



As the situation around coronavirus (COVID-19) progresses daily and even hourly, we are doing our best to get you timely and accurate information. You will continue to see an increased number of communications from the Hibbing Area Chamber as we are able to gather information for you. We will do our best to answer questions and provide timely information to you and our wider community.

Federal Legislation Update - Families First Coronavirus Response Act

The US Senate passed HR 6201 and President Trump is expected to sign this bill that funds several items related to coronavirus aid. Most impactful to our business community and community members will be significant changes to emergency paid sick leave and FMLA. We would like to highlight a few key points of the legislation and the path forward.

- The legislation requires all employers with fewer than 500 employees to provide 10 days of paid *sick leave* for employees affected by coronavirus (at 2/3 to full pay depending on circumstances)
- *Sick leave* from this program is in ADDITION TO any leave benefits employers already provide
- We are looking for clarity for which businesses might be exempt, but currently it looks like only certain health care providers and emergency responders may be excluded from the *sick leave* program.
- *Emergency FMLA* is being extended to businesses with fewer than 500 employees, including those who are typically exempt from FMLA
- The first 10 days of *emergency FMLA* are unpaid, and after the first 10 days, the employer is required to pay at not less than 2/3 the regular rate of pay.
- Employers who would normally be exempt from FMLA (fewer than 50 employees) may apply for an exemption to the *emergency FMLA* program if they can show that complying would jeopardize their business.
- Tax credits for both employers (*FMLA and emergency sick leave*) and self-employed individuals (*possibly only emergency sick leave*) will be available. Discussion is in progress on whether those credits could be advanced from payments already made by employers into the Social Security payroll tax, and we will provide more updates as they become available
- The Hibbing Area Chamber is continuing to work closely with both our state and federal legislators to advocate for business cash flow needs and quick reimbursement for these paid leave costs. We are also continuing to monitor and advocate for your needs as additional federal relief packages are developed. We fully expect another relief package to be developed in congress addressing additional needs.

We would like to share a blog post from one of our state Chamber partners, Greater Mankato Growth that does a very good job of explaining the provisions of the federal emergency leave legislation as we understand them at this time. We highly encourage you to read through the article, which outlines who is eligible for the emergency leave, the changes to and extension of FMLA, and the tax credits that businesses who pay these benefits will be eligible for.

<https://greatermankatoblog.com/2020/03/16/families-first-coronavirus-response-act-key-provisions-impacting-employers/>

Additional updates important to businesses

In addition to the communications sent on March 18, 2020, we have the following updates to share:

MN Sales Tax (businesses closed due to Governor's executive order) – A 30 days grace period for February sales tax due March 20th to the State of MN has been granted if your business was identified in the Governor's executive order to close due to COVID-19 (bars, restaurants, sports facilities, spas and cosmetology industries, etc.). No penalty or interest will be issued if the sales tax is paid by April 20th, and the Department of Revenue will continue to evaluate this situation.



MN Individual Income Tax – MN Dept. of Revenue is looking at enacting a 90 day extension for individual state income tax payments and expects to be able make an announcement with details by Monday, March 23rd. This also impacts business owners who file their earnings through their individual returns.

SBA Disaster Loan Assistance – DEED is working with SBA to be approved for the Disaster Loan Assistance program. The program will provide working capital with flexible terms and low rates for small businesses (less than 500 employees) and non-profit organizations. DEED expects the program to be available “soon,” but they have not been able to give a firm deadline on when applications will open for that program.

UI for Self-employed, Independent Contractors – If you pay into UI program, UI is available to you. If you have not paid into UI, this funding is not available to you at this time. DEED acknowledges that UI does not help all workers due to these restrictions and is working through options to help additional individuals. The modifications made to the UI program under the Governor’s executive order were meant to provide fast additional relief to workers and employers, and additional work will be done to continue to adapt to the needs of our state.

Shared Work Program – Employers can help provide UI for their employees if employers reduce hours of multiple employees instead of laying them off. Additional information is available here:

<https://www.uimn.org/employers/alternative-layoff/index.jsp>

Status of Confirmed Infections – At this time, the Hibbing Area Chamber is not aware of any cases of COVID-19 in Northeastern Minnesota. Confirmed cases are in the metro and southern MN areas. We will be closely monitoring news outlets for updates and sharing information as we receive it. We do know that testing for COVID-19 is limited due to a shortage of testing supplies. Not all suspected cases will be tested due to this issue. We encourage businesses and individuals to follow CDC guidelines on COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

WEBINAR TODAY and additional resources – Through our partnership with the Minnesota Chamber, we are able to share an invitation to a COVID-19 webinar happening TODAY at noon to 1:30pm. Register for this FREE webinar on COVID-19 resources for your business here:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/374341233947885068>. In addition to the webinar, the MN Chamber has compiled several resources for you to use: <https://www.mnchamber.com/blog/covid-19-business-toolkit>

We are proud to be working hard to meet your needs in this difficult time. If there are additional items that we can do to assist your business, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Hibbing Area Chamber. As a reminder, **please tell us your business’s needs by filling out [THIS SURVEY](#)**. We are sharing this information with our legislators to make sure they know your needs, and the staff at the Hibbing Area Chamber are reaching out to businesses who respond as we are able.