

# **Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry**

## **2013-14 Pro Business Policy Agenda**

Approved by Board of Directors 02.21.13

The Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry member businesses and employers throughout our region are productive and successful. Our members face numerous obstacles as they compete in today's global economy: an overly burdensome tax structure; onerous mandates and excessive regulations; unbalanced labor laws; rapidly rising health-care expenses; and a costly legal environment. Over the past two years progress has been made in addressing some of these issues. However, there are still issues that need addressed to create a competitive environment that encourages companies to do business and create jobs, along with attracting new business to our region. We will continue to work with lawmakers to address priorities in the following areas of public policy, which are the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry's pro-business policy agenda for 2013-2014:

### **Modern, safe and efficient transportation and infrastructure system**

In order to facilitate the free flow of goods and commerce, assure mobility of our citizens and maintain services necessary for manufacturing and commerce, we must maintain adequate and reliable infrastructure systems, including transportation and utilities. They must be adequately funded, efficiently constructed, maintained and operated. Focus on identifying ways such as streamlining the permitting and regulatory process and the authorization of public private partnerships to ensure our infrastructure is modern, safe and efficient.

### **Real, effective changes to improve the business tax structure and incentives**

Pennsylvania's corporate taxes and tax rate continue to put the Commonwealth at a competitive disadvantage. Comprehensive tax and spending reforms at both the state and federal level are necessary to stimulate economic development.

### **Prepared, trained and available workforce**

The region's economic viability and long term prosperity depends upon a well-educated workforce. Core work skills and lifelong learning can be vital for workers in a consistently evolving economy, and the Chamber supports workforce development programs that have criteria targeted to the employment needs of the business community.

### **Responsible Budget and Government Spending**

We urge the legislature to adopt the PA Budget on time and not create new taxes or increase taxes on employers. The Chamber supports efforts to fairly address unfunded liabilities and provide for long term solvency of pension programs including the transition to a defined contribution plan.

### **Flexibility in energy markets and science-based environmental requirements**

Any proposed environmental regulations and government mandates that artificially determine energy prices without being based on scientific fact are of concern for business. These mandates and requirements on energy bring less system flexibility and cost uncertainty.

### **Affordable and accessible health care**

Health-care costs continue to rise and businesses must be able to offer appropriate health-care benefits to their employees. Seek reforms to medical liability and expansion of health-care mandates. We will work through the implementation process of federal health-care reform with policymakers to maintain the level of quality care and control the costs.

### **Labor laws and regulations need to be more cost-effective**

A number of labor law policy reforms are necessary since many of the laws and regulations that dictate labor relations and employment policy are outdated. Support legal reform that will address abuse and facilitate a fair work environment for both worker and employee. We need to resolve artificial inflation to cost of maintain/creating a job through mandated wage laws.

### **Mandates, Streamline Government Processes/Requirements and Regionalization Benefits**

To establish an open dialogue to enable business and local/county/state government to align on a process to smoothly respond to expansion and development that provides positive economic benefit in our region.

### **Community Development**

Identify and communicate information about effective public and private economic development programs that meet businesses' and community needs.