

Merrimack chop shop busted; Ferrari found | Page 6

So much at steak for meat lovers | Page 9

Sasha Cohen sashays to lead  
in short program | Page 17

# The Telegraph

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY • NASHUA AND SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE



50 cents | www.nashuatelegraph.com

NEW ENGLAND'S 2003 - 2004 NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

173rd year, no. 107 | Wednesday, February 22, 2006

## Senate hears testimony on disabilities bill

By KEVIN LANDRIGAN  
Telegraph Staff

CONCORD - Hobbling on crutches up a Boston hillside on an icy day in January 2005, Deb Crapo of Rye feared she would never arrive at the hearing on her disability discrimination charge.

Crapo made it to the Legislature on Tuesday, where she pleaded with a state Senate committee to make New Hampshire the last New England state to require all private companies make "reasonable accommodations" so the disabled can work. This act would also move anti-discrimination hearings for the

smallest companies from Boston to the state Human Rights Commission in Concord. "Our state is behind the times," said Crapo, who had brought a complaint against her Portsmouth employer. She since has had both knees replaced.

The federal Americans with Disabilities Act compels accom-

modation to the disabled for all firms in the United States with 15 or more employees. Exeter Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan said a survey found 31 of 33 states surveyed place the anti-discrimination mandate on even smaller employers.

BILL | PAGE 15

## Bill

CONTINUED FROM | PAGE 1

There are some signs that distinction could end this year.

The state Senate deadlocked, 12-12, on this cause in 2005, with then-President Thomas Eaton, R-Keene, blocking its progress by voting with opponents.

The Business & Industry Association led the opposition a year ago, but Vice President David Juvet said the group is now neutral.

"We are not opposed to this legislation. I think we are on the same page, frankly," Juvet said.

Later, however, Juvet said on principle the group won't advocate for the bill.

"We do think that in some cases, small businesses will be exposed to added costs and some litigation," Juvet said.

Hassan said that most accommodations to allow the disabled to work would cost little or no money.

"This bill means to me that we would be moving one step closer to freedom for one segment of society that has been unprotected," Hassan said.

Carol Nadeau said she needed a Lazy Susan costing \$28.61 to allow her to place her paperwork high enough in front of her wheelchair. She began as a clerk with state government 25 years ago. Today, she runs the Governor's Commission on the Disabled.

"That's a pretty good return on an investment," Nadeau quipped.

## BILL AT A GLANCE

BILL NO: SB 273

SPONSOR: Exeter Democratic Sen. Maggie Wood Hassan

DESCRIPTION: Requires owners of small businesses to make "reasonable accommodation" so that people with disabilities could work there.

STATUS: The Senate Banks and Insurance Committee took initial testimony on the measure Tuesday.

Merrimack lawyer Nancy Richards-Stower was on the Human Rights Commission when it voted, 3-2, to exempt disability accommodations from anti-discrimination rules the agency adopted more than a decade ago.

"There is every reason on earth to pass this legislation," Richards-Stower said, choking back tears.

Hudson Republican Rep. Jordan Ulery, a conservative Republican, said it's pro-business to not have to go outside the state to fight a discrimination complaint.

"It seems to me to be an egregious cost for that businessman to have to go to Boston," Ulery said.

The Human Rights Commission executive director, Katharine Daley, said that if this bill became law, either side in a New Hampshire dispute could appeal to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission office in Boston.