

ECNC Weekly Update, June 2, 2006

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The budget game is now in the House's court, and it was obvious this week that the speed among state representatives had dramatically increased. The Appropriation Committee Co-chairs met and came up with targeted goals and appropriation recommendations for the subcommittees. On Thursday, the subcommittees began working on their budgets.

The House passed the \$1 minimum wage increase bill on Tuesday, although it is not expected that the Senate will immediately consider it. The Senate put their minimum wage bill in the budget and probably won't move on the issue until the House is done with their budget in the next two weeks. In response to complaints from many business groups that represent small businesses, the House is putting together a package of bills that help small businesses. Tax credits for hiring certain types of people, health insurance subsidies and regulatory reform are a few of the bills being considered.

Action Bills

House Bill 1849 – Lobbying Reforms 2006 was introduced by Representatives Hackney, Howard, Gibson and Sherrill and amends laws by establishing waiting periods before certain state officers may lobby, by barring lobbyists from certain appointments and other activities, by banning certain gifts, by establishing quarterly reporting of expenditures with additional interim reporting, by expanding the coverage of the lobbying laws to include executive branch officers, by limiting campaign contributions by registered lobbyists, and by making other conforming changes as recommended by the House Select Committee on Ethics and Governmental Reform.

(Referred to the House Committee on Judiciary I)

House Bill 1895 (= S1681) – Establish High Risk Pool was introduced by Representative Insko and establishes the NC Health Insurance Risk Pool to appropriate funds thereof. Every individual covered by a small business health insurance plan and some that are covered by ERISA will pay \$24 a year to fund the high risk health insurance pool. It is estimated that approximately 18,000 people who, because of health issues, cannot find affordable insurance will purchase through health insurance through this pool. There have been many questions raised about the actual cost of the program and the financial shortfalls that may occur. The bill will be heard for a third time in House Insurance and has more support for passage than in years past.

House Bill 2174 – Raise Minimum Wage was introduced by Representatives Harrell, Jones and Adams and has passed 2nd and 3rd readings in the House and will be sent to the Senate and referred to the Senate Commerce Committee. The bill raises the minimum wage to \$6.15.

Senate Bill 2006 (= H2744) – Economic Development Program Modifications was introduced by Senator Hoyle and makes modifications to the Job Development investment Grant Program, extends the William S. Lee Quality Jobs and Business Expansion Act for certain taxpayers, and extends certain sales and use tax refunds.

(Referred to the Senate Finance Committee)