

Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry

2014-15 Pro Business Policy Agenda

Approved by Board of Directors 09.18.14

The Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry is optimistic about the growing business climate in the Greater Reading Area. The progress we have made in influencing legislation is a great start, and we look forward to further helping business in the Greater Reading Area. We will continue to work with lawmakers to address policy issues to ensure our business community can compete in today's global economy. We urge lawmakers to build on recent progress and address the following areas of public policy that are GRCCI's legislative priorities. With these priorities in place, it is also the Chamber's intent to continue to lead, advocate, monitor and inform members on the various issues that will affect them.

Modern, safe and efficient transportation and infrastructure system

The quality of Berks County's transportation infrastructure and services are vital to our ability to attract and retain quality businesses to benefit our economy and citizens. The road network and infrastructure must be adequately funded, expanded, well-constructed, maintained and operated so that goods and people can travel safely and efficiently in the Greater Reading area.

Improving the business tax structure

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.

Building a career-ready workforce

Education is the key component in productivity, economic competitiveness, and workforce development. The Chamber will facilitate and support business and education partnerships and initiatives to improve our workforce pipeline, along with advocating for workforce development legislation and funding. Businesses, educators and students will be involved in increasing career awareness, work ethic and hands-on work experience to build a promising workforce for the future.

Responsible budget and government spending

We encourage a budget that will not place any burdensome taxes or raise current taxes for PA businesses. 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.

Updated and sensible labor laws and regulations

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. We will strive to relieve businesses of restrictive regulations and help members prepare for, navigate, and implement new regulations effectively.

Energy Independence and science-based environmental requirements

Unnecessary mandates and requirements on energy bring less system flexibility and increase cost uncertainty. Any proposed environmental regulations and government mandates should be based on science, promote a flexible system, minimize undue burdens on business, and maintain reasonable costs for businesses and end users.

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. 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.

Streamline business expansion and community development

To establish an open dialogue to enable business and local/county/state government/agencies to align on a process to smoothly respond to expansion and development that provides positive economic benefit in our region. Promote our business resource partners and make business and community members aware of resources available to support them.