

The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce 2020 Policy Agenda

The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce is a significant voice for business in Springfield and Sangamon County and has an obligation to its members to represent their interests to all levels of government and to the public. The Chamber supports laws and ordinances that encourage entrepreneurship, development, job creation and investment. The Chamber opposes public policy that creates unnecessary regulation and/or burdens on the business community that will negatively impact the business climate and the creation of new jobs.

Local Policy Agenda

Development Policy

Springfield and Sangamon County must have a consistent, transparent and predictable development process. The Chamber supports:

- Policies that impact development, construction and building standards that protect the public interest and safety and do not artificially increase the cost of development.
- Having consistent laws, rules and regulations among the units of local government in Sangamon County.
- A technical review of policies that will streamline the development process.
- A technical review of policies that encourage investment in our urban core and historic structures.

Infrastructure

Properly maintaining our infrastructure and transportation system is important to the quality of life and economic growth of our community. Taking money dedicated to infrastructure for short term budget fixes is more expensive in the long term and should be avoided. The Chamber supports:

- A comprehensive multiyear transportation and infrastructure plan that is coordinated among all levels of government.
- Ensuring tax and fees collected for infrastructure improvements are only spent on infrastructure.
- Continued implementation of the Springfield Rail Improvements Project.
- Updating parking meters in the downtown area to utilize technology to create more convenient parking options.

Economic & Local Business Incentives

Springfield & Sangamon County need to be proactive in business retention, expansion and attraction. In order to better compete for jobs, our community must be more aggressive in economic development efforts. The Chamber supports:

- A coordinated, public-private approach to economic development.
- Using tax incentives to help businesses expand, remain or locate in Sangamon County.
- A third party, independent RFP process to replace CWLP capacity that is taken offline by implementation of the Integrated Resource Plan.
- CWLP implementing an electric rate structure that will both relieve the burden of high commercial rates, creating a competitive advantage as it relates to business retention, expansion and attraction.
- Policies to ensure businesses in Sangamon County get the best opportunity possible to receive local government contracts.
- Enhancing partnerships with Springfield and Sangamon County on joint economic development initiatives.

Springfield Secondary Water Supply

Springfield needs to act on securing a secondary water source for our community. Hunter Lake has proven to be the lowest cost, high yield alternative by several studies conducted by professional and technical staff. The Chamber supports Hunter Lake as the City of Springfield and outlying communities' secondary water source.

State Policy Agenda

State Business Climate

We support and promote a competitive and fair tax climate that encourages entrepreneurship, investment and job creation. The Chamber opposes passage of the constitutional amendment to implement a statewide graduated income tax. The Chamber generally opposes tax increases, particularly when used to increase dollars in the general operating budget. The Chamber supports:

- Reforming the state's workers' compensation system that has become too expensive for employers. The State should:
 - Require the workplace to be principal cause of injury.
 - Use AMA guidelines to measure impairment.
- Reforming the state's legal climate to help prevent lawsuit abuse that increases the cost of doing business for Illinois employers.
- The continuance of previously adopted tax incentives for employers that have a proven track record at creating jobs.
- The State increasing the Estate Tax exemption to match the Federal Estate Tax Exemption at a minimum or eliminate it in connection with the Graduated Income Tax legislation.
- An educational campaign informing members of the potential implications of a graduated income tax should the constitutional amendment pass.

Minimum Wage

The Chamber opposed 2019 legislation that increased the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025. Increasing the minimum wage in Illinois will hurt business and job growth and will have

a negative effect on our economy. The Chamber strongly supports all efforts to amend the 2019 legislation or new legislation that would regionalize the minimum wage, including but not limited to the use of tax credits to accomplish regionalization.

State Budget and Finances

The State is still in a fiscal crisis and needs to take action towards addressing the structural budget deficit including unfunded pension liabilities. The Chamber supports implementing a long-term strategy towards addressing the structural deficit. The State, at a minimum, must cap spending for several years. The Chamber supports:

- Long term budget projections to help stabilize the State's yearly budget process. The State should implement, at a minimum, a 5-year revenue and expense projection by program, prepared by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability.
- An aggressive and fiscally responsible plan to continue to pay down the backlog of unpaid bills that hurt our local businesses, non-profits and local government that includes the continued use of debt restructuring through bonding.
- Using the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability's revenue projections during the budget process.
- An annual appropriation to fund the Mid-Illinois Medical District.

Pension Reform

The State of Illinois must address the underfunding of pensions and future pension costs. The General Assembly must remember that each pension system has its own intricacies and should target reforms in each pension system separately while keeping reforms fair across the five pension systems. The Chamber opposes leaving a pension system out of reform unless necessary for actuarial or legal reasons. The Chamber supports:

- Prohibiting the State from passing unfunded pension mandates on local governments. State mandates on local government should be funded or should at least be consistent with how the State handles its own pension liabilities.
- Consolidating downstate police and fire pensions and increasing the retirement age and years of service necessary to receive the maximum pension benefits.
- Reforming all pension benefits to be based on an average pay over a set amount of years instead of final pay.
- Legislation requiring pension payments to be a priority right after Bond payments.
- A thorough review of the pension ramp to create an affordable and realistic timetable for the 90% funded ratio.

State Regulations

The Chamber opposes overly burdensome regulations and government overreach. The Chamber opposes:

- Government overreach in contract negotiations between two private entities. Private entities should be able to enter into a mutually agreed upon contract that satisfies both parties without the government dictating terms of the contract.

- Regulations occurring by the rule making process that do not receive the public vetting that legislation receives.
- Rules that create new mandates for fire sprinkler systems in new construction.

Redistricting Reform

The way districts are drawn is one of the most important functions of government as this determines how elections will be handled for ten years. Allowing the legislators to draw their own districts has shown electoral consequences of politicians and political parties choosing their voters instead of voters choosing their elected officials. The Chamber supports the ongoing effort to amend the Illinois Constitution and turn the process over to an independent non-partisan panel.

Transportation

The State of Illinois needs to adequately invest in our transportation network in the most efficient way possible. The State of Illinois in the past has utilized shrinking dollars to bond for maintenance and overlay programs and this should be avoided moving forward. The Chamber supports:

- A plan that provides a framework for increased transportation spending with reliable and sustainable revenue sources that is equitable to all governments.
- Bonding for long-lasting major projects with new revenue.
- Adequate funding for the Springfield Rail Improvements Project.
- Efficient use of taxpayer dollars spent on the 3rd Street corridor.

Federal Issues

Transportation

The FAST Act was the first real multi-year authorization in over a decade providing funding certainty (expires in 2020). The Chamber supports the reauthorization of the FAST Act or similar multi-year legislation addressing America's ongoing surface transportation and infrastructure needs, including:

- A plan that provides the framework for increased transportation spending with reliable and sustainable revenue sources that is equitable to all governments.
- A \$350 million appropriation annually for the railroad relocation program.

Tax Reform

The current federal tax code is complicated, burdensome and not working for the betterment of our nation. The tax code should be reformed to allow for consistent treatment for all businesses and industries. Any reforms need to be tied to a multi-year plan for deficit reduction and long-term spending reform. The Chamber supports:

- Lowering and simplifying the corporate tax rate.
- Measures that encourage multinational corporations to bring capital back to the U.S.
- Continued efforts to reduce the financial burden of the Estate Tax on small businesses and farms.

Healthcare

Healthcare is a growing expense for businesses and governments. Proactive steps need to be taken to reduce healthcare cost. The Chamber supports:

- Revisiting the Medicaid provisions in Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to reduce costs for State governments and allow for additional flexibility to prevent waste, fraud, abuse and other changes that slow down the growth rate of Medicaid.
- Preventing lawsuit abuse to help reduce the cost of healthcare.
- Equal tax benefits for the self-employed.

Workforce Investment

The Chamber supports local control of Workforce Investment Boards to meet the unique workforce needs of our community. The Chamber opposes consolidating funding into a state block grant. This would consolidate power and funding into the State and away from the local level.

Marketplace Fairness Act

Online retailers have an unfair advantage over brick-and-mortar establishments due to a tax loophole that enables them to bypass collecting state and local sales taxes that retailers with a physical presence must collect. The Chamber supports the concept and creation of a Marketplace Fairness Act that requires online retailers to collect and distribute state and local taxes (to the state and zip code where the order is placed and delivered) as if the product were purchased at a brick-and-mortar location.

Immigration Reform

Our current immigration system is not meeting the needs of our society, our economy, our businesses, or our workforce demands. The Chamber supports comprehensive, common sense immigration reform that:

- Improves enforcement to protect our borders and national security while facilitating trade and travel.
- Addresses current and future workforce needs for both high-skilled and lesser-skilled workers through worker visa programs tied to market demands.
- Establishes a single, reliable federal employment verification system that all businesses can use.
- Provides a pragmatic opportunity to earn legal status.