



# 2021 Public Policies Agenda

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The Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce accepts the responsibility to represent its members as the voice of business. Our goal is to ensure that the business community's best interests are always represented in the region's governments. A pro-business climate is critical to the superior quality of life we enjoy in the greater Chambersburg area. It allows us to attract new businesses to our community and expand the ones currently hiring, serving and producing. It also allows us to grow.

The Chamber's professional staff and board of directors monitor borough, county, state and federal activities and represent our members on issues and legislation affecting the welfare of businesses and the quality of life in the Chambersburg area. When there is cause to advocate publicly on an issue, our president and representatives from the board of directors meet with decision-makers to ensure the position of the thousands of businesses and employees that we represent are being accounted for.

The Chambersburg Chamber Public Policies Agenda is updated annually to reflect the issues currently facing our community. In addition to specific priorities outlined below, the board of directors may identify key issues throughout the year that the Chamber will advocate for on behalf of the business community.

*Submitted for approval by the Board of Directors – March 2021*

## **Public Policies**

### **Address Local Education and Workforce Development Needs**

The Chamber and Chamber Foundation collaborate with Franklin County Area Development Corp., SCPaWorks, educators and business partners to develop ways to enhance student readiness for the workforce. The Chamber encourages conversations to address local education and workforce development needs and will continue to collaborate with other community stakeholders as invited to do so.

### **Combating the prescription drug and opioid epidemic**

Pennsylvania is facing a prescription drug and opioid abuse epidemic, particularly with injured workers. The Chamber seeks to improve Pennsylvania's workers' compensation system and help address prescription drug overuse and opioid addiction. The Chamber advocates implementing a prescription drug formulary for workers' compensation, which has helped mitigate prescription drug over-prescribing and addiction in many other states. Formularies offer a flexible approach that makes treatment of typical patients more efficient, facilitates exceptions for unique cases and addresses the outlier instances of over-prescribing. The Chamber also supports the proper certification of Utilization Review

Organizations to ensure qualified experts are holding all parties accountable to properly apply the formulary.

### **Opposition of Minimum Wage Increase**

While all businesses would feel the impact, small business employers would be especially hit hard: on average they make just \$50,000 a year. Businesses with such thin profit margins may not be able to absorb an employee wage hike, regardless whether their employees are full-time or part-time. Small businesses are the most common employers to pay minimum wage and would be most likely to halt hiring or cut jobs as a result of the wage hike. With more than 60 percent of Chamber membership comprised of small businesses, the Chamber is dedicated to representing businesses and advocating for no increase in the minimum wage that would be harmful to local small businesses.

### **Opposition of Reverse Tax Appeals**

The Chambersburg Area School District initiated an effort in 2015 to reassess the value of commercial properties to increase the property taxes owners must pay. A third-party consultant identifies properties as being appraised too low, and then the school board initiates a Reverse Tax Assessment Appeal. While this may provide financial benefits for the district in the short-term, it will have long-term negative consequences on the district, local businesses and the community.

Reverse Tax Appeals could lead to companies moving to other locations in the region where the taxes are significantly less. Property taxes paid by warehouses comprise a significant tax base for the school district and support over 1,000 jobs. If these companies leave Chambersburg for better tax rates and benefits, it could have a major negative impact on our business climate, and ultimately the entire community.

### **Widening of Interstate 81**

Interstate 81 has grown in its importance as a major north-south economic engine to our region. The explosive increase in truck movements has occurred and will certainly continue to grow as both intermodal and distribution centers come online. The highway provides access to major markets on the east coast. While the Chamber represents the interests of the business community, we can unequivocally express the desire of the residents of the county to see action to expand the highway. It has been 14 years since PennDOT studied the corridor, but little in the study has been implemented. We need to move immediately toward the expansion of the highway. While we wait for action, congestion grows. The Chamber supported the 2013 PA transportation bill (Act 89) to raise approximately 2 billion when the five-year phased-in tax increases are fully implemented. We are also supporting a long-term federal highway solution.

# **Legislative Agenda of PA Chamber Adopted by the Chambersburg Chamber**

## **Health Care**

The Chamber believes that employers should be able to offer their workers high quality, affordable health care either through traditional coverage or through alternative options in the marketplace. Job creators continue to seek reforms to the medical liability climate and limits on the expansion of costly health care coverage mandates and the Chamber will continue to advocate for policies that will encourage competition in the provision of health care while also giving employers the most flexibility when making health care decisions.

High health care costs remain an impediment for many businesses who wish to offer a high level of quality care and accessibility for employees at affordable prices and without undue bureaucracy. The Chamber will continue to advocate for policies that will encourage competition in the provision of health care while also giving employers the most flexibility when making health care decisions.

## **Labor**

Changes to Pennsylvania's labor relations and employment policies are necessary to address abuses and facilitate a fair work environment. The business community supports improving the unemployment compensation and workers' compensation systems while opposing mandates that increase the cost of doing business. In addition, the Chamber also supports legislative that would prohibit forced union dues collection in the private sector as a condition of employment and prevent public resources from being used to collect union dues and political contributions.

## **Civil Justice**

Pennsylvania's legal climate is conducive to frivolous lawsuits and lacks protections that create a fair, balanced and common sense system. The business community supports legal reforms that help prevent lawsuit abuse while protection the right of legitimate plaintiffs to seek justice.

## **Energy and Environmental**

Numerous state and federal environmental regulations and energy mandates are hindering the state's economic competitiveness. The Chamber believes that economic development and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive objectives and will continue to advocate for thoughtful, science-based development and flexibly implementation of environmental law.

## **Transportation and Infrastructure**

Pennsylvania must construct and maintain adequately funded and reliable transportation and utility systems and other infrastructure. The Chamber advocates for greater efficiencies in their construction, maintenance and delivery, including streamlined permit and regulatory processes.

## **Education**

Pennsylvania's prosperity depends upon a well-educated workforce. The Chamber supports an education system that establishes clear accountability and provides every child with the opportunity to

receive a quality education that will adequately prepare them for gainful employment or further education. This includes initiatives that provide families with options to best fit the specific education needs of students. We also promote workforce development programs that aim to close the jobs skills gap.

## **Responsible State Spending and Smart Government**

The Chamber urges the legislature and Governor to work collaboratively toward enactment of a responsible, on-time budget, while understanding that all opportunities for cost-savings and other reforms should be exhausted before new or higher taxes are considered. The Chamber supports efforts to fairly address the unfunded liability in the state pension systems and provide for the long-term solvency of these programs.

## **Taxes**

Pennsylvania's corporate tax policies and tax rate put the Commonwealth at a competitive disadvantage. Our Corporate Net Income Tax rate must be reduced in order for employers to prosper in a global economy. The Chamber advocates for elimination of the cap on Net Operating Losses, along with other changes to the state tax structure that embody the principles of competitiveness, predictability, fairness and simplicity and help stimulate economic development.

## **Workforce**

Employers in Pennsylvania continue to experience workforce challenges that are detrimental to our economy and prospects for growth. We urge lawmakers to build on past efforts and focus on policies that will help Pennsylvania's youth prepare for the jobs of the future; help facilitate upskilling opportunities within the incumbent workforce; encourage those on the sidelines to transition back into the workforce; and make Pennsylvania an attractive destination for individuals starting careers or relocating.