March 26, 2020

Updates on Federal Stimulus, State Budget, Workers' Comp, and other Issues

Federal Coronavirus Stimulus Package
The U.S. Senate late Wednesday passed an unparalleled $2.2 trillion economic rescue package steering aid to businesses, workers and health care systems engulfed by the coronavirus pandemic. The unanimous vote came despite misgivings on both sides about whether it goes too far or not far enough and capped days of difficult negotiations as Washington confronted a national challenge unlike it has ever faced. The Hardwood Federation has prepared a brief summary of the provisions. The package is expected to pass the House of Representatives later today and we will provide more details as the packaged is sign by the President.

Follow this link for an interesting article on how the Stimulus Package will impact small businesses.

ESFPA Comments on NY Proposal to expand Worker Comp to Corona Virus
In the dark of this year's Coronavirus 2021 State Budget process, the legislature is drafting a proposal to extend Workers Compensation Benefits to make COVID-19 a presumptive occupational disease for workers' compensation purposes, for a wide range of occupations whose businesses have been deemed "essential". ESFPA has written to Governor Cuomo objecting to such provisions and you can find our comments here. Please contact your legislator as outlined in yesterday's Alert here.

FRA's Online COVID-19 State Tracker Tool
The Forest Resources Association (FRA) has developed an on-line
Coronavirus tool tracker to monitor the response of states as they adopt policies for "Essential Businesses". The tool tracks state-by-state level so you can learn what impact (if any) Executive Orders and other government action are having on forest product businesses. You can access the FRA tracker here.

**Homeland Security Critical Infrastructure Guidance**

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) within the Department of Homeland Security has issued updated guidance on essential critical infrastructure employees during the COVID-19 emergency response. Although we had understood the previous guidance to include the entire manufacturing supply chain, this guidance makes that interpretation more explicit by clearly stating that workers needed to maintain the continuity of manufacturing functions and associated supply chains are classified as essential. Please note that this is only guidance and does not affect New York's listings of Essential Businesses. As New York revisits lists or begins to unwind limits on businesses this could be a useful resource for guidance.

**U.S. Dept. of Labor Guidance for Federal COVID-19 Leave**

The federal Department of Labor issued guidance on Explaining Paid Sick Leave and Expanded Family and Medical Leave Under The Families First Coronavirus Response Act. You can find the guidance here. Note that certain provisions of federal benefits to employees and New York State benefits overlap and sometimes the employee gets the better of the two options. The Business Council of NYS has released a PowerPoint slide deck that helps explain the two benefit programs and you can find that here.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments regarding this material, or if we can provide any additional information or support as we together respond to this state of emergency.

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