

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce & GBIC

2009 Legislative Session



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Chamber of Commerce

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*Legislative Summary is from
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2009 Session: Fiscal Stress Tempered by Hope for the Future

The 2009 Legislative session ended with the fall of the Speaker's gavel last Saturday evening at 10:44 p.m. While the session was a short one, only sixteen weeks, it was a tumultuous four months due to our fiscal crisis and the resulting program challenges, faced by Governor Douglas and the Legislature.

Given the sometimes tense climate in which the executive and legislative branches labored, we are pleased to report that our accomplishments this session are many and our losses few. A full list of our accomplishments follows as well as summaries of the issues which drew our focus this year.

On behalf of the Chamber and GBIC's Government Affairs staff, we thank our members for their input and participation this session. Your counsel, and your willingness to share your expertise, enables us to represent our members well and effect change under the Golden Dome.

Tom Torti
President
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2009 Legislative Accomplishments

- Restored funding for Department of Tourism and Marketing. This department's budget is essentially level funded at \$4.2 million when much of government had suffered cuts.
- Secured a \$100,000 direct appropriation to the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce for the Vermont Convention Bureau.
- Adjustments made to lower marginal income tax rates.
- Passage of the omnibus Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.313/S.137). This bill includes:
 - a total of \$3.5 million for economic development
 - permitting process changes
 - seed capital for entrepreneurs, technology and small business loans
 - vision and goals for economic development and workforce development
 - priorities for federal stimulus funds
- Recognition of the need for structural changes to government and state tax policies, resulting in numerous studies to be undertaken before next session.
- Prevented several onerous changes to worker's compensation from becoming law.
- Succeeded in preventing an increase to the Rooms and Meals Tax and the assessment of sales taxes on professional services, which were both considered several times throughout the session.

2010 Vermont State Budget

If one topic was the subject of the most conjecture this session, it was the state's fiscal health as defined by the 2009 and 2010 state budgets. The Biennium began with legislators grappling with the need to adjust the 2009 state budget downward due to decreased revenues. Early in the session, the state's economists, Jeff Carr and Thomas Kavet, projected that the state's revenue would be down more than \$120 million in Fiscal Year 2009 and \$200 million in both Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011.

Governor Douglas responded to these projections when he proposed his 2010 state budget in January. The Governor's budget included:

- Using funds included in the Federal stimulus bill to fill 2009 and 2010 shortfalls in Vermont's Medicaid budget
- Increasing the employer contribution to the unemployment insurance trust fund while also reducing benefits under the program
- Paying the employer portion of the teacher's retirement fund with Education Fund dollars instead of General Fund dollars
- Several changes to Vermont Medicaid programs
- Eliminating 600 state government positions
- Reducing all human service grants by 4 %
- Reducing the property transfer tax to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board by \$8.3 million
- Increasing the transportation construction budget through additional state bonding in concert with federal funding.

The Governor's budget proposal was met with criticism from House and Senate Democratic leaders who advocated using Federal stimulus funds to avoid state employee layoffs and budget cuts. Prior to the Town Meeting Day break, Speaker Shap Smith and Senate President Pro Tem Peter Shumlin announced a joint framework for the FY 2010 budget. It included \$28 million in cuts and, similar to the Governor's budget, would move a small portion of the teacher's retirement fund to the education fund. Their proposal also included \$33 million in new revenue from three sources: the income tax, rooms and meals tax and changes to sales and use taxes. Senator Shumlin and Speaker Smith asked the State Employees Union to come forward with a proposal to save \$14

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million in lieu of state employee position reductions. The Pro Tem and Speaker's framework also relied on \$153 million in direct and indirect federal stimulus funding.

In April, the state economists announced another 2009 revenue downgrade of almost \$14 million in General Fund dollars and downgraded the General Fund revenue forecast for 2010 by almost \$40 million. Following the downgrades, Speaker Smith, Senator Shumlin and Governor Douglas met several times in order to construct a joint budget proposal. While these negotiations continued for the rest of the session, the parties were not able to reach agreement. The House and Senate Democratic leadership put forward and passed a unified budget and tax plan. The Legislature adopted a plan that addresses the FY2009 budget shortfall of \$14.7 million by using \$11.7 million in carryover funds from the FY2010 budget and \$3 million from caseload reserve funds. The FY2010 budget benefits from \$174.5 million in Federal stimulus funding to meet state budget needs. Even with that money, appropriators faced a \$75.7 million deficit before any new revenues were added. This was addressed through \$26.1 million in new revenue (some of which comes from increased tax collection efforts); \$26.5 million in additional budget reductions; a transfer of \$19.8 million in general fund obligations to the education fund and using \$3.3 million in caseload reserves. Cuts in the budget included reducing hours at rest areas, reducing provider payments to hospitals and reducing Next Generation funding by \$4 million.

As of this writing, Governor Douglas has indicated that he may veto the FY2010 budget but has yet to take action. If he does so, the Legislature would have to return prior to July 1st in order to pass a new FY2010 budget. The outlook for the FY2011 budget is possibly even grimmer as there will be less Federal stimulus funds to put toward base spending.

New Taxes for 2010

The need to fill a gaping budget hole and declining revenues overshadowed the 2009 legislative session, resulting in the passage of many new taxes and policy changes. The Chairs of the money committees, Senators Susan Bartlett (D-Lamoille Co.) and Ann Cummings (D-Washington Co.), Representatives Martha Heath (D-Essex/Westford) and Michael Obuchowski (D-Windham) spent many long hours developing an approach that relied on spending cuts, Federal stimulus money, new revenues and changes to how we pay for government. In the end, \$21.3 million in new revenues was raised by the Legislature with another \$4.8 million in new enforcement and compliance measures passed. In presenting this package to the General Assembly, the Chairs emphasized that new revenues solved less than 10 % of the budget gap, while Federal stimulus money was relied upon to stabilize the state's fiscal situation.

In order to gain the approval of legislators in the waning hours of the session, legislative leaders also proposed a change to the education property tax rates and a freezing of the base education amount paid per pupil over the next two years. The non-residential rate will decrease by a penny from FY2009 to \$1.35 in FY2010 and FY2011. The base education payment will be \$8,210 for FY2009, but will be level funded at \$8,544 for FY2010 and 2011, forcing local school boards to plan for declining state education payments.

The tax changes included in the budget bill are:

1. The Vermont estate tax exclusion will be \$2 million instead of \$3.5 million.
2. Digital Downloads are now subject to a sales and use tax.
3. A new 6 % sales tax on liquor will be assessed.
4. The cigarette tax increases by 25 cents.
5. Other Tobacco products including moist tobacco products are now subject to taxes.
6. The 40 % exemption for Capital Gains is now capped at \$5,000.
7. The State Income Tax Deduction is also capped at \$5,000.
8. Changes to the Marginal Income Tax Rates are as follows: 9.5 % to 8.95 %; 9 % to 8.75%; 8.50 % to 7.75 %; 7.20 % to 6.75 % and 3.60 % to 3.55 %.
9. The establishment of more compliance personnel in the Department of Taxes and a tax amnesty program that is expected to raise \$4.7 million in additional revenues.
10. The bill also calls for the sale of State-owned surplus personal property in an effort to raise revenues.

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Economic Development Initiatives

Prior to the legislative session, Chairman Vince Illuzzi (R-Essex/Orleans) of the Senate Economic Development Committee sat down with the Chamber and GBIC Government Affairs team to develop an outline for how we could best energize Vermont's economy. Many of the ideas we discussed with Senator Illuzzi, and subsequently with the House Commerce Committee, resulted in the passage of the Vermont Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.313/S.137). This bill represents the first systematic attempt to address current deficits in our economic development toolbox and begins to set a vision for the future. Overall, the bill injects \$3.5 million dollars of federal stimulus funds and the state's financial backing to provide seed capital that will leverage additional private investment via the Vermont Economic Development Authority and other entities. The bill also includes changes to permitting processes that protect the environment while allowing development to move forward, establishes priorities for spending federal stimulus money and provides goals and guidelines for future economic and workforce development initiatives. We appreciate the leadership of the committee chairmen - Senator Illuzzi and Representative Warren Kitzmiller (D-Montpelier) and the strong and unwavering support of our Chittenden County Senators Racine, Miller, and Ashe as well as Senator Bill Carris (D-Rutland Co.) for their hard work on this important legislation. On the House side, Representatives Clem Bissonette (D-Winooski), Jason Lorber (D-Burlington), Megan Smith (D-Mendon) and Jeff Wilson (D-Manchester) were helpful in working through that legislative body.

Specific items included in the bill are:

- Establishment of goals for economic development drawing from the work of the Commission on the Future of Economic Development (CFED).
- Capitalization of an Entrepreneur's Seed Capital Fund at \$2,150,000 using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and a tax credit of 20 %.
- Vermont Economic Development Authority interest rate subsidy for the Vermont Jobs Fund, and establishment of a small business loan program and a technology loan program.
- Important changes for tax increment financing mechanisms for Burlington and Milton.
- \$500,000 for Department of Tourism and Marketing and \$100,000 to the Vermont Convention Bureau.
- Extension of stormwater permitting authority to 2012.
- Changes to enable use of tax increment financing for public infrastructure in Burlington and Milton.
- Improvements to permitting process for telecommunications, hazardous mitigation projects, mini-hydro projects, ARRA projects and expansion of the general permitting program.
- Springfield Redevelopment Pilot Program for the J&L site. (This pilot program is the end result of an original proposal for Opportunity Zones throughout the state.)
- Renewable energy pilot programs for Montpelier and Randolph.
- Changes to workforce development leadership to allow the Commissioner of Labor to work with Workforce Development Council Executive Committee and changes to allow more flexible funding for career and alternative workforce education.
- Encouragement of collaboration to promote a green workforce via curriculum and training.
- Establishment of priorities for expenditure of federal stimulus money for workforce development, smart grid and energy technology, Burlington airport projects, agriculture, telecommunications and environmental protection measures.
- Significant changes to the Clean Energy Development Fund to position it for receipt of over \$31 million in federal stimulus funds for energy efficiency and conservation measures.
- Establishment of the Vermont Farm to Plate program and an appropriation of \$100,000.

Unfortunately, an important economic stimulus item, research and development tax credits, was not included in the final package. Also, financial incentives for communities and businesses such as tax increment financing, Green Growth Zones and Opportunity Zones were cut back to select municipalities rather than made available for all Vermont towns. Go to www.vermont.org/chamber/govaffairs.aspx for a summary of this bill.

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Energy Legislation

Before the start of the Legislative session in January, most interested parties expected that the Legislature would consider the relicensing of the Entergy Vermont Yankee Nuclear Plant during this session. The plant's license to operate expires in 2012. However, it was not to be with House Natural Resources Committee Chair, Tony Klein (D-East Montpelier) stating early in the session that his Committee would not consider the plant's relicensing without more information on a power purchase agreement between Entergy and Vermont utilities. Klein indicated that the Legislature needed to know what benefit Vermont ratepayers could expect in exchange for the plant's continued operation. Yet with re-licensing off the table, Legislators still managed to pass legislation that will affect the plant's operation, as well as other bills relating to the state's energy future.

H. 436 was passed by the House and Senate late in the session and is considered to be one of the bills Governor Douglas may veto. The bill requires Entergy Vermont Yankee to certify adequate funds for the plant's decommissioning prior to the plant's relicensing or if the plant is spun off into a new corporation. The Vermont Department of Public Service raised concerns that the bill would break Vermont's previous deal with Entergy and could lead to litigation. Business groups raised concerns that the bill would have a negative impact on any future power purchase agreement with Entergy and could ultimately raise electric rates for Vermont employers and residents.

Shortly after the Town Meeting Day break, the House Natural Resources began work on what would become H. 446, An Act Relating to Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency. Many of the provisions originally included in the bill were drafted by a diverse group of stakeholders that had reached remarkable consensus in hopes of encouraging additional in-state renewable energy development. The legislation contains a 'standard offer provision' that would enable renewable developers to receive a predictable rate from a Vermont utility for qualifying renewable energy projects. The energy prices ultimately included in the bill by the Legislature drew criticism from business groups, utilities and some of those who had developed the consensus proposal. These groups hoped to have the standard offer provisions determined by the Vermont Public Service Board (PSB) rather than being set in statute and fought to include a provision that required the PSB to consider ratepayer impact when setting the price for power. These changes were not included in the final bill. H. 446 could also draw Governor Douglas' veto given the proposed effect it might have on ratepayers.

Other provisions included in H. 446 would allow industrial electric customers with energy efficiency charges in excess of \$1.5 million to self-manage their efficiency program under a three-year pilot program. This provision was one that IBM worked diligently to have passed during the session. Another provision would enable municipalities to create special districts that could use municipal financing tools such as bonding in order to enable homeowners to build renewable energy projects. Homeowners would repay the municipality through a special assessment on their property which drew concern from Vermont's banking community because the underlying bank mortgage would take second place behind the repayment to the municipality. A provision was included in the bill that would allow a municipality to remove the lien from the property if a mortgage holder placed the property in foreclosure proceedings.

Finally, the Economic Development Bill, H. 313, included significant changes to the governance and administration of the Clean Energy Fund. It will allow emerging energy efficient technologies to be eligible for the Fund, appropriate \$31.6 million of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money into the Fund and clarifies provisions for solar tax credits.

Workforce Development Action

The budget challenges for 2010 did not leave workforce development efforts unscathed. The \$281.5 million dollar gap for fiscal years 2009 and 2010 forced lawmakers to make difficult budget cuts across all agencies. Unfortunately, the Next Generation Fund sustained a \$4 million cut, going from \$7.3 million to \$3.3 million.

The \$3.3 million was divided up in the following amounts:

Workforce development: \$2,063,500

- Workforce Education Training Fund (WETF) \$1,415,500
- Adult Technical Education Programs \$410,500
- UVM Technology Transfer Program \$118,750
- Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies \$118,750

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Health Care Loan repayment: \$300,000

Scholarships and grants: \$929,500

- Vermont Student Assistance Corporation Non-degree Grants \$494,500
- National Guard educational assistance program \$150,000
- Vermont State Colleges Dual Enrollment Programs \$285,000

The Vermont Training Program received an additional \$200,000 in one-time appropriation funds from the federal stimulus act.

The budget bill (H.441) also established a committee to make recommendations for the possible restructuring of the Department of Labor with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development in order to better serve their constituencies. The committee will be made up of three members appointed by the House Speaker, three by the Conference on Committees and three by the Governor. The committee must seek input from a long list of stakeholders before making their recommendations.

H.313 – An Act Relating to Near-Term and Long-Term Economic Development, has several provisions relating to workforce development. H.313 encourages collaborative partnerships and highlights the need for ARRA funds to take into consideration the recession's disparate impact on women and children when these funds are awarded. It also has a stated purpose of promoting state-sponsored workforce development that is coherent and targeted to growing industry sectors. The bill:

- Presents findings and priorities for use of ARRA funds for various populations and for emerging sectors such as energy efficiency and health care, including health care technology.
- Allows greater flexibility with how workforce development funds are appropriated among existing programs (career exploration programs -many applications, and alternative intensive vocational/academic programs -fewer applications).
- Eliminates the workforce development leadership subcommittee and transfers its responsibilities to the workforce development council executive committee.
- Through Social Security numbers of participating individuals, tracks the employment history of program participants as a means of measuring outcomes, not applicable to training programs lasting no more than two days; SSN's may not be retained for more than five years by the departments.
- Repeals various reporting requirements from the Acts of 2007.
- Requires a report on Vermont's work-based learning programs by January 1, 2010.
- Creates the Green Workforce Collaborative, the purpose of which is to evaluate Vermont's job force and education needs for the emerging energy-related job sectors, with a focus on target populations defined by ARRA.

H.405, an Act relating to K-12 and Higher Education Partnerships, sets up a working group of higher education stakeholders and the Department of Education to consider ways to increase the aspirations and preparedness of Vermont students for life beyond high school.

Finally, **H.427, Miscellaneous Amendments to Education Law,** establishes a committee to explore the development of a loan repayment program to recruit and retain licensed veterinarians throughout the state.

The 2010 Transportation and Capital Bills

Transportation Budget (H.438)

Under the leadership of Senator Dick Mazza (D-Chittenden/Grand Isle Co.) and Rep. Richard Westman (D-Cambridge), a \$550 million transportation plan was passed. This plan relies heavily on federal stimulus money, but also authorizes the ability to bond at a future date. The bill recognizes the need to raise revenues to improve our deteriorating infrastructure by raising \$9.2 million in motor vehicle fees, establishing a 2 % tax on the retail price of gas and a 3 cent tax on diesel. The bill includes:

- money for passenger rail service for Amtrak and the Ethan Allen as well as a cost benefit analysis of purchasing equipment for passenger rail

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- changes to design build contracts
- the closure of several rest areas and a reduction in service hours for others
- an evaluation of commercializing rest areas
- a provision for \$4 million of continuously welded rail along the western corridor, if revenue forecasts are favorable
- a call for the development of a cost estimate for upgrading the western corridor rail line for passenger rail from Burlington, Rutland, Bennington and Albany.

Capital Budget (H.445)

Highlights of the \$109 million capital plan include:

- Creation of the Vermont Investment Program to increase work opportunities for tradespeople, artisans and young Vermonters and improve the infrastructure of the state's parks and cultural/historical sites. Specific projects include restoration of bathrooms and park facilities, transitional housing construction, and telecommunications and broadband improvements
- \$2 million for construction and renovations for University of Vermont buildings
- \$2 million for construction and renovations for Vermont State Colleges building
- \$2.2 million for reduction of phosphorous in State's waterways
- \$19.4 million for pollution control revolving loan fund
- Disposition of state properties including the sale of the Tree Farm to the Town of Essex/Village of Essex Junction and sale of the former IBM Building in Forestdale Technology Park
- Authorization of general obligation bonding in the amount of \$70 million.

Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund

Early in the session, Commissioner of Labor Pat Moulton Powden visited several House and Senate committees to brief legislators on the Administration's proposal to fix the rapidly decreasing unemployment insurance trust fund. The proposal contained several changes to employer unemployment insurance payments as well as employee benefits such as:

- Raise the taxable base wage from \$8,000 to \$14,000 in 2010.
- Raise the taxable base wage from \$14,000 in 2010 to \$20,000 in 2011.
- Do not relieve employers that do not respond within 10 days to the Department's request for information relating to the employee's dismissal from experience rating changes.
- Institute a 1 % fee on all charges to reimbursable employers (non-profits, local/state governments, school districts) to cover part of the cost of administering benefits.
- Reduce the maximum weekly benefit for employees from \$425 to \$409.
- Change how the weekly benefit amount is calculated from 57 % of wages paid to an employee over the last 5 quarters to 50 %.
- Changes to: the number of weeks worked in order to gain benefits, annual benefits paid out and eligibility for a person fired for misconduct and gross misconduct.

Business groups, including the Chamber and GBIC, worked throughout the Legislative session to draw attention to the need to act with regard to the unemployment insurance trust fund and advocated for benefit and taxable base wage changes in order to put the fund on a sustainable track. While the issue did receive some legislative attention toward the end of the session, ultimately there was no action on this issue.

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The lack of legislative action on the unemployment insurance trust fund will mean that employee benefits will remain unchanged, with the maximum weekly benefit amount increasing to \$438 this summer, and the state will likely need to begin borrowing from the Federal unemployment fund in order to continue to pay out an average of \$5 million per week in benefits. For employers, the lack of action will likely result in steeper increases in insurance payments once reform is enacted, Federal penalties and higher insurance rates.

Health Care Legislation

With the focus squarely on state's budget crisis, health care reform efforts were more limited in scope this year. Legislators considered ideas to improve the state's health system without adding to the General Fund problem. While there were fewer new programs and less spending this year, there are several provisions that will represent small increases to those with private insurance. The following is a summary of several bills of interest:

- **H. 444, An Act Relating to Health Care Reform**, hopes to position Vermont in order to take advantage of competitive Federal stimulus funds available for electronic medical record systems. Vermont is ahead of the curve on health care information technology and the Legislature hopes to draw down significant federal funds to further the work. It also includes changes to the method by which workers' compensation claims are paid to providers by insurers, increases deductibles for some people served by the Catamount Health Plan and calls for a study on the employer-sponsored insurance assistance program. The bill would also allow persons with health insurance plans that have a \$7,500 individual deductible or a \$15,000 family deductible to enroll directly in the Catamount Health Plan.
- **S. 129, An Act Relating to Containing Health Care Costs by Decreasing Variability in Health Care Spending and Utilization**, will require the Vermont Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities and Health Care to complete a study looking at the variability in healthy care utilization across different regions of the state. Recommendations for reducing health care costs based on the study's findings will follow the report.
- **H. 24, An Act Relating to Insurance Coverage for Colorectal Cancer Screening**, will require insurers to charge no more than a \$100 deductible for colonoscopies. The bill would decrease out of pocket costs for individuals in order to encourage screening but would increase overall costs to the health care system. In states with similar provisions, usage was increased by approximately one percent per year. The Senate increased the maximum deductible to \$100, from \$25 in the House-passed version of the bill. Both bodies agreed to the change and the bill now awaits the Governor's signature.
- **S. 48, An Act Relating to the Marketing of Prescription Drugs**, will require pharmaceutical companies to disclose additional information related to their marketing efforts in Vermont. The legislation also bans the gift of meals to health care professionals. Many in Vermont's hospitality industry, including the Chamber and Convention Bureau, are concerned that this bill will work against their efforts to attract meetings and events to Vermont. Many small restaurants and delicatessens also voiced concern that the ban on meals will cut off an important and significant source of income during this economic downturn.

Other bills of interest:

- **H.R. 20**, a resolution adopted by the House, encourages a renewed commitment to the cleanup and restoration of Lake Champlain as part of the 400th anniversary of its discovery by Samuel de Champlain.
- **H.83** changes requirements for fees and conditions relating to underground storage tanks. It awaits the Governor's signature.
- **H.86**, which calls for a study of Landscape Architect Licensure issues was passed and is likely to become law. S. 28 which would have allowed the licensure of landscape architects was passed by the Senate but did not pass the House.
- **H.447** establishes a more efficient and effective means of identifying and classifying wetlands. It was passed by both houses and awaits the Governor's signature.
- **S. 7**, which prohibits smoking in the workplace was passed and is on its way to the Governor for his signature.
- **S.27** was signed by Governor Douglas and will allow wine tastings and sales of wine and liquor at the manufacturers' premises.
- **S. 51, An Act Relating to Motor Vehicle Franchise Laws**, was passed and is likely to be signed by the Governor. The bill serves to protect Vermont auto dealer franchises.

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The Ones That Got Away....

Estate tax exclusion will be \$2,000,000 instead of \$3,500,000.

State income tax deduction and capital gains exemption now capped at \$5,000.

No Research and Development Tax Credit legislation.

A cut of \$4 million for Next Generation programs and scholarships (\$7,293,000 to \$3,293,000).

Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Fund legislation.

No solution for Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund.

Studies of Interest

The Legislature included a number of issues of concern to our members for additional study prior to the 2010 legislative session. They are:

- Blue Ribbon Tax Structure Commission: to do a structural analysis and recommend improvements for modernization.
- Vermont Education System Effectiveness Committee: to recommend improvements to the structure and funding of education.
- Governor's Productivity Task Force: to increase efficiency and innovation.
- Committee to Maximize the Availability of Community Development Block Grants: develop a proposal to ensure highest and best use of money previously awarded to municipalities.
- Design and Funding of Retirement and Retiree Health Benefit Plans: Focus on plans currently in existence for State Employees and Teachers.
- Reorganization of Agency of Commerce and Community Development and Department of Labor: to identify areas for collaboration and efficiency.
- Licensed Lender Requirements: to facilitate limited instances of high risk lending by venture capital firms, individuals and partnerships.
- Health Information Technology for Payment Reform.
- Encouragement of Media and Film Industry in Vermont.
- Landscape Architect licensure: to study issues related to licensing.

Looking Ahead...

Over the summer, the Chamber and GBIC will work with our members to refine our legislative priorities in anticipation of the 2010 legislative session. We need our members to get involved! We plan to review this past legislative session's actions and bills that may resurface in preparation for the 2010 session.

We will focus our study efforts on:

- tax and fiscal policy,
- environmental and stormwater permitting,
- tourism/hospitality spending priorities.

Contact Dawn Francis at dawn@vermont.org or call 863-3489 ext. 210 to help us chart the Chamber's legislative course for next year.

Things to look forward to during the 2010 General Assembly!

- Vermont's Tax structure.
- Funding and governance of education.
- Stormwater permitting.
- Changes to environmental permitting processes and Act 250 criteria.
- Long-term economic development strategy including governance issues such as reorganization of Agency of Commerce and Community Development and Department of Labor as well as the allocation and use of funds managed by the Community Development Block Grant program.
- Government efficiencies, innovations and sustainability