**At the State House**

The State House remains closed to the public at this time. Committees are holding meetings; however most meetings are related to budget briefings, COVID19 briefings, or advice and consent votes for government positions or commission appointments.

The House Speaker and the Senate President have indicated that the legislature will return to address the current year budget shortfall as soon as next week; and plan to return again in July to pass a FY2021 budget.

The **House Committee on Small Business is meeting Tuesday at 4:30 p.m**. Presentations will be given by Mark Hayward, RI District Director of the Small Business Administration and Ed Huttenhower, Executive Director of the RI Small Business Development Center. They will be followed by a presentation by Dale Venturini, President & CEO of the RI Hospitality Association and Sarah Brakto Vice President of Advocacy and General Counsel for RIHA. Finally, the committee will hear from David LaHousse, owner of Kay’s Restaurant (Woonsocket) and The Lodge Pub & Eatery (Lincoln), and Kristin Gennuso, co-owner of Chez Pascal (Providence). The meeting can be livestreamed at: <http://ritv.devosvideo.com/show?video=cd679c40105a>

The **Joint Legislative COVID-19 Emergency Spending Task Force will meet Tuesday at 4:00 p.m.** This meeting will be televised. The Task Force plans to receive an update on COVID-19 expenditures and encumbrances, nursing home support, and surge hospital data.

**Last Week**

The **House Corporations Committee** held a meeting last week to hear from the Department of Business Regulation relating to their efforts to phase in the re-opening of the State’s economy. Director Liz Tanner told the committee 3500 inspections of businesses have taken place between April 18th and June 4th. These inspections were conducted by 23 part-time DBR staff members and a pool of 18 lottery employees that shifted focus to DBR pending the opening of the casinos. The Department plans to hire additional employees as the lottery folks return to their jobs this week.

DBR houses most of the compliance question response team as well as the complaint unit. Five percent (5%) of customer complaints relate to the failure of other customers to wear masks. Ten percent (10%) of customers are complaining about the failure of employees wearing masks. Director Tanner stated that early on, DBR was also receiving calls about “rumors” of employees coming to work sick. A process has now been created to refer the claim to the Department of Health who will follow up with the business when this occurs.

During the Phase I opening, inspections were conducted on outdoor dining sites and retail sites. While the compliance with face mask wearing and cleaning was high, meeting signage requirements was low, as was compliance with having a written plan. ***Every open business is required to post signs and to have a written plan. If you have not completed your plan, please go to:*** <https://www.reopeningri.com/resource_pdfs/COVID-19-Control_Plan_Fillable_Template-Final-5.13.20.pdf> If a business fails an inspection, DBR will provide information concerning how to comply, and an unannounced re-inspection will occur. With the opening of Phase II now underway, more businesses will be visited by an inspector. If you would like to pro-actively ask for an inspection, you can contact DBR at <https://dbr.ri.gov/> . Director Tanner expressed a willingness to go to businesses that wish to have a visit to ensure the operations are in compliance.

A message from Beth Dwyer, Banking Division - bank lobbies that were once closed are now reopening in Phase II. She discussed the slight concern banks had with customers wearing masks in lobbies. The concern is one of financial safety – the banks need to confirm proper identities of individuals withdrawing funds as well as to deter robberies. If you go into a bank lobby, you may be asked to show your face and to then place the mask back in its proper placement. The Division is still awaiting federal guidance relating to the ending of the crisis and the handling of mortgage delinquencies. Currently borrowers have a 90 day grace period. When the crisis comes to an end, it is unclear if individuals will be required to make a large payment to become current on a loan, and therefore not subject to foreclosure, or if the resuming of normal payments will be considered current (or somewhere in between).

A last item of interest was the increase use in telemedicine. The northeast states, have experienced a 15,503% increase in the use of telemedicine. While the fact that individuals are using telemedicine to address health issues instead of ignoring ailments is a positive, it is unclear what effect the use will have on insurance premiums next year. Health insurance carriers look at income and losses and usually submit rate change requests in May for rates to be put in place for the following year. A rate change request submitted for 2021 would not reflect accurate costs associated with a full 365 day a year implementation of telemedicine, because Rhode Island has experienced an increase of telemedicine at the same time it experienced a decrease in elective procedures, and other normal health provider visits (i.e. chiropractic visits). The Chamber will continue research this issue and the potential premium impacts of the use of telemedicine.