



MAJORITY REPORT

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From the desk of the Majority Leader



“Crunch time” has arrived in the New Hampshire House. The next three weeks will be crucial to the success of the current legislative session. While education funding and the budget are two areas that will be receiving most of the media attention, as expected, there are many other important pieces of legislation that will also require our attention. As a result, attendance at committee meetings will be extremely important as we get closer to “crossover day.” I urge our members to make every effort to attend all committee meetings, especially when an executive session is being held on pending legislation. Please check with your chairman to make sure that you are aware when executive sessions are planned.

The Education Committee has been working long hours trying to solve the education funding problem and Finance will be finalizing their budget and passing it over to Ways & Means. We will also be making important decisions together with regard to the State’s Capital Budget.

Session day on March 23 will begin at 1:00 P.M. and we will hold a Republican Caucus just prior to our work session, at 12:15 P.M. With all of the legislation that we will be dealing with on the floor over the next two weeks, it is crucial that we get as many of our members to attend caucuses on session day.

As always, the door to the Majority Office is always open. Please come by and speak with either myself or Pam Price if you have any questions about legislation.

Michael O'Neil

Legislative Priorities

Prior to the current legislative session, during a number information-gathering meetings, input from Republican members helped the Majority Office to compile a list of goals and objectives. Included among these objectives were tort reform and modifications to SB110.

SB110, passed in 2003, reformed the small group health insurance market, redefined the definition of small groups and allowed rating on a number of factors. The objective was to increase the number of carriers offering insurance in the state. There are a number of bills currently before Commerce that will address some of the problems.

There are a number of bills currently before Judiciary that deal with tort reform, which affects access to, and affordability of, health care. Physicians, faced with rising premiums and with no way to pass along the costs because of managed care, are finding it difficult to remain in practice.

(Priorities—continued on page 2)



*The Annual Majority
Office
Chile Cook-Off
is coming soon!*

Please contact Teresa Preston in the Majority office if you'd like to enter your chili!





The Majority Office *SUPPORTS* the Committee Reports on the following bills:

HB 367

This bill would allow a municipality to adopt a homestead exemption of \$5,000 by a vote of its legislative body. The exemption would be \$10,000 for residents 65 years of age or older. It came out of **Municipal and County Government, ITL, 11-6**. We support the committee report because:

- If there is an exemption or credit on one parcel of property in a municipality, the difference has to be made up by another taxpayer--which is cost-shifting.
- Local municipalities already have the ability to grant property tax relief that is voted on by their legislative bodies.
- The minority of the committee admits that the bill has a number of flaws.

HB 563—FN-A

This bill would require that the commissioner of revenue administration set the tobacco tax rate annually, on July 1, at a rate that is 25 percent below the lowest tax rate of our three neighboring states. It came out of **Ways & Means, ITL, 10-8**. We support the committee report because:

- It allows our tax policy on tobacco to be controlled by out of state legislators.
- It enables an executive branch official to raise taxes without approval of a future legislative body.
- It would negatively impact *The NH Advantage*.
- There are other pieces of tobacco tax legislation being held pending the outcome of the budget.

HB 522

This bill would establish a committee to study gaming options for New Hampshire. It came out of **Ways & Means, OTP, 14-4**. We support the committee report because:

- The committee would study the social impact of gaming on NH, as well as revenue issues.
- The Study is supported by both pro and anti gambling groups.



Please vote to SUPPORT the committee reports!

—**Priorities** (cont.)

There is already a shortage of high risk specialists, including Neurosurgeons and OB/Gyn doctors. Additionally, the practice of defensive medicine (ordering medically unnecessary tests) is estimated at 27 percent of the overall cost of medicine, which in turn drives up the cost of health care for all.

A strong, viable health care system is important to the economic strength of our state. For this reason, Republican members agreed that these two issues should be priorities this session.

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