

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

Retirements Could Mean Plenty of Retread Legislation

BY JAMES DECHENE

AS THE 2018 CAMPAIGN SEASON continues to heat up, with the larger number of open seats due to retirements (upwards of 20% of the total seats in the General Assembly), there could be big changes coming into, and out of, Dover. It's worth reviewing legislation in previous General Assembly sessions that either passed one chamber, or was held up in committee. With a greater percentage of progressive members, this legislation could be brought back and have a better chance of passage.

Minimum Wage

An increase to Delaware's minimum wage was passed in the wee hours of the last night of the 149th General Assembly. An increase of \$0.50 an hour will start January 1, 2019, and another \$0.50 will happen on October 1, 2019. Supporters of the increase maintain that \$9.25 will still be too low for Delaware workers, and point to surrounding states with higher minimum wages. The concern for businesses should be for both those who pay at or near the minimum wage, and for those that pay a few dollars over. An upward pressure to pay employees more as the minimum wage continues to climb will be felt across the board.

Paid Family Leave

Legislation providing 12 weeks of paid family leave upon the birth or adoption of a child for state employees passed last year. Supporters of the legislation pointed to examples of leave policies at some of Delaware's larger employers while making the argument of parity for state workers. The concern is for future legislation that would require all employers to provide paid leave, regardless of size of company.

Predictive Scheduling

Legislation that would mandate employers provide employees with a set schedule two weeks in advance would have negative impacts on Delaware employers, particularly those in the food service, hospitality and retail industries. Imposing penalties on employers forced to deviate from the schedule due to slow or busy seasons, employees who miss a shift without

providing ample notice, or for any other business reason, would place an undue hardship on industries that already are under strain in Delaware. Given that tourism is Delaware's second highest revenue generator, care must be taken when considering legislation impacting these industries.



Increase in Renewable Energy Requirements

Efforts to increase Delaware's renewable portfolio standard, specifically with increases in wind and solar generation, have been considered for a number of years. Issues related to the high cost of renewables, accessibility to Delaware, and reliability, have been the major barriers to mandated increases. While the costs continue to decline, they are still higher than traditional forms of energy, and could have a negative impact on companies considering moving to, or expanding in, Delaware. Add in the potential costs of the Artificial Island project to rate payers, and the increase in utility rates could knock us out of regional competitiveness.

These are by no means the breadth of legislation that could be considered. In recent years we have seen bills impacting the insurance industry, hospitals, and telecommunications, and proposed changes to labor and employment law. Not to mention changes to Delaware's tax and business incorporation structures, all of which has an impact on Delaware business. When candidates are out knocking doors at your business or at home, ask them where they stand on these issues, and others, important to your business and to Delaware.