



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

Senate Passes Comprehensive Small Business Assistance Package

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In the final week of the 2006 Legislative Session, the Senate passed a comprehensive package of bills designed to help small businesses grow and create jobs in New York by making health care and energy costs more affordable and by cutting the red tape that slows the progress of small businesses.

The bills will complement significant small business initiatives passed during the session including \$3.5 billion in tax cuts and relief from red tape and bureaucracy by simplifying and reducing paperwork and eliminating unnecessary or overly burdensome fees and permits.

One bill (S.414), sponsored by Senator William Larkin (R-C, Cornwall on Hudson), would remove restrictions and permit owners of a sole proprietorship or a small business to purchase both individual and family insurance policies for their employees under the new Healthy New York insurance program.

"The increasing cost of health insurance is a serious problem throughout the state's small business community," said Senator Larkin. "This bill is designed to compliment

the Healthy NY plan which reduces the cost of health insurance for small businesses that currently cannot offer health coverage to their employees. It allows small businesses that are currently purchasing small group policies to purchase a new Healthy NY basic benefits package for their employees. It is estimated that small businesses would save an extra 5-7 percent with this plan."

Another bill (S.8385), sponsored by Senator James Alesi (R-C, Perinton), would develop a tremendous one stop location for a wealth of easily accessible information on the I Love NY Business site. The bill would establish a statewide business information and referral system designed to meet the needs of existing, startup and relocating businesses by providing information regarding: current economic development technical and business assistance programs; links to state funded economic development service providers; funding opportunities including grants; loans and tax incentives. Additional elements of the bill would maintain an online Small Business Activity Calendar, provide decision-making tools, and increase network, education, and peer-to-peer opportunities for small business owners.

Another bill, (S.8423) sponsored by Senator John Flanagan (R-C, East Northport), would provide a "511" hotline for small business, expanding a call center dedicated to providing answers to simple questions and directing small businesses to the appropriate agency and staff. The bill would also collect information from calls in order to create and update a FAQs area on the one stop web site based on caller inquiries and ensure that efforts are made to address the underlying questions.

Another bill (S.7152) sponsored by Senator Flanagan would authorize the installment payment of civil penalties owed to the state by a small businesses (provisions of this bill do not apply to traffic infractions or parking violations).

A bill, (S.8386) sponsored by Senator Alesi, would make all possible State permits and licenses for small businesses available online in order to save small businesses time and resources, while another bill, (S.8384) sponsored by Senator Alesi, would strengthen the Small Business Advisory Board and ask it to consider and report the following areas:

Develop and update a list of those programs that should be on the site.

Suggest measures to assess the effectiveness of virtual government programs and other assistance programs.

Work with other advisory boards like the Tourism Advisory Board to coordinate activities and programs.

Conduct hearings that allow small businesses or industry groups to provide input.

A bill, (S.6566) sponsored by Senator Mary Lou Rath (R-C, Williamsville), would provide for a two cent per kilowatt hour small business electric energy tax credit to help small business better cope with the rising cost of energy.

A bill, (S.8314) sponsored by Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane) would provide small businesses with an annual summary in plain language of the key legislative, budgetary and regulatory changes that impact them each year.

The bills were sent to the Assembly.