March 5, 2020

**Environment and Natural Resources committee continues work on packaging legislation**

The Environment and Natural Resources committee continues to work on **LD 2104, An Act To Support and Increase the Recycling of Packaging**, that would create a first in the nation extended producer responsibility framework for the State of Maine. On Thursday, March 5, Sen. Brownie Carson (D-Cumberland) presented an amendment that significantly altered the original proposal. The amendment proposed the following changes to the original legislation (http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_129th/billtexts/HP150001.asp):

1. It amends the definition of “municipality” to include refuse disposal districts and regional associations.

2. It amends the definition of “producer” to remove inclusion of persons that sell, offer for sale, or distribute for sale in the State products in or using packaging material and that elect to fulfill the responsibilities of a producers. It also excludes from that definition nonprofit organization exempt from taxation under the United States Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)(3).

3. It amends the definition of “toxicity” to include reference to intentionally introduced chemicals regulated pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 32, chapter 26-A.

4. It deletes the definition of “packaging stewardship plan” and makes a number of changes to the bill to remove the requirement that a stewardship organization contracted by the Department of Environmental Protection to operate the packaging stewardship program submit a program plan for approval. Instead, the amendment requires the department to adopt major substantive rules for the implementation, administration and enforcement of the packaging stewardship program, which will set the operational and other requirements for the packaging stewardship program. Those rules must be adopted prior the issuance by the department of a request for proposals for the operation of the packaging stewardship program by a stewardship organization. The amendment provides that such rulemaking must be initiated by December 31, 2021 and sets forth the scope and requirements of that rulemaking.

5. It removes from the bill the specific methods by which the stewardship organization is to calculate producer payments and participating municipality reimbursements, instead leaving the determination of such methods to department rulemaking.

6. It amends the bill in a number of places to require the stewardship organization to consider input from producers and municipalities in the development and operation of certain aspects of the packaging stewardship program.

**Labor committee approves bill limiting non-disclosure agreements**

Governor Mills said to have concerns with final version

At a work session on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing approved along party lines a bill designed to limit the use and enforcement of “non-disclosure agreements” (NDAs) for both hiring and in the settlement of discrimination claims. The net effect of the bill, should it become law, would be to end the use and efficacy of NDAs in Maine. **LD 1529, An Act Concerning Nondisclosure Agreements in Employment**, sponsored by Rep. Thom Harnett (D-Gardiner), was heard in committee last session and carried over for final committee action this year. The bill actually passed in both the House and Senate, but when the bill arrived on the Governor Mills’ desk, she had it recalled. The bill was subsequently sent back to the Labor and Housing committee.

As originally drafted, the bill would have significantly restricted the right of an employer to use NDAs, both with prospective employees at time of hire or in cases where settlements for discrimination claims contained an NDA, unless the

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A message from the president...

“In all things, facts should triumph over fear...”

by Dana Connors

As cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) begin to reach U.S. soil, and particularly the New England region, I cannot stress enough that Maine’s response to the coronavirus must be grounded in facts, not driven by fear. Regardless of size or sector, concerns about the coronavirus and actions that businesses should, or should not, take will greatly mitigate the impact of the virus on public health and the economy.

On March 2, Governor Janet Mills convened a Coronavirus Response Team to build on Maine CDC’s work in coordinating coronavirus preparation and response to protect public health. The team is charged with coordinating state government’s response across departments, local agencies, and health authorities to combat the potential spread of novel coronavirus.

While concerns are certainly understandable, Maine’s response must be grounded in facts – preparation, not panic. Now is the time to listen to experts, to stay informed, and to take reasonable measures to prepare. Try not to panic. We need to be prudent and be prepared, without overreacting. While monitoring the situation, Mainers should feel confident as they go about their daily lives, head to work, conduct meetings, or drop their children off at school.

Working together with government and experts, the Maine State Chamber plans to help instill confidence and calm—and we encourage all our members to join us in that pursuit. We have provided more information on page 13. To develop your own response, we encourage our members to visit the Maine CDC’s coronavirus website at www.maine.gov/dhhs/meccd/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml, as well as the U.S. Chamber’s coronavirus business resource page at uschamber.com/coronavirus.
One of the more divisive tax issues last session had to deal with allowing municipalities the authority to impose local option sales taxes at the municipal level. Two of the five remaining proposals on this topic were considered as carry over bills by Taxation committee and voted on Tuesday, March 3. The final vote is still being compiled. Those two bills are:

- **LD 609**, An Act to Provide Municipalities Additional Sales Tax Revenue from Lodging Sales, sponsored by Rep. Maureen Terry (D-Gorham); and,


LD 609 proposes to increase the lodging tax by 1% and would return incremental revenues generated, minus administrative costs for Maine Revenue Services, to the generating municipality.

As originally drafted, LD 1254 would have allowed a municipality to impose a year-round or seasonal local option sales tax, if approved by municipal referendum, of no more than 1% on prepared food and short-term lodging. A total of 85% of revenue generated would have been distributed back to the generating municipality and 15% would have been distributed to all other municipalities around the state. The money would have to be used for preventing and treating opioid use.

That 2019 version was headed towards a 7-6 “ought-not-to-pass” report in committee. However, in a last-ditch effort to make the bill more politically palatable, Rep. Michael Sylvester (D-Portland) came in with an amendment that changed the distribution formula to 75% back to the generating municipality and 25% to the Maine Rural Development Fund. That ended up securing an extra vote on the committee, and ultimately, the bill received a 7-6 “ought-to-pass-as-amended” report.

Last session, LD 1254 made it to the floor for debate and remained a political football between the House and Senate. It could not garner the votes in the Senate to pass and it was ultimately recommitted to the Taxation committee in the closing days of the session.

The Maine State Chamber has long-opposed local option sales taxes for a variety of reasons, all of which were outlined in its testimony on these bills, including:

- **Enacting a local option sales tax increases the total tax burden in the state**: This bill would have added another layer of sales tax to items purchased in municipalities in which it had been enacted. While local option taxes are another way to raise revenue for municipalities, but in no way assure that taxes would later be reduced at the local level.

- **Local option sales taxes hurt small brick and mortar businesses**: Many citizens buy local to support their neighbors – owners of small brick-and-mortar businesses in their municipalities. Local businesses located in one locale compete with local businesses in another. Businesses located in towns that enact a local option sales tax will be at a competitive disadvantage with businesses in municipalities that do not enact a local option sales tax. This will pit one community against another. **Local brick-and-mortar retail businesses will never be able**

Continued on Page 5...
Non-Disclosure Agreements...
(Continued from Page 1...)

aggrieved party agreed to the NDA as part of the settlement. However even in those cases, the bill went on to render most NDAs as unenforceable, because they could not limit a victim’s right to report and provide testimony or statements to the Maine Human Rights Commission or the Maine Department of Labor.

At the committee’s work session, the bill’s sponsor offered an amendment that is only slightly different than the original – and equally problematic for employers. The amended version would prohibit an employer from requiring any new hire enter into a non-disclosure agreement as a condition of employment. As a matter of practice, the Maine State Chamber is not aware this is an issue in the Maine workplace, and certainly not one for the average worker.

Furthermore, under the amended version of the bill, an employer cannot require an employee to enter into any type of severance or settlement agreement that would prohibit or limit that employee’s right to report allegations of discrimination to a state agency or other enforcement body. According to both the bill’s sponsor and the committee co-chair, Governor Mills expressed concern over this part of the bill. When questioned by Sen. Stacey Guerin (R-Penobscot), Rep. Harnett indicated that he and other bill supporters did not reach agreement with the administration on this part of the bill.

This is an important change to Maine law. While an individual cannot be denied the right to testify by any agreement, or be subpoenaed with respect to allegations of discrimination, reporting such allegations are usually part of any NDA agreement.

What’s more, under the proposed language, an NDA can only be used if it is requested by the employee. In any discrimination settlement negotiations, the employer would not be able to make such a request as part of the settlement. In addition, even if the employee requested an NDA, it must specifically state that the employee retains the right to report, testify, or provide evidence in any federal or state proceeding that might involve the company or individual.

The net effect of the bill is to make NDAs meaningless, even if entered into by both parties. While some might hail this as something positive, NDAs have a role in protecting not only the privacy of the business, but also the privacy of the victim of discrimination as well. If a business cannot rely on an agreed upon NDA as part of a settlement, then why settle any claim? In addition, the employer cannot even put the idea of an NDA as a settlement tool on the table, placing them at a disadvantage when it comes to trying to settle a claim. LD 1529 sets up an unlevel playing field when it comes to settling discrimination cases of any kind. There will be little, if any, rush to reach settlements, resulting in higher legal costs, and ultimately in a higher cost of doing business in Maine compared to other states.

The Maine State Chamber opposed this bill, as drafted last session, and we remain firmly opposed to the amended version approved by a majority of the Labor committee. For additional information or questions, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623 4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org.
Local Option Sales Tax... (Continued from Page 3...)

**to compete in that high-taxed environment.** The tax will hit their bottom line, and they may not be able to pass the expense on to the consumer. Ultimately, they will lose sales to neighboring towns that don’t have local option sales tax.

**Local option sales taxes impact local economic development efforts:** Municipalities around the state work hard to try to attract businesses to their locales; many hire economic development directors to do just that. This will do nothing to attract businesses, but instead, would discourage businesses from locating in towns that have additional taxes. This bill will make towns that impose sales taxes less attractive. Once local option taxes are in place, they would be virtually impossible to remove because that municipality would become dependent on the revenue.

If you have any questions, please contact Linda Caprara by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing lcaprara@mainechamber.org.

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**High-quality child care, early learning programs are key to a strong Maine workforce**

We recently testified before the Maine Legislature’s Health and Human Services Committee in support of LD 1760, a bill that will create high-quality child-care and early learning programs for Maine kids in communities across our state. We spoke on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and Educate Maine, as members of the national business organization ReadyNation, and MaineSpark, a coalition of organizations dedicated to achieving the state’s education attainment goal that 60 percent of Maine adults have a credential of value by 2025.

We shared with committee members our strong belief that increasing access to high-quality education, beginning with early learning programs and child care for Maine’s youngest learners, is one of the most important investments Maine can make to boost both today’s and tomorrow’s workforce. The strength of Maine’s workforce is critical to a robust economy and the economic security of Maine families.

The coordinated investments in high-quality early learning that LD 1760 proposes will help ensure successful participation in the modern, knowledge-based economy by helping to prepare Maine youth for the post-secondary education and training they — and Maine employers — need. A strong early start, especially
Package Recycling...
(Continued from Page 1...)  

7 It provides that prohibitions on the sale of products of producers not in compliance with the requirements of the packaging stewardship law take effect one calendar year following the effective date of the contract between the stewardship organization and the department. It also provides that producers are required to begin making payments to the stewardship organization 180 calendar days following the effective date of that same contract.

8 It provides that, to be eligible for reimbursement of costs as a participating municipality, a municipality is required to submit certain information to the stewardship organization and must provide for the collection and recycling of types of packaging material that are generated in the municipality and that are readily recyclable.

9 It clarifies the order of priority to be used by the stewardship organization in expending funds from the packaging stewardship fund, which includes the establishment of a reserve account to ensure full reimbursements to participating municipalities in future years.

10 It provides that the department determination of the types of packaging that are to be considered readily recyclable must include a transitional period between the time that a type of packaging material is determined to be readily recyclable and the time that such a determination will be effective for the purposes of determining producer payments and municipal reimbursements.

11 It provides an alternative method, to be specified in department rule, for a producer to report required information to the stewardship organization in the event that a producer fails to obtain sufficient information regarding the characteristics of the packaging material it sells, offers for sale or distributes for sale in the State.

12 It amends the small producer exemption to increase the gross revenue threshold from $1,000,000 to $2,000,000; to remove the exemption based on a producer conducting all sales in the State at a single point of retail sale; and to include an exemption for a producer that employs in total 10 or fewer employees.

Having just received the amendment that day, the committee voted to table the bill so members could further review the proposed changes. The committee will continue to work the bill during the next several weeks, and we will keep you updated on the changes and proposals that are made. If you have any questions, please contact Ben Gilman by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 111, or by emailing bgilman@mainechamber.org.
2020 Business Day at the Statehouse
Thurs., March 12 | 8:30 a.m. to Noon | Hall of Flags, Second Floor, Maine Statehouse, Augusta

Employers and employees welcome ... PLEASE JOIN US!

You are invited to the Maine State Chamber of Commerce’s annual Business Day at the Statehouse on Thursday, March 12, 2020, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Hall of Flags (Statehouse, Second Floor).

Business Day at the Statehouse provides a prime opportunity for our members, and their employees, to discuss business issues and priorities with legislators and state government officials, as we work together to strengthen Maine’s economy and keep Maine competitive. Participants have the unique opportunity to connect face-to-face with legislators. Employers often use this time to emphasize the importance of preserving and retaining existing jobs, strengthening Maine’s economy through the creation of new opportunities, and keeping Maine businesses competitive in today’s economy.

With your participation, the “Voice of Maine Business” will resonate throughout Augusta! We anticipate another great turnout this year! If you have additional questions, please register online at www.mainechamber.org or email aarno@mainechamber.org.

High-Quality Child Care...
(Continued from Page 5...)

for at-risk kids, helps build the social, emotional and cognitive foundations and developmental skills children need to start school ready to succeed.

Research has consistently shown how early education benefits kids throughout their schooling and in adulthood. For example, data shows that children who participate in high-quality early learning programs are 44 percent more likely to graduate from high school; 74 percent more likely to hold a skilled job; and make 26 percent more in earnings as adults.

These numbers translate into an unbeatable long-term rate of return — up to $13 for every $1 invested. The difference in lifetime earnings for a male college graduate compared to a male who did not complete high school averages $1.3 million. The lifetime average earning difference for women is more than $900,000. More post-secondary graduates mean more skilled workers, more prosperous Maine families and communities, and a stronger Maine economy in which employers also can grow.

Access to quality early learning programs also helps strengthen today’s workforce. The current lack of high-quality child care is a barrier to work for many people. Parents who are unable to find reliable child care are significantly less likely to be employed than those who do. The scarcity and cost of child care is driving many parents out of the workforce or making it difficult for parents to stay in the workforce, exacerbating Maine’s shortage of workers and damaging families’ economic security.

With 73 percent of all Maine children under age 6 having all parents in the workforce, high-quality child care is a necessity. Although these challenges affect all parents, it is important to note that it hits mothers the hardest, since mothers are more often in low-wage jobs with nonstandard hours and inconsistent schedules.

LD 1760 seeks to address these challenges and improve early learning access and participation. The proposal is designed as a community-based collaboration, using all the assets of a local community and breaking down the existing programmatic silos to reduce fragmentation in services to children and families. It offers a comprehensive, multi-generational approach, and also supports the much-needed training and technical assistance to those who work as early educators in child care settings.

Without question, high-quality child care is a key piece of Maine’s workforce today and critical to future workforce development. We are pleased Gov. Janet Mills recognizes this and has made increasing access to child care part of Maine’s new 10-year economic plan. LD 1760 is the first step in achieving this goal.

Greater access to high-quality early learning in child care settings will promote family economic security and spur economic growth. LD 1760 is real economic development and an economic imperative for Maine.
We offer sustainable programs to our customers that not only provide sound economic and environmental return but also build jobs and careers. We view waste as a valuable resource as well as an opportunity for positive change.

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For the most current information, visit www.mainechamber.org
Maine seeks to establish the Maine Spaceport Complex Leadership Council

EDITOR’S NOTE: The following testimony was delivered by Sen. Shenna Bellows in support of LD 2092, Resolve, to Establish the Maine Spaceport Complex Leadership Council, at a public hearing held on Thursday, March 5, 2020, before the Joint Standing Committees on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. We have reprinted it here for your review.

Dear Senator Herbig, Representative Daughtry, and Distinguished Members on the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business: I am Senator Shenna Bellows representing Senate District 14, which includes the towns of Chelsea, Farmingdale, Gardiner, Hallowell, Manchester, Monmouth, Pittston, Randolph, Readfield, West Gardiner and Winthrop. I am here today to introduce LD 2092, Resolve, To Establish the Maine Spaceport Complex Leadership Council.

This bill establishes a public-private partnership – a coordinating council to undertake the processes required to move forward with the development of launch sites and mission control for Maine to be the leader in the commercial launch of nanosatellites, sometimes referred to as “cube sats.”

This was not my idea. Experts behind me will talk in more detail about Maine’s growing aerospace industry. A constituent, Terry Shehata, heads Maine’s Space Grant Consortium, an entity that has brought millions of dollars into Maine from NASA for investments in education and our economy. In his work, he saw an opportunity. The development of nanosatellite technology with a

For the most current information, visit www.mainechamber.org

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broad range of applications including communications, research and mapping for industries ranging from agriculture and forestry to pharmaceuticals and telecommunications is posed to be a multi-billion-dollar commercial industry.

So how is it that Maine could be a national and even global leader in this brand new industry? We have three unique competitive advantages: geographic location; existing infrastructure at Loring, Brunswick Landing and Cutler in Washington County; and, a potential workforce.

Our geographic location gives us two advantages: We’re closer than other potential launch sites to industry on the East Coast, and again, experts will speak to this, but Maine is uniquely positioned to launch nanosatellites into the earth’s polar orbit whereas Florida, for example, launches into the equatorial orbit. That our geography could make us a manufacturing and technology leader is remarkable and important to leverage.

Our existing infrastructure is a second key feature. The leaders at Loring and Brunswick have been involved in all the work that has gone into this idea. They understand better than we can how amazing the former military infrastructure at Loring and Brunswick are and how ideal those facilities would be to create launch pads and mission control for commercial launching of nanosatellites through a spaceport complex.

Finally, creating a spaceport complex in Maine will create a pathway for engineering students from our universities to stay and live and work here in our state. A spaceport complex would bring more good manufacturing jobs into our state as well as good-paying facilities jobs in Aroostook and Washington Counties.

Your committee has spent a great deal of time looking at Maine’s economic strategic plan. This proposal fits well
Spaceport is an opportunity for Maine to lead in the growing aerospace industry

by Sen. Shenna Bellows (D-Kennebec), March 5 press conference remarks

We all know that Maine is a great place to live and work. But our state is also uniquely positioned to be at the forefront of an exciting emerging industry. As a legislator, it has been my priority to support both Maine’s heritage and growing industries. Any time we have the opportunity to welcome and make way for new businesses that bring good jobs to our state, that’s an opportunity we ought to pursue. Maine’s geographic location and existing military infrastructure — including Brunswick Landing and the former Loring Air Force Base — give our state a unique competitive edge to be at the forefront of the aerospace and nanosatellite industry.

That’s where my bill, LD 2092, comes in. LD 2092 would make sure Maine is well prepared to take advantage of that competitive edge, to welcome businesses in this industry, bring good jobs to the people of Maine, and give an incredible boost to our local economy.

Maine is already home to not one, but two, amazing startup manufacturers of small satellite launch vehicles. VALT Enterprises and bluShift Aerospace are developing small, low-cost launch vehicles to carry nanosatellites to orbital space. They seek to leverage a growing interest in the use of the small, lightweight, inexpensive satellites to conduct a broad range of applications. Both aim to keep manufacturing and launch operations in Maine as part of a larger vision to foster a Maine-based nanosatellite sector.

Last week, we learned that NASA will launch the first Maine-built satellite – a so-called cube sat – into space at some point in the next three years as part of a collaboration between the University of Maine and three Maine schools. Nanosatellites, including cube sats, have a variety of public and private-sector applications, from communications to mapping to research.

When I first heard about nanosatellites, I thought it sounded like science fiction, but this is a real technology that exists today – and it has the potential to bring a slew of high-paying jobs to our state. BluShift says their team is small, but their ambitions are big – just as Maine’s ambitions should be. After all, our state motto, “Dirigo,” calls us to be leaders. Our geography and our infrastructure make us not only a good location but potentially the best location to do this.

We have the opportunity to lead the country in the growing aerospace industry. Here in the legislature, we’re always looking for opportunities to create good jobs and keep our young people here to live and work. It’s not every day that there’s a brand new manufacturing industry that Maine is best positioned to lead. But today we have the opportunity to make Maine a leader in a new industry that will create good jobs and grow our economy now and into the future.

Maine Spaceport...

(Continued from Page 10...)

within that plan. Growth of the New Space economy will spur development in all seven technology sectors targeted for growth by State of Maine (information technology, advanced materials, precision tech, biotech, forestry/agriculture, marine tech/aquaculture, environmental tech); and development of globally based applications that enable the use of nanosatellite data for both commercial and consumer uses. Additionally, this initiative lines up well with the strategic plan’s goals of helping to train and retain Maine’s students graduating with aerospace-related STEM degrees; encourage startups; attract skilled workers and their families from out of state. Finally, analysis of data generated by nanosatellites can enhance decision making and improve management of natural resources.

Now, to launch rockets into space from Maine – especially for commercial applications – requires coordination among federal, state, regional, local and private entities. The private sector can’t do this without support from public authorities to navigate the regulatory and permitting processes on issues ranging from environmental to use of the airspace. There are already 52 aerospace companies doing business today in Maine. The aerospace companies here today, and the aerospace companies all across the state looking to this as a huge economic opportunity, are in conversations with venture capitalists. Private investment in this area will be enormously important. But the private investors need to know that Maine is serious and that there investment won’t be stopped by some failure to communicate or bureaucratic problem. That’s why a coordinating council is so important. I urge you to vote “ought to pass.” Time is of the essence. Maine needs a spaceport complex leadership council to seize this once-in-a-lifetime economic opportunity.

For the most current information, visit www.mainechamber.org

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Member portal provides you with increased access and information

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce its new member portal on the Maine State Chamber of Commerce website. Through the portal, members will be able to update their profile and contact information, register for Chamber events, read the latest news, and access the “Member’s Only” functions found throughout the Chamber’s website. Also, the main contact of each organization will be able to view and pay invoices using the member portal.

If you haven’t done so already, please set up your access to the Member Portal by following these five simple steps:

- Navigate to the Maine State Chamber’s website at www.mainechamber.org.
- Click on the MEMBER LOG IN option located on the right of the menu bar.
- From the Members Only screen, click on the “Click here for login information” option located to the right of the green LOG IN button.
- The next screen is titled “Reset your password.” Type in your email address and then click the “Request Password Reset Email” button.
- You will then receive an email with a link that, once you click on it, will take you through the password set up. If you do not receive this email message within a few minutes, please check your SPAM folder for the email.

If you experience problems using the member portal or if you have additional questions, please contact Mark Ellis by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 109, or by emailing mellis@mainechamber.org.

Digest of New Legislation

Maine Chamber staff have studied each of these recently printed bills to assess potential impact on business trends. If you have concerns regarding any bill, please communicate those concerns to a member of our governmental services staff at (207) 623-4568.

A total of 98 business-related bills have been tracked to date since the session began on January 8, 2020!

BUDGET AND FINANCE

Maine employers should have contingency plans in place for productivity, employees in case of coronavirus outbreak

As a Maine employer, you already know it pays to be prepared. Whether you operate locally or globally, at some point in the near future, the outbreaks in other parts of the globe may likely affect the ability to obtain products from abroad or even the ability to produce goods and services. There are some great resources and guidelines for business through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Maine State Government, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from the coronavirus while ensuring continuity of operations. Based on information provided by the CDC, coronavirus preparedness guides help employers and employees learn more about how they can prepare for and address the impacts of the coronavirus. The U.S. Chamber has also created resources for business response and economic impact data nationally and globally. They can be accessed online at uschamber.com/coronavirus.

First and foremost, circulate workplace prevention tips for employees, including measures to limit the contact with and spread of the virus, including:

- Avoid close contact;
- Stay home when you are sick;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
- Cover your mouth and nose;
- Clean your hands;
- Practice other good health habits; and,
- Follow CDC’s recommendations for using a facemask.

Secondly, assemble your management team and determine your response plan, in advance of employees getting sick. Include in your plan items such as:

- Determining whether flex working is an option;
- Creating an employee communication plan;
- Deciding how to handle spikes in absenteeism;
- Coordinating with state and local health officials; and,
- Making a business continuity plan.

And to keep your business running smoothly, make sure you are ready if/when employees become sick:

- **Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible:** Consistent with public health guidance, permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member, and that employees are aware of these policies. Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees should notify their supervisor if they are sick and won’t be coming into the office.

- **Local decision-making:** Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions based on the conditions in each locality.

- **Employee travel:** Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a health care provider for advice if needed.

- **Separate sick employees:** CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately.

- **Social distancing:** Plan to minimize exposure between healthy employees and also between those employees and the public, if public health officials call for social distancing.

- **Workplace hygiene:** Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use.

Additional measures in response to the coronavirus include reviewing the CDC’s traveler’s health notices and international travel restrictions, understanding your company’s policy for obtaining medical care outside the United States, and developing a process for maintaining health confidentiality and assessing OSHA requirements, if an employee is confirmed to have the coronavirus.

Maine’s Coronavirus Response Team...

Governor Janet Mills has convened a Coronavirus Response Team (maine.gov/dhhs/press -Continued on Page 14...
Whether you are dealing with a complaint filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or the Human Rights Commission, or even a lawsuit filed with the same two organizations, the results can be a drain to your mental and financial resources. Studies show that complaints of employment discrimination have been known to lead to morale issues at the workplace and negatively impact creativity and productivity. Our seminar will cover these relevant topics, and attendees were encouraged to ask questions about their own internal EEO policies, as well as anything else they may have heard about and needed more clarification.

This workshop was designed to educate small businesses and help owners and managers focus on running a successful business by maintaining a strong equal employment opportunity (EEO) policy. This is the second year the Maine State Chamber has partnered with the Maine Human Rights Commission and the Boston Regional Office of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission to bring this informative and timely program to Maine employers.

To begin the training, Amy Sneirson, executive director of the Maine Human Rights Commission, outlined agency trends and recent litigation. Elizabeth Marcus, head of the EEOC’s Mediation Program for New England, followed with more about the EEOC’s early dispute resolution program, as well as program updates and best practices for success. Anthony Pino, EEOC enforcement manager from the Boston district office, outlined the five-point initiative from Janet Dhillon, the EEOC chair and highlighted different forms of retaliation, as well as offered participants practical tips to keep retaliation out of the workplace.

Thank you to our seminar’s sponsors for their support:

- Breakfast sponsor: Verrill;  
- Premier sponsor: Harvard Pilgrim; and,  
- Supporting sponsor: Corning, Inc.

Coronavirus Prep...  
(Continued from Page 13...)  
release.shtml?id=2177142), led by Maine CDC Director Nirav Shah, charged with coordinating State government’s response across departments and local agencies and health authorities to the potential spread of COVID-19. Maine CDC will inform the public if positive tests are confirmed and will offer regular updates on testing recommendations. The number of positive test results will be posted to Maine CDC’s coronavirus webpage at maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml.

General Coronavirus Information...

On March 5, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) announced that testing for the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) at the state’s Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory is expected to begin soon. Maine has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 at this time. As Maine CDC previously reported, one individual who met early criteria tested negative.

COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus, first detected in China and now detected in other countries, including the United States. For some, the respiratory virus causes mild symptoms like the common cold or influenza (flu); for others, it can cause severe pneumonia that requires medical care or hospitalization. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and sore throat (in some patients). Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure. Most patients experience mild symptoms and can recuperate at home, but others, particularly those with underlying medical conditions, may experience more severe respiratory illness. The virus appears to spread in similar ways to influenza (flu) and the common cold – through the air by coughing and sneezing; through close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands; and through touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

Currently there is no vaccine available to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, following the simple steps listed above will reduce the possible spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses such as influenza and the common cold.

Individuals who exhibit symptoms should contact their health care providers, who will make the initial determination on whether COVID-19 testing is advisable. In cases where testing is advisable, medical providers will alert the Maine CDC to coordinate testing. As appropriate, health providers will take samples and submit them to Maine CDC.

For the general public who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low. People in communities where ongoing community spread with the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported are at elevated though still relatively low risk of exposure. Health care workers caring for patients with COVID-19 are at elevated risk of exposure. Close contacts of persons with COVID-19 also are at elevated risk of exposure. Travelers returning from affected international locations where community spread is occurring also are at elevated risk of exposure.
2020 Events Calendar

Monday, May 18
Portland Area
Regional Breakfast Meeting
7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield,
2 Gannett Drive, South Portland

Tuesday, May 19
Lewiston Area
Regional Breakfast Meeting
7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
Geiger
70 Mount Hope Avenue, Lewiston

Thursday, May 21
Bangor Area
Regional Breakfast Meeting
7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.
Hilton Garden Inn
250 Haskell Road, Bangor
In collaboration with
Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce

Wednesday, May 27
Health Care Forum
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Kennebec Savings Bank
330 Civic Center Drive, Augusta

Thursday, May 28
Presque Isle Area
Regional Breakfast Meeting
7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.
University of Maine at Presque Isle, St.
John & Aroostook Rooms, Presque Isle

June TBD
Augusta Area
Regional Breakfast Meeting
7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
Bangor Savings Bank
Senator Way, Augusta
In collaboration with the
Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce

Friday, September 11
Scramble for Scholars
25th Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament
The Samoset Resort, Rockport

For sponsorship information, please contact Melody Rousseau by calling (207) 623-4568 or by emailing melodyr@mainechamber.org. Event questions can be directed to Angie Arno at aarno@mainechamber.org.

For the most current information, visit www.mainechamber.org
Tuesday, March 31, 2020
5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
Senator Inn & Spa, Augusta

* Light hors d’oeuvres and cash bar *
Please register online at www.mainechamber.org.
Questions? Please email aarno@mainechamber.org.