

The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce 2021 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 public policy that encourages 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 will streamline the development process.
- Policies that are consistent across local units of government in Sangamon County.
- Policies that encourage investment in our urban core.

Infrastructure

Properly maintaining our infrastructure and transportation system is important to the quality of life and economic growth of our community. The Chamber supports:

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

Economic & Local Business Incentives

Springfield & Sangamon County need to be proactive in business retention, expansion, and attraction. 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.
- CWLP implementing an electric rate structure which relieves the burden of high commercial rates and creates a competitive advantage for the business community.
- Policies to ensure businesses in Sangamon County have 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 tax climate that encourages entrepreneurship, investment, and job creation. The Chamber opposed 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 addressing the cost to employers.
- Reforming the state's legal climate preventing lawsuit abuse and the cost to employers.
- Providing tax incentives for employers that have a proven track record of job creation.
- Increasing the Illinois Estate Tax exemption to match the Federal exemption.

State Regulations

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

- Government overreach in contract negotiations between two private entities. Private entities should be able to enter 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.

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, Finances, and Pension Reform

The State must immediately act to address its fiscal crisis. Illinois, at a minimum, must cap spending for several years while implementing a long-term strategy towards addressing the structural budget deficit, including unfunded pension liabilities. Without significant reforms pension costs will continue to eliminate core government services, encourage additional tax increases, and do irreversible damage to Illinois' finances and economy. The Chamber supports:

- Long-term budget projections, by program, for a minimum of five years with projections provided by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability.
- Significant pension reforms - Illinois' current system is unsustainable, and reforms must be implemented, if necessary, by a constitutional amendment.

- Requiring pension payments to be a priority after bond payments.
- An aggressive and responsible plan to pay down the State's backlog of unpaid bills.

Ethics Reform

Illinois lawmakers have lost the public trust. Meaningful ethics reform can provide a foundation for targeting corruption and beginning the long process of restoring the people's trust in state government and our elected officials. The Chamber supports:

- Banning state legislators from serving as lobbyists.
- Banning lawmakers from becoming lobbyists in the General Assembly immediately after leaving office.
- Defining what activities are considered lobbying.
- Creating an official censure process for lawmakers who violate ethics laws.
- Strengthening the office of Legislative Inspector General (LIG), giving the LIG the ability to investigate lawmakers without approval of the Legislative Ethics Commission.
- Reconstituting the Legislative Ethics Commission to be made up of people who are not elected legislators.
- Allowing for temporary removal of lawmakers from leadership positions, including committee chairmanships during criminal investigations or following indictments.

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 nonpartisan panel.

Mid-Illinois Medical District

The Mid-Illinois Medical District (MIMD) is a one-square mile designation in the heart of Springfield just to the north of downtown. Established in 2003 by an act of the Illinois General Assembly, the MIMD is a vibrant environment that supports patient care, bio-medical research, new medical technologies and advanced medical-related activities. The Mission of the Medical District is to promote the orderly development and expansion of health care facilities and medical-related industries. The Medical District is governed by an eleven-member commission appointed by the Governor of Illinois, the Mayor of Springfield and the Sangamon County Board. The Chamber supports an annual appropriation by the State of Illinois to provide funding for the MIMD.

Transportation

The State of Illinois needs to adequately invest in our transportation network in the most efficient way possible. 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 Program.

Federal Issues

Transportation

The FAST Act was the first real multi-year authorization in over a decade providing funding certainty (expiration date September 30, 2020). Funding has been extended for one year. The Chamber supports the reauthorization of the FAST Act or similar multi-year legislation addressing America's ongoing surface transportation and infrastructure needs. The Chamber supports:

- A plan that provides the framework for increased transportation spending with reliable and sustainable revenue sources that is equitable to all governments.
- Continued funding and grants supporting rail improvement programs and projects.

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.

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.