



Connecticut Legislative Update

June 2021



The following report is from LDAC Lobbyist, Carrie Rand of Nome Associates.

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Did You Know?

The lumber and building materials industry employs more than 36,000 people in Conn.

The 2020 virtual session finally concluded on June 17th. It was the latest possible ending by calendar rules, the Wednesday after the first Monday- June 9th, that was extended into special session in order to tackle the budget implementation bills and the legalization of marijuana.

Rebounding from COVID, CT was in the forefront with vaccination rates. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding injected an enormous amount of money into the economy that led to the passage of a bipartisan budget, the first in a number of years. One of the main initiatives we lobbied heavily for was a disbursement of funds to reduce the burden employers will have to bear with the repayment of the Unemployment Compensation fund. To date CT has borrowed a billion dollars from the Federal Government to help those individuals that were laid off or lost employment due to COVID. Employers are responsible to pay this back, via yearly assessments. We lobbied to have \$500 million of the ARP's money allocated to reduce this sum, and were successful in obtaining \$315 million. In addition we worked for passage of a bill that restructured Unemployment Compensation to favor good employers who do not have high experience ratings. These two initiatives, coupled together, will help CT employers recover from COVID and thrive in the future.

Two business related issues we successfully killed were the expansion of paid family medical leave benefits and predictive scheduling. Although these bills have been around for several years, predictive scheduling was the biggest threat this session as it passed the Senate. We worked hard garnering 26 moderate Democrats to go to the Speaker and block a vote in the House of Representatives. Unfortunately we know it will resurface next session but we will continue to keep the pressure on those moderates that supported us this year.

Although the General Assembly passed a bi partisan budget, one initiative was removed from the package and was voted upon separately. This was the Highway Use Tax, now renamed the Highway Use Fee. This bill imposes a tax on trucks 26,000 lbs and over for more damaging use of CT roadways. New York has a similar fee, that does not generate the revenue that was anticipated. We lobbied heavily but were unsuccessful, and the bill passed both the House and the Senate. CT is using this money to ensure solvency of the Special Transportation Fund. We know that this will impact only a small portion of the trucks LDAC members currently run, but are nervous this tax will be expanded to lower weight trucks when revenues do not meet the amount the State estimated.

One of the biggest bills of the entire session was the legalization of recreational marijuana. With much wrangling and back and forth the measure finally passed after being debated 3 times in the Senate and was signed by the Governor. The vote was close in both chambers as many legislators worked hard to ensure equity for those who have been most impacted by its illegal use in the past, while others felt it was a road CT should not travel down. Although there are employers protections included in the initiative, legalization of marijuana will pose increased liability and work for CT employers.

The General Assembly is expected to go back into session in two weeks to continue extension of the Governor's executive powers to deal with the pandemic. Once that is finished we can only hope they will remain adjourned until February 2022.

Questions?

Please contact Kirk Ives, Director of Legislative & Regulatory Affairs at 518-880-6376 or kives@nrla.org.