Capitol View: from Haynie and Associates

August 2020

On March 9, the opening of the regular legislative session, Governor John Bel Edwards announced that the first Louisiana citizen had tested positive for Coronavirus. Weeks later the legislature went on pause for over a month resuming for May before adjourning regular session on June 1st. With the regular session condensed to 30 days and the threat of the virus, the legislature scaled back the amount of legislation that was considered.

LES along with Senator Hewitt decided that our LAPELS requested legislation could be put on hold until 2021 (see SB 125 of the 2020 regular session). This legislation would give the LAPELS board greater flexibility on granting licenses as well as cleaned up or removed several older statutes that needed updating. We anticipate that we will re-introduce the legislation during the 2021 fiscal session.

During the abridged May regular session, legislation that generally pertained to all professional licensing boards was debated and I thank the LES board for their time and input to work with the authors to amend them to a fair resolution. Some of the issues addressed for all licensures included: improved reciprocity for military families and financial aid considerations for those unable to pay license fees. Also of note was the passage of COVID-19 liability protections for businesses.

Directly following the June 1 adjournment of the regular session at 6:00 pm the Legislature called a special session which ran from June 1 at 6:01 pm through June 30. The special session was limited in scope to key areas identified by the House and Senate leadership that were essential to COVID-19 or related to jumpstarting the economy with recommendations coming from the Louisiana Economic Recovery Taskforce. Suggestions that were made by the Taskforce and passed into law included: automobile tort reform, business-friendly tax changes, and spending reforms. While the changes were relatively minor, it showed the Republican lead House and Senate were ready to get to work as they successfully compromised with Governor John Bel Edwards on the main instruments, all of which were signed into law.

The special session in June also saw the passage of the state budget (HB 1) and the capital outlay budget (HB 2). The state budget was relieved by the CARES act dollars sent down from the federal government, but questions remain on the stability of the state’s revenues going forward with the uncertainty created by COVID-19. The state’s capital outlay budget was passed with a conservative approach based on the future uncertainty of the state’s finances, with many projects being moved to priority 5 or delayed. There is a strong possibility that the legislature convenes again in September or later for a narrow special session to address any budget shortfalls or additional federal stimulus spending.

With the 2019 elections almost a year behind us, I want to remind LES members how important it is for you to get to know your elected officials before you have to call on them on behalf of the profession. Please mark your calendars and remember to vote for the November 3rd Presidential/Congress primary election (early voting October 20th – 27th).

Haynie and Associates’ appreciate our continued partnership with the Louisiana Engineering Society and wishes all LES members and families good health through these unprecedented times.