



**New England Board of Higher Education
Legislative Advisory Committee Meeting
Mill Falls at the Lake
Meredith, New Hampshire
Thursday, September 27, 2018**

Connecticut

Connecticut lawmakers concluded their session on May 9, 2018 with the passage of Senate Bill 543, a \$20.86 billion budget adjustment bill for FY19, which makes revisions to the second year of the biennial budget. The budget bill contains no new income or sales taxes. While previous legislative sessions have been fairly contentious, in the 2018 session, lawmakers exhibited a spirit of cooperation, which proved instrumental in passing the second consecutive bipartisan budget in two years. Moreover, crafting the budget was made easier when lawmakers learned of unanticipated state income tax revenue of more than \$1 billion.

In his letter to legislators, Gov. Malloy noted his budget revisions to address fiscal stability, produced:

- The lowest average growth rate in the general fund in several decades;
- Two historic labor agreements saving the state more than \$42 billion over 20 years;
- Downsizing the executive branch which is 13% smaller than it was 8 years ago including the lowest staffing level since 1975;
- A healthy Rainy Day Fund which is expected to have more than \$1 billion by next year.

Despite budget revisions, FY18 ended with a \$386.7 million deficit. Funding for programs previously cut were restored, including Husky A Medicaid funding for low-income parents and the Medicare Savings Program for seniors and the disabled. Prior to the close of the legislative session, Gov. Malloy announced an historic partnership with General Dynamics Electric Boat which will provide jobs for Connecticut residents by helping the company grow their workforce. Highlights of the agreement provide for the following:

- Increasing the workforce by 1,881, eventually bringing the total to over 13,000;
- Making capital investments of \$852 million;
- Providing more than \$250 million in annual spending on over 700 Connecticut suppliers located in 102 Connecticut cities and towns as a result of the U.S. Navy's increased demand for submarines.

General Dynamics Electric Boat will be undergoing a significant expansion in its Groton location with the construction of a new dry dock and manufacturing superstructure. The Groton facility will house the construction of the new Columbia-class nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines replacing the aging Ohio-class submarines. To accommodate increased manufacturing, Electric Boat will be training and hiring 18,000 new employees over the next decade.

Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development will over the course of the agreement provide the following:

- \$35 million loan for machinery and equipment through Gov. Malloy's First Five Plus Program;
- Up to \$20 million from Connecticut Innovations in sales and use tax exemptions for capital and new construction on the Electric Boat campus;
- \$8 million in grant funds to be used on third-party workforce development initiatives at Connecticut's community colleges, technical high schools and organizations such as the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board.

Gov. Malloy's partnership with General Dynamics Electric Boat addresses many of the elements in SB 444 and SB 535, which called for training workers and funding for submarine facilities. NEBHE's Director of Resources, Kelli Vallieres testified with John Beauregard, Executive Director of the Eastern Workforce Investment Board, in support of the bills.

Legislation Passed and Signed Into Law

K-12 EDUCATION

SB 455 An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Makes a number of changes in the teacher certification laws to make it easier, in certain areas, to obtain certification. Removes obstacles for candidates who demonstrate subject area mastery, speeding up the process for qualified out-of-state teaching candidates and allowing already-certified teachers to earn the flexibility to instruct in subject areas where there is a teaching shortage.

HIGHER EDUCATION

SB4 An Act Assisting Students Without Legal Immigration Status With the Cost of College

Extends eligibility for institutional financial aid to attend a state public higher education institution to certain students, including honorably discharged veterans who lack legal immigration status.

Under federal law, a student who lacks legal immigration status is ineligible for state benefits, including institutional financial aid, unless a state law affirmatively confers eligibility (8 U.S.C. § 1621(d)). This act affirmatively extends eligibility for institutional financial aid to attend a state public institution of higher education (i.e., UConn and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities) to certain students and honorably discharged veterans who lack legal immigration status, to the extent allowed by federal law, if they (1) meet certain residency, age, and criminal history requirements and (2) file an affidavit about their intent to legalize their immigration status with the institution they are attending. Under the act, veterans are eligible for institutional financial aid to attend a public institution of higher education upon the act's passage, while non-veterans are eligible for such aid on the earlier of January 1, 2020, or upon the effective date of a federal law that provides a "pathway to citizenship" for students without legal immigration status. The act does not define "pathway to citizenship." The act specifies that it does not require or compel an institution to match the amount of federal student aid that such students would receive if they were eligible for federal student aid. The act requires UConn and the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), by July 1, 2018, to establish procedures and develop forms to enable the newly eligible students to apply

for and receive institutional financial aid. It allows UConn and BOR to adopt any policies necessary to implement the act.

Effective Date: Upon passage

SB 352 An Act Extending the Moratorium on Approval of Programs of Independent Institutions of Higher Education

Extends certain nonprofit, independent higher education institutions' exemption from the Office of Higher Education's (OHE's) approval process for new programs and program modifications for two years, until July 1, 2020. By law, "independent institutions of higher education" are exempt from program approval if they (1) are eligible to participate in the Federal Family Education Loan program; (2) do not have a financial responsibility score of less than 1.5, as determined by the U.S. Department of Education, for the most recent fiscal year for which data is available; and (3) have been located in Connecticut and accredited as degree-granting institutions in good standing for at least 10 years by a federally recognized regional accrediting association,

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SB 266 An Act Concerning Incentives to Encourage the Growth of Bioscience Venture Capital in Connecticut

Creates a tax deduction for the income generated by investments in eligible Connecticut-based bioscience businesses. The deduction is available only to the general partners of a qualified venture capital fund and equals their share of the investment and management income generated by the fund's eligible investments. The revenue services commissioner must adopt regulations for instituting the deduction.

SB 444 An Act Concerning Advanced Manufacturing Training and the Capital Needs of the Submarine Industry

Provides for advanced manufacturing training programs administered by regional workforce development boards; making space available on the campus of Three Rivers Community College for plastics manufacturing training and requiring Commissioner of Economic and Community Development to conduct comprehensive review of capital needs of submarine industry every three years.

SB 535 An Act Establishing the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative and Concerning Economic Development and Manufacturing Bonds for Submarine Facility Capital Improvements

Establishes the Apprenticeship Connecticut initiative to develop work force pipeline programs and provide bond funding for such programs, and dedicate economic development and manufacturing bonds for capital improvements to a facility located in the state that is engaged in the design, construction and lifecycle support of submarines for the United States Navy.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION PASSED, SIGNED INTO LAW

HB 5542 An Act Concerning Bump Stocks and Other Means of Enhancing the Rate of Fire of a Firearm (As amended by House A)

This bill bans bump stocks and generally makes it a class D felony for anyone except a licensed firearms manufacturer fulfilling a military contract, to sell, offer to sell, otherwise transfer, or offer to transfer, purchase, possess, use, or manufacture a "rate of fire enhancement" (e.g., a bump stock). By law, a class D felony is punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine up to \$5,000, or both.

HB 5386 An Act Concerning Pay Equity (as Amended by House A)

Prohibits employers, including the state and its political subdivisions, from asking, or directing a third-party to ask, about a prospective employee's wage and salary history. The prohibition does not apply (1) if the prospective employee voluntarily discloses his or her wage and salary history or (2) to any actions taken by an employer, employment agency, or its employees or agents under a federal or state law that specifically authorizes the disclosure or verification of salary history for employment purposes. The bill also allows an employer to ask about the other elements of a prospective employee's compensation structure (e.g., stock options) but the employer may not ask about their value.

Higher Education Updates

Connecticut Regents Approve New Plan to Consolidate Community Colleges in 2023

On June 21, 2018, the Board of Regents for Higher Education, approved a new plan to consolidate the community colleges into a single accredited institution. However, the merger has been pushed back to 2023.

Mark Ojakian, President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) noted that financial stability for the colleges is at the heart of this plan. He said he recognized more time was needed to get a foundation in place for a change of this magnitude. Plans call for a regional structure that includes more than 200 degree programs. Eventually, 117 administrative and staff positions would be eliminated as opposed to 163 positions, which were proposed in the first plan. Three regional presidents will be named in the spring of 2019. The new plan will also keep department heads instead of removing them, an element of the of the first plan. The consolidation plan is expected to save approximately \$17 million.

University of Connecticut's Balancing Act

For now, the University of Connecticut's Board of Trustees will hold the line on additional tuition and fee increases. In December of 2015, the trustees voted to increase tuition by 31% over a 4-year period. In addition, UConn began enrolling more students, while hiring fewer faculty and staff. Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Craig Kennedy noted there are fewer professors in the classroom, fewer faculty engaged in research. Taking up the slack are part-time instructors and adjuncts.

Trustees have approved a \$1.25 billion budget for the new fiscal year. The budget increase is due in large part to a 28% increase in fringe benefits, which has been part of negotiated contracts. University employees were also part of state employee concessions that froze pay for this year. They are slated to receive a \$2,000 increase under the new budget, which adds an additional \$20 million to expenses that UConn must address.

Maine

Maine lawmakers suffered through a protracted set of sessions as they tackled a diverse, challenging set of issues. Aside from passing a budget for FY19, which provided a hefty surplus of \$175 million, they failed to resolve several major issues before ending the regular session on May 2, 2018. On June 19, they returned to work in a special session and approved a \$41 million spending package for human services. Another special session was held on July 9 to take up the Medicaid expansion bill, which provides \$60 million for some 70,000 low-income Mainers for the first year of the expansion. The bill failed to get the two-thirds vote needed to override Gov. LePage's veto. On August 23, a state judge ordered Gov. LePage to file an expansion plan as approved by Maine voters. On August 31, Gov. LePage submitted an expansion plan and recommended that the federal government reject it.

During the special sessions, lawmakers overturned many of Gov. LePage's vetoes including a bill to authorize the sale of marijuana in the state, another measure to permit doctors to prescribe medical marijuana to patients, and a \$41 million funding package for human services, including opioid drug treatment and mental health services needed for elderly and disabled residents. Also, lawmakers voted unanimously to overturn a veto that would increase MaineCare reimbursement rates for direct care workers in group homes to the equivalent of \$11 per hour.

Gov. LePage continued to wage war with legislators by refusing to release Clean Election funds approved by the voters. A court order directed the LePage administration to issue payments of over \$1 million to 120 publicly financed candidates. The administration responded it would abide by the court order but would not issue the payments, which should be handled by the State Ethics Commission. An agreement was struck to have the state finance agency work with the Ethics Commission to get payments distributed to 120 candidates as soon as possible.

Gov. LePage filed legislation (*LD 1834 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Provide for Student Loan Debt Relief*) to address student debt and workforce issues. In his testimony before the legislature, Gov. LePage requested a \$50 million bond to help lower the debt load for Maine students and to refinance student debt for graduates who move to Maine to work. He proposed zero-interest loans for Maine residents to attend college in Maine. Under the Maine Student Loan Debt Relief Program, zero-interest loans up to \$10,000 per year for a maximum of five years would be made available to Maine residents who study at qualified in-state institutions of higher education and agree to live and work in Maine for at least five years following graduation. No action was taken on the measure.

The Governor also insisted that lawmakers address child protective services. This was in response to the deaths of two young girls who allegedly died at the hands of their caregivers. He proposed legislation, which was adopted, to provide \$21 million in funding to strengthen child protective services. Lawmakers approved the legislation in the special session.

Legislation Passed and Signed Into Law

LD 836 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Build Maine's Workforce Development Capacity by Modernizing and Improving the Facilities and Infrastructure at Maine's Public Universities and Community College

Changes the title, reduces from \$75,000,000 to \$49,000,000 funds provided to build Maine's workforce development capacity by the construction, reconstruction and

remodeling of existing or new facilities and other infrastructure within the University of Maine System. Also adds a bond issue to provide funds in the amount of \$15,000,000 to be used to improve educational programs by upgrading facilities at all 7 community colleges to provide Maine people with access to high-skill, low-cost technical and career education.

LD 1475 An Act to Reduce Childhood Poverty by Leveraging Investments in Families Today (LIFT)

Provides \$2.1 million to assist low-income parents in paying for higher education. Eligible parents are those in households earning 185% or less of the federal poverty level or about \$46,000 a year for a family of four. Funds would go to those who are eligible for but do not receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

LIFT had broad bipartisan support and became law without the governor's signature. Speaker Sara Gideon, the bill's sponsor, noted that in addition to helping families out of poverty, the legislation would help address workforce shortages. Eligible programs include those in the fields of health care, technology and engineering. Funds could also be used for other postsecondary programs with a high value, industry-recognized certificate or credential.

LD 1666 An Act to Ensure the Successful Implementation of Proficiency-based Diplomas by Extending the Timeline for Phasing in Their Implementation

Delays by one year the timeline for the implementation of proficiency-based diplomas.

LD 1843 An Act to Amend Career and Technical Education Statutes

Amends the current calculation of state subsidy for career and technical education from an expenditure-driven model to a cost model to recognize current costs of direct instruction, operation of facilities and student and administrative support. The bill also changes the subsidy payment for satellite programs and career and technical education regions and establishes funding provisions for the operation of career and technical education middle school programs through authorization of pilot programs.

LD 1731 An Act to Recognize the Accreditation of Certain Private Schools.

Allows a private school that enrolls fewer than 60% of publicly funded students to operate as an approved private school if it is accredited by a commission on independent schools of a New England association of schools and colleges; in current law, such a private school is subject to the Department of Education's basic school approval process

LD 1858 An Act to Include Security Installations and Upgrades in Maine's School Revolving Renovation Fund

Amends the law governing the School Revolving Renovation Fund to specify that Priority 1 status loans made to school administrative units for school repair and renovation, include loans for the installations or improvements necessary to increase school facility security.

LD 1922 An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services and Child Protection Act (Governor's bill)

Amends the current statute to require that all reasonable efforts be made to rehabilitate and reunify families as a means for protecting the welfare of children. It provides new funding of \$21 million, including \$8 million to replace outdated information systems for tracking cases, \$3 million for raises for caseworkers, \$2.6 million for foster families, funds for 16 new caseworkers and additional funds for child protective services.

Massachusetts

For nearly a month into the new fiscal year, the Commonwealth had the distinction of being the only state in the country without a budget for FY19. Gov. Charlie Baker signed the FY19 budget on July 26, 2018. The \$41.2 billion budget does not include any new taxes or fees and represents an increase in spending of 3.2% over the prior fiscal year.

Lawmakers raced to tackle myriad issues before the session ended on July 31, 2018. However, time ran out for an education funding bill. A report issued by the Foundation Budget Review Commission noted the 25 year-old foundation formula to be woefully inadequate and made recommendations to increase funding.

The Senate version would have increased the education foundation funding by more than \$1 billion, while the House bill would have increased it by about one-third as much. The two branches were unable to reconcile their differences in time for the legislature to take action.

Other bills that were casualties included a ban on "conversion therapy" related to the sexual orientation and gender identity of minors, a proposal to allow residents to list their gender as "X" on a driver's license, and another to respond to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision that dealt a blow to public-sector unions.

Notable changes in the budget related to education and workforce development include:

- \$4.9 billion for K-12 education, an increase of \$160.6 million over FY18
- \$1.2 billion for higher education, an increase of \$45 million over FY18
- \$200 million to address the opioid and heroin epidemic.
- An increase to the Stabilization Fund of \$368 million, bringing the total to \$2.1 billion at the close of FY19
- An increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit from 23% to 30% of the federal tax credit
- Reinstatement funding for Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a collaboration of government, business and academic partners to help manufacturers be more competitive
- Increased funding, from \$2 million to \$6 million to train, and place unemployed and underemployed workers
- Funding of Youth Works, a summer jobs program for at-risk youth, at \$12.8 million

Legislation Passed and Signed Into Law

H 4592 An Act Relative to Economic Development in the Commonwealth

Authorizes almost \$538 million in public infrastructure grants for local projects, \$250 million for the popular MassWorks municipal infrastructure program and \$75 million in grants for technical education and workforce training. The legislation also contains non-compete reform which would limit who can be subject to a non-compete and how non-competes can be structured.

H 4640 An Act Relative to Minimum Wage, Paid Family, Medical Leave and the Sales Tax Holiday

Also known as the Grand Bargain since the each of the following, would have been on the November ballot:

Raises the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2023; includes a raise in the tipped minimum wage; implements paid family and medical leave program beginning in 2021, with funding to come from a new payroll tax; creates a permanent sales tax holiday.

H 4486 An Act Protecting Youth From the Health Risks of Tobacco and Nicotine Addiction

Prohibits the use of tobacco products or vapor products within the school buildings or facilities or on the grounds or school buses of a primary or secondary school, including public and private schools, or at any school-sponsored event. Each school committee or board of trustees shall establish a policy regarding violations of this section. The policy may include, but shall not be limited to, mandatory education classes on the hazards of using tobacco products or vapor products.

S 2260 An Act Negating Archaic Statutes Targeting Young Women

Repeals the state's 173 year-old abortion ban and allows women to access an abortion irrespective of federal abortion laws.

H. 4670 An Act Relative to Firearms (Extreme Risk Protection Order)

Authorizes confiscation of an individual's firearms if a judge deems the individual to be a threat to him or herself and to others.

H. 4667 An Act Automatically Registering Eligible Voters and Enhancing Safeguards Against Fraud

Registers eligible residents to vote when they get their driver's licenses or health insurance through the state. Begins in 2020.

H. 4742 An Act for Prevention and Access to Appropriate Care and Treatment of Addiction

Requires all prescribers convert to secure electronic prescriptions and Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) each time a prescription for a benzodiazepine is issued; increases access to overdose-reversing medication

New Hampshire

In his State of the State Address in February of 2018, Gov. Chris Sununu noted progress made since 2017. In the first year of the budget biennium:

- The Rainy Day fund grew to \$100 million;
- Surplus funds were used to provide property tax relief for New Hampshire residents;
- New Hampshire cities and towns received funds for critical infrastructure projects;
- A new Public School Infrastructure Fund will provide \$20 million to communities for long, overdue infrastructure projects including school security.

The governor announced a new STEM initiative, the Governor's Cup, a collaborative partnership between The University System of New Hampshire, the Community College System, and FIRST Robotics. This will feature an annual competition open to students and teams from across the state for college credit. Each senior on the winning team will receive a tuition-free semester at a school of their choosing within the University or Community College System.

Gov. Sununu vowed to carry on the fight in favor of legislation (SB 1), which would put legal barriers in place before other states could collect their sales taxes from New Hampshire businesses. New Hampshire has no sales tax and no experience in collecting, remitting sales taxes. One of the provisions of SB 1 would be to require out-of-state taxing agencies to register with New Hampshire's Attorney General before attempting to collect sales taxes. In a special session, the New Hampshire Senate voted 24 – 0 to adopt the recommendations of a task force to put legal barriers in place before other states could collect their sales taxes from New Hampshire businesses. The House response was to strip SB 1 of everything except a 13-member commission to study the proposal and report back on July 1, 2019. Speaker Gene Chandler cut off further debate ending the House session. An hour later, the Senate voted 23 – 1 to reject the House amendment for a study. The Supreme Court's ruling in *South Dakota v. Wayfair*, cleared the way for other states to force New Hampshire businesses to collect their sales tax when they produce a product in that state.

The governor vetoed a bill (SB 593) to abolish the death penalty which had bipartisan support and passed the House and Senate.

Legislation Passed and Signed Into Law

HB 1264 An Act Relative to Construction of the Terms "resident," "inhabitant," "residence," and "residency."

Establishes voter registration requirements for out-of-state students enrolled at New Hampshire colleges and universities. Previously, students were not required to present documentary proof of residency (e.g., driver's license or vehicle registration) in order to register to vote. The new law requires students to present proof of residency to register to vote. This means that students and other part-time residents will be required to pay for a new in-state driver's license and register their cars in the state. Opponents of the new law say this is generational voter suppression.

HB 1674 An Act Relative to Computer Science and Digital Skills Required for an Adequate Education.

Modifies the educational content of an adequate education. replacing "technology education, and information and communication technologies" with "engineering and technologies" and "computer science and digital literacy."

Also modifies the input-based accountability standards for technical education required for a school to demonstrate that it provides the opportunity for an adequate education.

SB 313 Reforming New Hampshire's Medicaid and Premium Assistance Program, Establishing the Granite Workforce Pilot Program, and Relative to Certain Liquor Funds.

Preserves government-funded health insurance for 50,000 low-income adults through 2023.

HB 587 Relative to Conversion Therapy Seeking to Change a Person's Sexual Orientation.

Bans conversion therapy for minors. New Hampshire is now one of 13 states and the District of Columbia to protect LGBTQ youth from conversion therapy.

Casualties

HB 1319 An Act Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Gender Identity.

Bans discrimination based on gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations (such as restaurants, hotels, and other places that serve the public).

Affords protections for transgender people that are already in place against discrimination based on race, sex, religion, and sexual preference.

Higher Education Updates

Tuition and Fees at New Hampshire Community Colleges, UNH System Increase

Tuition for 2018-2019 will increase by 2.4% or \$5 per credit at New Hampshire's community colleges. For full-time students taking 12 credits the cost will be \$5,160 for the full year. The increase will be offset somewhat by an increase in Gov. Sununu's new scholarship program designed to help the neediest students.

At the University of New Hampshire, tuition will increase by 2.5% or \$746 for residents while tuition will increase by 3.5% or \$1,556 for non-residents. New Hampshire receives the lowest amount of state funding in the country while UNH has the highest tuition rate for residents in the U.S. according to the College Board. University officials are hopeful that financial aid will increase to offset tuition rates for the neediest students.

Rhode Island

On Friday, June 22, 2018, Gov. Gina Raimondo signed a \$9.6 billion budget for FY19, which increases spending by \$300 million over the previous year. Lawmakers concluded their work for 2018 in a rare Saturday session on June 23rd. The spending plan introduces sports-wagering at Twin River Casino in Lincoln and the soon-to-open Tiverton casino. IGT, formerly GTech will operate the two casinos. The state would collect 51 percent of the revenue with IGT receiving 32 percent and Twin River 17 percent. Projections estimate raising \$23.5 million in FY19.

The FY19 budget invests \$147.9 million to fix Rhode Island's roads and bridges and supports the second year of the car tax phase out signed into law last year. Rhode Islanders will nearly a 25% reduction in their next car tax bill compared with the bill they received before the phase out started.

The budget includes \$11 million for Gov. Raimondo's Real Jobs Rhode Island training program, making the program permanent. Real Jobs Rhode Island gives young people in foster care the option to continue access to care until the age of 21 and doubles funding for senior centers and invests in higher-quality childcare.

The budget also increases the tax credits from 25% to 30% for production costs given to motion picture production companies and raises the cap on credit from \$5 million to \$7 million, raises the fee for medical marijuana licenses from \$5,000 to \$250,000 and increases Medicaid payments to 59 nursing homes by 2.5% in exchange for dropping a lawsuit against the state.

The budget included approval of a plan to build a new stadium for the PawSox in the City of Pawtucket at a cost of \$83 million. However, on August 17, the Pawtucket Red Sox announced the team would be going to Worcester, Massachusetts. The team will continue to play in Pawtucket for the next two years.

Education items passed in the FY19 budget include:

- **\$210,000 for Computer Science for Rhode Island/CS4RI**
Makes Rhode Island the first and only state to offer computer science in every school
- **\$500,000 for Dual and Concurrent Enrollment**
High school students can earn college credit for free.
- **\$250,000 for English Language Learners**
Provides additional funding to support English Language Learners who are in the most intensive programs
- **\$70 Million of School Construction Bonds for Higher Education**
Voters approved \$45 million for the University of Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay Campus for marine educational research and \$25 million to Rhode Island College's School of Education and Human Development.
- **\$6 million for the Second Year of Rhode Island Promise Scholarship Program**
Tuition free access for Rhode Island high school graduates to the Community College of Rhode Island
- **\$4 million for the Northern Rhode Island Higher Education Center**
Center to be located in Woonsocket. Four employer partners, CVS Health, Fidelity, Amica and AAA Northeast will help develop curricula and training programs at the Northern Rhode Island Higher Education Center which is modeled on the Westerly Education Center which was created by a public-private partnership with Electric Boat and others in April of 2017. *The*

Westerly Education Center was also recognized by the New England Board of Higher Education as the 2018 recipient of the Rhode Island Excellence Award.

The employer partners will provide curricular, training to prepare students to compete for jobs. Amica will develop curricula and training to help Rhode Islanders compete for jobs in computer information systems in addition to building programs to meet the company's needs in call center services (including bilingualism and leadership training. CVS Health will develop training cohorts for Rhode Islanders to become certified as Pharmacy Technicians and prepare them for jobs in data analytics and IT. Fidelity will focus on identified needs in data analytics and IT cyber and will launch a partnership with Bryant University's Executive Development Center to train new hires.

Legislation Passed and Signed Into Law

H. 7982B, S. 2688A An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles – Operators and Chauffers' Licenses (DACA, Driver's License)

Protects Dreamers who may lose DACA protections, to continue to drive legally. Continues the status quo relating to operators and chauffeur's licenses to approved recipients under the Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. This act would also provide that the issuance of a Rhode Island operator's license shall not confer the right to vote in the state of Rhode Island.

H. 8342 An Act Relating to Education

This act would have each public institution of postsecondary education establish a plan for addressing the mental health needs of its students. Each institution shall develop policies aimed at identifying a student exhibiting suicidal behavior or tendencies.

H 7688 An Act Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure – Courts – Extreme Risk Protection Orders - Criminal Offenses, Weapons (Red Flag)

Provide the superior courts with authority to issue "extreme risk protection orders" when the court finds the subject of the order is an imminent danger to cause personal injury to self or others by having access to a firearm. The act would also provide that a person subject to an extreme risk protection order surrender all firearms and carry permits while subject to such an order. This act would take effect upon passage.

S 2279B An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses (Kristen's Law, Opioids)

This act would create a new criminal offense for the delivery of a controlled substance resulting in death. Specifies that any person convicted of unlawfully selling illicit substances that result in a person's death shall be sentenced to up to life in prison.

S 2292 Substitute A An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Weapons (Bump Stocks)

Makes possession of bump stock, binary triggers or trigger cranks punishable by up to ten (10) years imprisonment and/or up to a ten thousand dollar (\$10,000) fine and would make it unlawful and apply the same penalties for any person within this state to modify any semi-automatic weapon to shoot full automatic fire with a single pull or hold of the trigger. This act would take effect ninety days after the passage of the act.

Vermont Legislative Summary

After adjourning the regular session on May 13, 2018 without having a budget for FY19 in place, lawmakers returned to the capitol for a special session, which began on May 23 and ended on June 29. After three tries, the FY19 budget of \$5.8 billion became law without the governor's signature. At issue was how to use \$34.5 million, a one-time windfall in the budget. Gov. Scott wanted to reduce property taxes for Vermonters but legislators countered that it would make more sense to apply the surplus to reducing the shortfall in the teacher's pension fund.

The outcome of the dispute between Scott and lawmakers was that Vermont residents will not see an increase in residential property taxes. However, rates for non-residential property owners will see an increase of 4.5%. About one third of tax revenue comes from non-residential property owners, which applies to camps, second homes and small businesses.

During the session, Gov. Scott vetoed two high profile bills; one to increase the minimum wage and a measure to provide paid leave which would have been funded through a payroll tax on employees. Scott also vetoed S. 197 which would have made it easier for those exposed to toxic chemicals to compel companies responsible to pay for related medical expenses. Democratic lawmakers lacked the two-thirds majority to override the Governor's vetoes.

Other items included in the budget were:

- Changes in the sources and uses of the state education fund, including dedicating 100 percent of sales and use tax revenue and 25 percent of meals and rooms tax revenue to the education fund to replace an annual transfer from the general fund
- Changes in Vermont income tax law to offset changes from the federal government, including a 5% tax credit for charitable contributions up to \$20,000
- An expansion of the tax exemption for Social Security income
- An increase in the statewide non-residential property tax rate, to \$1.58 per \$100 of assessed value with no increase in the average homestead property tax rate, which will remain at \$1.50
- Lower limits in the maximum house site value for Vermonters who receive a property tax adjustment.
- A task force to examine staff-to-student ratios in Vermont school districts
- A new statewide commission that will decide the portion of health care costs that school employees and school districts should pay, replacing local negotiation.
- School employees and school boards to be equally represented on the board of the Vermont Education Health Initiative, the organization that designs health care plans for school employees
- A commission to study Vermont taxes and recommend structural changes

Legislation Passed and Signed Into Law

H. 897 An Act Relating to the Effectiveness, Availability and Equity of Services Provided to Students Who Require Additional Support

Changes the state funding model for special education for all supervisory unions in fiscal year 2021, for school year 2020-2021, from a reimbursement model to a census-based model. Creates an advisory group to assist the State Board of Education in developing rules to implement statutory changes and to advise the General Assembly of any statutory changes it determines are necessary or advisable to meet the goals of the act; requires the Agency of Education to conduct a study of weighting factors used to

determine education property tax rates and to consider whether the census grant amount should be increased for supervisory unions that have, in any year, relatively higher costs in supporting students who require additional support; requires the Agency of Education, for the 2018–2019, 2019–2020, and 2020–2021 school years, to assist supervisory unions to expand and improve their delivery of services to students who require additional supports; and creates three new positions within the Agency of Education to support special education services.

H 378 An Act Relating to the Creation of an Artificial Intelligence Task Force.

Creates the Artificial Intelligence Task Force to investigate the field of artificial intelligence in the State and make recommendations on the responsible growth of Vermont’s emerging technology markets, the use of artificial intelligence in State government, and State regulation of the artificial intelligence field. The task force is repealed on June 30, 2019.

H 511 An act Relating to Eliminating Penalties for Possession of Limited Amounts of Marijuana

Makes Vermont the first state to legalize marijuana through the state legislature. Permits the possession of up to one ounce of marijuana by individuals over the age of 21 and allows individuals to grow up to two marijuana plants in their homes. Does not allow for retail sales of marijuana in the state

S. 221 An Act Relating to Extreme Risk Protection Orders

Provides for law enforcement to confiscate weapons from individuals deemed by a court to be a threat to themselves or others

S. 55 An Act Relating to the Disposition of Unlawful and Abandoned Firearms

Increases the firearm purchase age from 18 to 21. Requires background checks on private gun sales and prohibits the sale of high-capacity magazines, beginning October 1, 2018.

H. 422 An Act Relating to Removal of Firearms From a Person Arrested or Cited for Domestic Assault.

Allows law enforcement to confiscate weapons from individuals arrested or cited for domestic assault if the individual is in immediate possession of the weapon, the weapon is visible to the officer, or the weapon is discovered during a legal search.