

## Public Affairs Update

The Legislature is scheduled to finish its work by this Wednesday, June 19. Although final adjournment for the First Regular Session of the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature may not happen that day, session could finish by the end of the week. The two-year General Fund budget has passed the House and Senate. Other bills that require funding sit on the Appropriations “table” and must receive a favorable recommendation from that committee to move forward. Currently, there are nearly 200 bills with a price tag of more than \$820 million. Only about \$6 million is available to be spent on these bills so most requests will go unfulfilled. There are about 35 bond bills that will be worked on this week.



### Meals and Lodging Tax

One of the major issues left is the local option lodging tax increase, [LD 1254](#) (Rep. Sylvester, D-Portland). An amendment added in the House removed the meals portion and would allow only a lodging tax. The Senate will now vote on this change. As it currently stands, the bill would allow a municipality to impose a local option lodging tax of 1% if approved by referendum of the voters in that municipality. The revenue from this tax increase would be distributed with the split of 75% to the municipality that voted to raise the lodging tax and 25% to the Maine Rural Development Authority.

Due to the complicated nature of collecting this tax for some towns and not others and redistributing the money, Maine Revenue Services will have to spend \$1.9 million in the next two years to implement a new system and add an employee to collect this tax. The bill will have further votes by the House and Senate this week. Please contact your legislators and encourage them to vote against this tax increase. You can find contact information for your [Representative](#) and [Senator](#) at these links.

### Workers' Comp

The workers' comp omnibus bill, [LD 756](#) (Rep. Sylvester, D-Portland), has been enacted after a compromise was reached last week. Some of the changes are: an increase in the maximum weekly benefit for workers' compensation from 100% to 125% of the state's average weekly wage; annual cost-of-living adjustments of up to five percent for injured workers on full disability after a five-year waiting period; and doubling the allowable period to file a workers' compensation claim from 30 days to 60 days following an on-the-job injury.

### AEDs Required for Commercial Buildings

The bill that would require all commercial buildings built or renovated after January 1, 2020, with an occupancy of 200 people or more have an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), [LD 1169](#) (Sen. Deschambault, D-York), has been enacted and is on the Governor's desk.

### Plastic Bag Ban

[LD 1532](#) was passed by the House and Senate last week, and the Governor has signed it into law. The law creates a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags and adds a five-cent fee on paper bags beginning April 2020. For more details on the bill, click on the link to read the amendment language, refer to the June 3rd edition of the *Insider*, or contact me with any questions.