. The Vermont Chamber continues to advocate in the Legislature for passage of relief packages that offer the greatest eligibility flexibility possible for distressed businesses. Doing so is essential to ensuring equitable access to relief resources across Vermont's business community.

[Vermont Chamber Testifies on Broadband Need](#)

The Vermont Chamber testified this week in the Senate Committee on Finance to highlight the need for broadband connectivity in unserved Vermont communities. Currently, 23 percent of Vermont (69,899 business and residential locations) does not have access to broadband at 25/3 mbps – the service speed that defines broadband under federal law. During testimony, the Vermont Chamber encouraged senators to work to advance funding to provide broadband to households currently unable to work from home, learn from home or receive telehealth services because of connectivity limitations. Debate continues in the Legislature around what internet speed goal should serve as the threshold to qualify for state infrastructure funds. We will continue to encourage the Legislature to quickly act to provide broadband access to unserved communities.

[Paycheck Protection Program Changes Now Law](#)

The Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act (PPPFA) became law late last week. PPPFA makes several changes to the existing program, including extending the covered period from eight weeks to 24 weeks, extending the date to restore full-time employees from June 30 to December 31, and increasing the term of a loan to a minimum of five years, from two years. PPPFA also provides an additional provision that enables forgiveness to be determined without regard to a proportional reduction in employees. The Vermont Chamber pushed for the changes included in the PPPFA in our advocacy with the congressional delegation.

[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 Appoints Interim Labor Secretary Harrington to Permanent Post**](#)

[**Vermont House Prepares \\$600 Million COVID-19 Spending Package**](#)

[**Coworking Spaces, Slowly Reopening, See Promise in Push for Remote Work**](#)

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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.

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