

Re: S.62 (Unemployment Bill)

To the Editor:

I was disappointed to read the commentary by Shawn Shouldice in Wednesday's paper (5/19), a bit snarkily entitled "Time for Legislature to Hit Leave Meeting Button." (It's not like we don't want to!)

The writer disingenuously focuses on one section of a bill, S.62, that wasn't even in its final form until Wednesday night. (The bill passed the House the following morning, and is expected to be concurred in by the Senate before the end of the session Friday or Saturday.)

That section does indeed provide an additional \$25 per week in Unemployment Insurance benefits to laid-off workers, up to a total aggregate cost to the UI system of \$100 million over the course of 10 or more years (how long depends on the number of unemployed Vermonters). This cost does increase premiums paid by businesses over that period.

But what the writer neglects to mention is that the bill also includes a \$400 million REDUCTION in UI business premiums over the same period, by adjusting the calculation of that premium. So the net impact of this bill to businesses is a savings of \$300 million.

The intent of S.62 is to expand Vermont's workforce, attract new residents, and support employers unable to fill positions.

Besides the UI provisions, it includes one-time funding for adult Career and Technical Education centers to upgrade equipment, curriculum and scholarships for workforce training and education. It also includes incentives for workers to relocate within Vermont, and continues the remote worker program favored by the Administration.

S.62 advanced in the House with overwhelming votes on both the UI and the other sections, and was approved in its entirety on a roll-call vote of 143-0.

I am sorry part of the bill does not meet the approval of Mr. Shouldice on behalf of the National Federation of Independent Business. But the final vote shows it is not as one-sided as he portrays.

—Rep. Scott Campbell

May 20, 2021