

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

# New Faces Will Bring New Perspectives to Dover

BY JAMES DECHENE

AT THE TIME of this writing there are seven weeks until the General Election. A lot can happen in an election cycle over the course of a few hours, let alone weeks. And while we may not be able to predict accurate outcomes for November 6 at this point in time, there are a few hard facts we already know will impact Chamber members.

First, five key committees in the General Assembly will have new chairs. These are the committees that first hear bills related to wages, insurance requirements, legalization of recreational marijuana, labor and employment law, and the impact of increased taxes. Add to that the shuffle of members who currently chair a committee but serve as a vice-chair for an open chair position, changes to Joint Finance Committee membership and for the Capital Infrastructure Committee. It makes for a lot of changes in how legislation impacting the business community will be handled.

Second, add to that mix at least 20% new faces at Legislative Hall. There are currently 14 open seats, with two members of the House running for Senate. Add to that another new face in the House 1st District as Rep. Charles Potter lost his primary to Nnamdi Chukwuocha.

The key takeaways from these events are: there has been a loss in institutional knowledge in Legislative Hall, which means a steep learning curve for some new members on how life works in Dover, and now, more than ever (or at least in the last decade), it is vital for the business community to be developing relationships with new and current legislators.

Of all the various ways to get involved, meeting with your legislator at your business is one of the easiest and most effective. A meeting over lunch followed by a tour of your facility goes a long way in showing legislators how your business works and provides a window to show the

impact of legislation in real world scenarios.

Another way to be involved and build relationships is to attend Small Business Day in Dover held by the Chamber in May. In partnerships with chambers around the state, this event brings together businesses from across Delaware to meet with their elected officials and to emphasize the importance small businesses have in driving Delaware's economy.

Additionally, we recommend visiting Dover during a committee meeting where legislation will be heard and voted on to be released for a full vote of the House or Senate. Provide feedback at these meetings on how legislation will impact you, your business and your employees, and you have the perfect trifecta of business community engagement.

Any of these three activities taken separately are impactful and, with a critical mass engaging in all three, shows legislators that the business community is and should be a voice to be reckoned with. It is up to all of us to make that happen in the months and years to come. The State Chamber is happy to help you coordinate meetings at your business, to take you to Dover on visits, and to help you tell your story on how you're helping make Delaware a better place to work and live.

