



Legislative Update
For the week ending January 11, 2008

LEGISLATIVE WATCH 2008: On Jan 16th we will hold Legislative Watch 2008 at the Barley House B-Lounge at 8am. The cost to attend is \$25. Henry Veilleux, the NHLRA Lobbyist will be holding a review on the upcoming bills/issues we are watching this session. Get involved, bring your questions and comments regarding any or the below issues or other thoughts you may have.

3% MEALS & ROOMS TAX REIMBURSEMENT: The House Ways & Means Committee has postponed a hearing on [HB 1369](#), which would reduce the percentage amount our industry may retain as compensation for collecting the meals and rooms tax from 3% to 1.5%, up to a maximum of \$100 per month. A hearing was scheduled for next Thursday, January 17. No new hearing has been scheduled yet. [HB 1369](#) would decrease the total compensation provided to our industry from \$6.5 million to \$1.9 million, which is a loss of \$4.6 million. If enacted, it would take effect on July 1, 2008. **NHLRA urges members to contact House Ways & Means Committee members before the January 17 hearing to urge them to defeat the bill.** [Click here](#) for talking points and contact info of committee members.

DO NOT MAIL REGISTRY: Many people opposed to the establishment of a "do-not-mail" registry attended the House Commerce Committee hearing on [HB 1506](#) this past Thursday. So many people attended the hearing, the Committee had to stop the hearing and will resume it on Thursday, January 24 at 1:30 pm. [HB 1506](#) would establish a "do-not-mail" registry, similar to the current "do-not-call" list. Under [HB 1506](#), businesses (including restaurants and lodging establishments) could not send a direct mail piece to anyone who has not visited the establishment within the last three months and who has notified the Justice department that they do not wish to receive solicitations in the mail. The penalty for doing so would be a fine of up to \$500. Businesses would have to check the list in the Department of Justice every month and cross reference it with their own mailing list. This bill would affect NHLRA members that mail out menus, special offers or coupons.

ELIMINATING "AT-WILL" EMPLOYMENT: This past Wednesday, the House Labor Committee heard [HB 1515](#), which would prohibit an employer from terminating an employee without just cause. Within 30 days after the termination, the employer would be required to file with the NH Department of Employment Security a statement explaining the cause for termination. Failure to file such a report would result in a \$2500 fine. In addition, an employer who terminates an employee without just cause would be fined \$2000. The sponsor of the bill never showed up at the hearing, and there were many business groups who attended and opposed the bill.

SINGLE LIQUOR COMMISSIONER: On Thursday, January 17 at 1:00 pm, the House Executive Departments & Administration Committee will hear [HB 1552](#), which would replace the 3-member Liquor Commission with a single Liquor Commissioner.

EXPANDED GAMBLING: On Tuesday, February 19 at 8:30 am, the Senate Ways & Means Committee will hear two proposals to expand gambling in New Hampshire. [SB 330](#) would allow video slot machines at the State's racetracks in Salem, Belmont, Hinsdale, and Seabrook. Meanwhile, [SB 306](#) would allow video slots at horse racetracks; hotels with at least 140 rentable rooms in Coos County; and at grand hotels with at least 195 rentable rooms and an 18-hole golf course in Coos County. In addition, the House is scheduled to vote this Wednesday on [HB 886](#), which would establish a North Country Gaming Area where up to 3 casinos would be allowed to operate. The House Ways & Means Committee voted 13-5 to recommend studying the bill further. The minority of the committee is recommending that the bill be killed.

TAVERN LICENSE: On Tuesday, January 22 at 11:00 am the House Ways & Means Committee will hear [HB 432](#), which would establish a new tavern license. This new license would not allow anyone under the age of 21 in the establishment. It would not require the sale of food. Any establishment with a lounge to restaurant capacity ratio of 3 to 1 would be required to obtain a tavern license. No one under the age of 21 could be employed. Proof of at least \$300,000 in liability insurance would be required. License fees would be \$12,000 for an establishment capable of seating less than 50 people; and \$24,000 for establishments that could seat 50 or more people. Full-service restaurant and cocktail lounge licenses would be tightened up by increasing the annual food sale requirements from \$75,000 to \$150,000. NHLRA plans to meet with proponents of the bill and legislators to amend the bill to alleviate some of the concerns we have.

PROHIBITING THE START OF SCHOOL UNTIL AFTER LABOR DAY: On Tuesday, February 12 at 2:00 pm, the House Education Committee will hear [HB 1489](#), which would prohibit the start of public school until after Labor Day.

INCREASING THE BEER TAX: On Thursday, January 24 at 11:00 am, the House Ways & Means Committee will hear [HB 1574](#), which would increase the tax on beer from 30 cents to 35 cents a gallon.

EMPLOYMENT OF VETERANS ON CERTAIN NATIONAL HOLIDAYS: On Thursday, January 17 at 12:00 noon, the House State-Federal Relations and Veterans Affairs Committee will hear [HB 1576](#), which will allow veterans no longer active in the armed forces a preference not to work on Memorial Day, July 4, or Veterans Day, or within 24 hours of these holidays.

SCHOOL FUNDING CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: NHLRA will be meeting with other business groups next Tuesday, January 15 to discuss a common message to urge legislators to work together to develop a constitutional amendment that would allow the State to target state education aid in such a way that will not force the State to raise millions more in new revenue.

For more information on these or other governmental matters, feel free to contact NHLRA's lobbyist, [Henry Veilleux](#) of Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group at 603-228-2370. You may also visit website of the [New Hampshire Lodging & Restaurant Association](#) or contact [Michelline Dufort](#) at 603-228-9585.