KEEPING UP WITH THE CAPITOL

We are approaching the halfway point of session and the Chamber has currently testified on more than 125 bills. There are still many bills moving that would greatly impact businesses; among them are bills mandating additional benefits to employees, increases in salaries and new requirements. While working on the 18 bills that are still alive in our legislative package, we will continue to testify on those that have a negative impact on businesses in Hawaii.

HB496, HB535 and SB129 require employers to provide extended paid leave that goes beyond the use by an employee to recover from a health illness or injury. These bills would increase the administrative burden and create additional costs to a business, who must manage this benefit and find coverage for an employee on this additional leave mandate. SB1122 increases the monthly minimum salary of wage and hour exempt employees from $2,000 per month to an amount tied to the minimum wage, which increases at a yearly rate.

Meanwhile, HB1326 would increase the monetary threshold from $300 to $750 for second-degree theft, which could lead to a possible increase in theft, as perpetrators would have more leeway before being charged. These bills would make doing business difficult as they would lead to increases in wage and indirect labor costs – including Medicare and all other premiums and taxes tied to wages. In addition to legislative activity at the State Capitol, we encourage the business community’s participation in upcoming Chamber events. Of particular note is Innovative Learning & State of Education on April 14th. Please visit cochawaii.org to find out how you can participate in the legislative process and to register for events.

VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

With approximately 1,000 member organizations of all sizes and industries, representing 200,000 employees, the Chamber truly values and appreciates our members’ investment, which allows us to advocate for them and build a better business climate in Hawaii. When our membership team talks to potential new members, a commonly asked question is, “What is the value of being part of the Chamber?” In response, the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) commissioned a study to determine, “The Real Value of Joining a Local Chamber of Commerce.” Here’s a recap of the findings:

• Being active in your local Chamber is an effective business strategy. It communicates that a company uses good business practices, is reputable, cares about its customers and is involved in its community.
• If a company is highly involved in its local Chamber (e.g., sits on the board), consumers are 10% more likely to think that its products stack up better against its competition.
• When consumers know that a restaurant franchise is a Chamber member, they are 68% more likely to eat at the franchise in the next few months.
• When consumers know that an insurance company is a Chamber member, they are 36% more likely to think favorably of the company.
• When consumers know that a small business is a Chamber member, they are 49% more likely to think favorably of it and 80% more likely to purchase goods or services from the company in the future.
• Positive impacts of Chamber membership have remained the same and even increased over time.

Please share this information with potential members and join us in achieving our goal of 2,000 members by 2016. The more members we have, the stronger the “Voice of Business” will be in our state and the more we can accomplish to make a significant difference in our business climate and the quality of life for the people of Hawaii.

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii continues to find ways to enhance our products and services, engage our members in various activities and support our members through various programs. We are in a challenging, yet, exciting time in our state when we can, together, help shape the future of Hawaii. We invite you to be a part of this effort. Thank you for your support.

Sherry Menor-McNamara
President & CEO

* full copy of this study can be found at cochawaii.org