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IREM tours N.H. Statehouse, gov. Hassan signs Bill 47

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IREM's success as an organization is largely due to its highly rated education programs, management designations, and networking events. IREM is also very active in legislative issues that affect the real estate industry, both at the state and national levels. For several years, the Boston IREM Chapter has been coordinating statehouse tours, both in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. IREM National has launched a new incentive, based on the Boston IREM Chapter's success, to encourage local chapters to develop a "Day at the Statehouse" program.

Statehouse visits help us to develop relationships with our local legislators. At the visits, we inform our legislators about our expertise in the real estate trade and offer to provide information on proposed legislation associated with the real estate industry. These relations are important to help shape future legislation at the state level that will have an impact on our business.

On May 7 a group of our New Hampshire and Massachusetts IREM members and industry partners visited the New Hampshire Statehouse. The group toured the building and grounds and were greeted by governor Maggie Hassan in the governor's office.

The building itself is filled with fascinating history. The first discussions regarding the erection of a suitable state capitol building in New Hampshire took place in the year 1814. The War of 1812 had come to a close with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, although the news had not reached America until after our troops under General Jackson had continued fighting into 1815 and won the famous battle of New Orleans. The first session of the legislature to be held in the building was in 1819. The building has served continuously as the home of the New Hampshire General Court ever since.

The statehouse boasts one of the largest collections of Civil War battle flags still on display in the nation. Many states have stored their original battle flags in order to preserve them.

There is an ongoing effort to raise funds to preserve our New Hampshire battle flags and plans for restoration are forthcoming.

The IREM group was invited to witness a landmark bill signed into law. A small group, including IREM members, most of the New Hampshire senate and some state representatives as well as advocates for people with disabilities, crowded the governor's council chamber to witness this ground breaking legislation become law.

This new law prohibits subminimum wage in New Hampshire. New Hampshire is the first state in the nation to make it illegal for people with disabilities to be paid less than minimum wage. Previously, New Hampshire law allowed employers to obtain permission to pay those with physical or mental impairments less than minimum wage.

Though no businesses in the state are currently taking advantage of the provision, Hassan said that updating the state's policies to officially end the practice affirms "fully including all people is critical to the strength of our society, our democracy and our economy."

Since the 1930s, federal law has allowed employers to request special permission from the U.S.

Department of Labor to pay those with disabilities less than the federal minimum, which is currently \$7.25 per hour. However, the issue has become divisive in recent years.

"New Hampshire has a strong tradition of treating all of our citizens with respect and dignity, and by making New Hampshire the first state to prohibit employers from paying subminimum wages to people who experience disabilities, Senate Bill 47 helps build on that tradition," Hassan said.

This was an honor for IREM and we were proud to be a part of this historic event. After the tour and bill signing, IREM members reconvened at Tandy's Top Shelf for a fun filled networking experience with great refreshments and friends.

David Barrett, CPM, ARM, PCAM, AMS, CMCA, is president at RCM Services, Allston, Mass., and was the 2014 president of IREM Boston.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540