

# SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: COVID-19 ONMIBUS BILL ENACTED

ALISON SUCY  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER  
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS & COMMUNICATIONS

The Maine Legislature went into its final day of session on Tuesday, March 17, to enact emergency legislation pertaining to COVID-19, the supplemental budget, and other timely measures. All other unfinished bills have been carried over to be dealt with in a special session at a future date.

The COVID-19 omnibus bill, [LD 2167](#), was enacted and it has several sections relevant to tourism businesses.

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (Part B)

Certain **unemployment insurance eligibility** and benefit charging provisions are revised to allow an individual who takes a temporary leave of absence due to COVID-19 to qualify for unemployment benefits:

- If an individual is dislocated or temporarily laid off as a result of the state of emergency, benefits paid to that individual under this subchapter **may not be charged against the experience rating** record of any employer.
- An individual is deemed to have met the eligibility requirements as long as the individual remains able and available to work for, and maintains contact with, the relevant employer and the individual is: under a temporary medical quarantine or isolation restriction to ensure that the individual has not been affected by the subject condition of the state of emergency and is expected to return to work; or temporarily laid off due to a partial or full closure of the individual's place of employment as a result of the state of emergency and is expected to return to work once the emergency closure is lifted.
- The **waiting period requirement is waived** for an individual who is dislocated or temporarily laid off as a result of the state of emergency.
- During the state of emergency, an individual who is on a temporary leave of absence due to a medical quarantine or isolation restriction, a demonstrated risk of exposure or infection or a need to care for a dependent family member as a result of COVID-19 is not disqualified from receiving benefits during this absence as long as the individual continues to remain able and available to work for, and maintains contact with, the relevant employer.

**THIS IS APPLICABLE FOR THE DURATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARED BY THE GOVERNOR DUE TO THE OUTBREAK OF COVID-19, AND FOR 30 DAYS FOLLOWING THE TERMINATION OF THAT STATE OF EMERGENCY.**

## LOAN GUARANTEE PROGRAM (Part I)

- The program, administered by the Finance Authority of Maine, provides **easier access to no-interest loans** for residents of this State, **including self-employed residents**, who experience a reduction in income due to the state of emergency arising from COVID-19.

- Affected employees are eligible for up to 3 loans, each equal to their monthly after-tax pay, up to \$5,000, less unemployment benefits.
- Repayment is due starting 90 days after the end of the state of emergency and during the subsequent 6 months; during that period, interest may not be charged or accrue on the loan.
- Following the end of the 270 days, a credit union or financial institution that made a loan under the program, after a good faith effort to collect the principal amount of the loan, may apply to the authority for repayment of the uncollected amount of the loan in default.

## **PLASTIC BAGS (Part J)**

- The requirement that a retail establishment charge a fee of at least 5¢ per recycled paper or reusable plastic bag used at the point of sale is **delayed from April 22, 2020 to January 15, 2021**.
- The date on which the State occupies the whole field of regulation of single-use carry-out bags at retail establishments is moved up from April 22, 2020 to March 17, 2020.
- The voiding of any municipal ordinance in conflict with state law is delayed until January 15, 2021.

## **LICENSING & REGISTRATIONS (Part F)**

- Licenses and registrations, such as for motor vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, watercraft and dogs, issued by a municipality issued by that municipality that expire during the state of emergency are extended until 30 days after the end of the state of emergency.
- A municipality, without conducting a hearing, may grant a request for a renewal of a license to sell alcohol. This does not affect the ability of a municipality to deny a request for renewal for specified cause and is valid only during the state of emergency and the 30 days following the end of the state of emergency.
- The Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife must allow a resident of this State to renew the registration of a motor vehicle, trailer, all-terrain vehicle or watercraft, regardless of whether the municipality in which that resident resides participates in the online registration service for the duration of the state of emergency and 30 days following the end of the state of emergency.