

Chair's Message BY KATIE WILKINSON

»» Vacation! What a novel concept during these “coronavirus times”! Have you scheduled your family vacation? Have you resumed travel for work or leisure? Are you working to resume a “new normal” schedule?

Tourism is a critical component of our economy in Delaware. Our beach communities, for example, have so much to offer visitors – from both inside and outside of the state. The restaurants, hotels, and retail establishments rely heavily on travelers, and were more heavily impacted than other industries due to the inability to travel. These businesses need our collective support. Our members need your support!

Fortunately, all signs point to a robust spring and summer for Delaware. Point-



to-Point hit the grounds of Winterthur in May; Funland opened on the Rehoboth boardwalk; NASCAR races resumed in Dover; Firefly Music Festival is back on the calendar and tickets are going quickly; kids are back in summer camps; and families are scheduling and taking vacations.

But not everything is back to normal. These same businesses continue to struggle to find sufficient staffing to be able to meet the growing demands of consumers. Capacity limitations and changing COVID statistics wreaked havoc on efforts to bring on H1B visa holders for this summer. This alone created huge challenges for our beach restaurants, retail, and hotels – just as capacity limitations are eliminated – as

these businesses are highly reliant on the ability to bring in foreign workers.

Unemployment numbers are coming down, but these positions remain vacant. We must consider implementing changes to the current unemployment program to remove the incentive to remain unemployed. Our tourism economy demands this.

It is the perfect storm. Delawareans and visitors want to travel, make plans, and socialize. With the relaxed CDC guidelines, the demand is likely higher than it was even pre-pandemic. And yet, these establishments cannot leverage this demand because of a lack of staff. How do we get people back to work in these industries?

Delawareans are hopeful. We are excited. We see the light at the end of the tunnel, but still have miles to go to reach economic stability. As we do this, the slow crawl back to a “next normal” continues. I remain hopeful and I hope you do as well!

Advocacy in Action BY TYLER MICIK

It was a busy spring for our policy committees! Several State Chamber committees met throughout April and May, including the employer advocacy & education (EAEC), tax, and infrastructure & transportation committees. In April, Senator Sarah McBride joined the EAEC committee to discuss her proposal to mandate paid family and medical leave in Delaware. As a result of the conversation, the State Chamber sent a letter to Senator McBride outlining our concerns. In early May, Senator McBride introduced

Senate Bill 1, the Healthy Delaware Families Act, and incorporated the recommendations. We are continuing to analyze the bill and offer commentary. The tax committee met in mid-May and was joined by Secretary Rick Geisenberger and State escheator, Brenda Mayrack who discussed Senate Bill 104, which relates to unclaimed property. The infrastructure & transportation committee, as well as leaders from the business community, met in May to discuss recommendations on how the State

should spend the additional \$1 billion it's set to receive from the federal government. The State Chamber plans to offer recommendations to the Governor and is seeking feedback from the business community.

Want to join the conversation and influence policy decisions that help shape the future of Delaware? Contact Tyler Micik at tmicik@dsc.com or (302) 576-6590.

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