



State to Main

The Voice of Vermont Business



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[Vermont Chamber Submits Testimony on Economic Relief Proposal](#)

Vermont Chamber Vice President of Tourism Amy Spear offered testimony on the economic relief proposal drafted in the House and recently amended and advanced in the Senate. Spear’s testimony called for expanding eligibility to provide resources for businesses left behind by the relief programs created in June. The testimony also called for ensuring a significant portion of the relief funds are dedicated to a rescue package for the hospitality industry, including the lodging and restaurant entities most severely impacted by mandatory operating restrictions related to COVID-19. The Vermont Chamber continues to advocate for the advancement of additional funds for existing relief programs and for a set-aside program that would serve industries most impacted by the pandemic. As the current session draws to a close, the Vermont Chamber will continue pushing for meaningful relief to address the unprecedented hardship facing Vermont’s business community.

Economic Relief Program for Business	Gov's Proposal	House-passed version	Senate-passed version	Final - TBD next week
<i>There is \$133 million yet to be allocated for COVID related relief</i>				
ACCD: Hospitality grants	\$ 50	\$ -	\$ -	
ACCD: All businesses*	\$ -	\$ 88	\$ 77	
Tax Dept: Certain businesses	\$ 23	\$ -	\$ -	
Gift Card Program	\$ 50	\$ -	\$ -	
Cash to UI recipients	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 17	
Tourism Marketing	\$ 10	\$ 4	\$ 4	
Ski resort COVID upgrades	\$ -	\$ 5	\$ -	
Higher ed/ public safety	\$ -	\$ 33	\$ 33	
Workforce: CCV/VTC	\$ -	\$ 3	\$ 2	
Total	\$ 133	\$ 133	\$ 133	
* Cap moved from \$50k to \$150k by Governor, House changed it to \$300k				

[Senate Not Supportive of Cloud Tax Proposal](#)

On Tuesday the House Committee on Ways and Means advanced a proposal that would impose a tax on vender-hosted pre-written software. Tech industry representatives have repeatedly expressed opposition to establishing a tax on software as a service (SaaS), commonly known as a cloud tax. Such a tax would disincentivize the startup and growth of SaaS businesses in Vermont and add considerable operating costs to other businesses. The Vermont Chamber recently joined dozens of advocacy organizations and business leaders in expressing our continued opposition to the implementation of this tax. On Thursday the

Senate Committee on Finance heard additional testimony from industry representatives that elaborated on the negative impacts the tax will have on Vermont's tech industry, if implemented. Ultimately, the Committee was not supportive of the provision and the full Senate did not advance the proposal. The Vermont Chamber will continue working to ensure that Vermont's tech sector is not placed at a competitive disadvantage or exposed to other economic harm as a result of burdensome regulations or additional tax mandates.

[U.S. Removes 10 Percent Tariff on Canadian Aluminum](#)

The Vermont Chamber joined New England states and Canada in expressing opposition to the Trump Administration's decision to reimpose a 10 percent tariff on Canadian aluminum. The Vermont Chamber made clear in remarks offered in a joint statement shared with the Scott Administration that the majority of Canadian companies source over half of their aerospace parts from the U.S. and that tariffs create uncertainty, raise costs, lower sales revenues, and place our manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage. Responding to industry calls for stability, Vermont Governor Phil Scott joined New Hampshire Governor Christopher Sununu and Maine Governor Janet Mills last week in calling for an end to the tariff. Facing growing criticism from impacted states and industry, this week the United States removed the tariff. The action was praised by Chris Carrigan, Vermont Chamber Vice President of Business Development, in a recent interview with the Rutland Herald. Please reach out to [Chris Carrigan](#) with any questions.

[Governor Scott Relaxes Hospitality Occupancy Restrictions](#)

Governor Scott today announced needed changes to business operation guidelines for the hospitality sector. The Vermont Chamber's four-person lobbying team has been working on behalf of the hospitality industry to secure these changes. Certain lodging occupancy restrictions have been lifted. Restaurants, catering, food service, and bars can allow 50 percent of fire safety occupancy or one person per 100 square feet, with a maximum of 75 people indoors and 150 people outdoors or their maximum licensed seating capacity, whichever is less. Bar seating is now permitted with seating that allows for physical distancing of six feet between dining parties and a physical barrier between patrons and bartenders. Beginning next week the Cross State Travel Information will be updated each Tuesday instead of Friday. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development's restart guidance page has also been updated with detailed information. As the impacts and challenges of COVID-19 continue, the Vermont Chamber will continue to advocate for operational and financial relief for the hospitality industry.

[House Amends Unemployment Insurance Rate Criteria](#)

The House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development established criteria that would enable the unemployment insurance (UI) tax rate schedule, which determines employers contributions to the UI trust fund, to adjust necessarily to ensure the UI trust fund remains solvent in the event of a prolonged or abrupt draw down as a result of high future rates of unemployment. The changes were supported by the Department of Labor and business advocates present. While a major increase to the UI tax rate schedule, if triggered, would add costs for employers, if the UI trust fund is drawn down to zero and the state is forced to borrow from the federal government, the economic impact on

employers could be more significant. The Vermont Chamber expressed support for the change during brief testimony.

[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. 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, please send information to news@vtchamber.com. Thank you for your support.

[In Case You Missed It](#)

[Vermont's Unemployment Rate Decreases to 4.8 Percent in August](#)

[Tariff on Canadian Aluminum off for Now](#)

[Child Care System Adds Hubs Quickly, but Many Families Still Face Big Problem](#)



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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