

Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry 2015-16 Pro Business Policy Agenda

Board of Directors Approved 11/24/15
Business & Community Advocacy Council Approved 10/09/15

The Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry serves as the voice for business at all levels of government. We represents business and community interests and viewpoints on current issues facing the Greater Reading Region. The progress we have made in influencing legislation is a great start, and 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/regulatory 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

Having a robust transportation system in Berks County is vital to our ability to attract and retain quality businesses to benefit our economy and citizens. To facilitate the free flow of goods and commerce, assure the mobility of its citizens, and maintain the foundational services necessary for manufacturing and commerce, we must maintain adequate and reliable infrastructure systems, including transportation and utilities, that are adequately funded and incorporate greater efficiencies in their construction and/or reconstruction and delivery, including, but not limited to, streamlined permit and regulatory processes.

BUILDING A CAREER-READY WORKFORCE

Economic viability and long-term prosperity depends upon a well-educated workforce. Education is the key component in productivity, economic competitiveness, and workforce development. The Chamber will facilitate and support business and education partnerships. Utilizing our Educational Improvement Tax Credit Foundation and initiatives to engage businesses, educators and students to build a promising workforce for the future. We will advocate for workforce development legislation and funding. Lifelong learning can be vital for workers in a consistently evolving economy, and the Chamber supports workforce development programs that have clear performance criteria and are targeted to the employment needs of the business community.

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 local, state and federal level are necessary to stimulate economic development.

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. We supports efforts to identify and consider privatizing government services that could be more efficiently conducted by the private sector.

BALANCED LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LAWS AND REGULATIONS

A number of labor policy reforms are necessary to address abuses and facilitate a fair work environment for both employees and employers. 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.

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ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SCIENCE-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Unnecessary mandates and requirements on energy bring less system flexibility ultimately leading to higher costs. The Chamber advocates that any proposed environmental laws, regulations and government mandates should be based on thoughtful, science-based development and consider the cost of implementation as it relates to actual benefits.

AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

Health-care costs continue to rise and businesses want to 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 a high level of quality care for employees, while working to control costs of insurance and the costs of healthcare.

STREAMLINE BUSINESS EXPANSION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Provide leadership for our members and community and develop programs that educate and involve the next generation of community leaders. 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.