

# The ADVOCATE

## for Business & Community

A quarterly publication of the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry

*Together we are building a foundation for a stronger more vibrant Greater Reading. Our business advocacy and community leadership initiatives are focused on:*

- *enhancing our business climate,*
- *strengthening your bottom line,*
- *maximizing workforce pipeline and training opportunities, and*
- *revitalizing our community.*

Get connected at [GreaterReadingVoice.com](http://GreaterReadingVoice.com) to be engaged on policy issues, community leadership initiatives and connect with elected officials and community leaders.

Your Business – Your Voice  
Gail A. Landis, C.P.M.  
V.P. Government & Community Relations

### **BUSINESS & COMMUNITY ADVOCACY** **Starting off the 2015-2016 Legislative Session**

#### **PA 2015-2016 BUDGET COUNTDOWN**

House and Senate lawmakers returned June 1 for a busy session that marks the start of the last month of the Commonwealth's fiscal year. While lawmakers are required to pass a balanced state budget for the upcoming year by June 30, legislative leaders and the governor have both expressed doubt that agreement will be reached on a spending plan by the constitutionally-mandated deadline.

The House is expected to engage in lengthy debate on H.B. 1192, the General Appropriations bill, and pass a severely pared down version of Gov. Tom Wolf's nearly \$34 billion spending plan. Despite the Governor's continued push for an additional tax on the natural gas industry and increased spending, Republican majorities in the legislature remain wary of discussing new revenue options. The Senate has been clear that they will not address additional revenue proposals until significant pension reform is enacted. Meanwhile, the House continues to advocate for legislation it passed in February to privatize the state-run liquor monopoly. The issue of property tax relief and the means to fund it are sure to be part of the conversation in the weeks ahead as well. Details on the proposed budget along with related information is available by clicking here: [2015-16 Proposed PA Budget](#).

## PUBLIC PENSION REFORM

The Chamber Board of Directors and Business & Community Advocacy Council believe no new revenue sources should be considered under the budget process until we have meaningful public pension reform (state and municipal). Your Chamber has been a leader in forming the [Coalition for Sustainable Communities](#) presenting real-world proposals to address this unfunded liability issue.

If the legislature addresses the pension issue we will be vigilant to ensure that any revenue increases are tied to strategic economic investments in the economic outlook of our state and education improvements.

## TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES & FUNDING

The Chamber's Transportation Committee has been working hard. In addition to 222N and federal transportation funding, the group realized we needed to take action to keep the business community informed of the significant construction plans to upgrade and modernize our local bridge infrastructure. The ReadingBridges workgroup, a public private partnership facilitated by the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the Berks County Commissioners, and key stakeholders, is dedicated to providing the Greater Reading community with the latest news and updates regarding the planned Reading Bridge Projects. Our goal is to identify potential issues and ways to keep our Greater Reading economy and quality of place vibrant during construction. Our current priority is the Buttonwood Street Bridge rehabilitation project that will begin in July of 2015. The bridge will remain closed for approximately two construction seasons to all pedestrian and vehicular traffic. To learn more about this project, traffic patterns, and more - go to our website: [ReadingBridges.net](http://ReadingBridges.net).

## WORKFORCE PIPELINE INITIATIVES

At the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry, we recognize that our future business leaders and entrepreneurs are learning in the classroom right now. The guidance and tools they receive in school now will have a huge impact on their future success. It is also important for students to experience the world of work. In order to ensure we have a qualified workforce and each student maximizes his or her potential. The Chamber has launched several Workforce Pipeline Initiatives with the support and partnership of local schools, volunteers, and sponsors. In the last quarter we experienced two successful initiatives:

### **Career Prep Fair - April 29**

Unlike a typical career fair, Reading High School seniors were given the opportunity to learn more about particular career paths and local opportunities. Over 400 students and 45 volunteers from the business community and institutes of higher learning connected to discuss their future opportunities. This event was a follow-up to our December Career Prep Workshop where twenty volunteers offered insights into resume writing and job interviews

to the entire senior class at Reading High School.



### CHOICES - May 19

CHOICES is an interactive decision-making workshop we introduced to ALL 8th graders at Reading Intermediate School. The program walked students through real-world exercises about the benefits of staying in school and introducing practical skills. Hats off to the 40 community and business volunteers who made a difference in the lives of 1,120 students on May 19 & 20.



We would like to acknowledge our volunteers and mentors that made both the Career Fair and CHOICES programs such a success! Visit our [Workforce Pipeline & Policy](#) webpage for a complete review of these initiatives! There will be additional opportunities in September 2015 to engage - we hope you will join us!

## BUSINESS & COMMUNITY ADVOCACY COUNCIL

### NEWS BITES

#### OPENING DOORS - A REVERSE TRADE SHOW

The Free Member **OPENING DOORS** event on **June 11** provides an opportunity for members to meet with Corporate and Government Purchasing Managers to identify business opportunities. In addition, representatives

from Business Resource Partners will be on hand to provide information on vital assistance services available to sustain and grow businesses.

A **Special Thank You** to our sponsors for making this opportunity available!

**Partner: Southeast PA Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP); Major Sponsor: Greater Reading Economic Partnership; Supporting Sponsor: Vision Federal Credit Union, and, Patron Sponsor: Levan Machine & Truck Equipment.**

## UPDATE ON THE ENERGY EVOLUTION IN BERKS COUNTY FORUM

Our **Energy Evolution in Berks County** forum held on May 5, 2015 looked at innovative technology and new energy sources. We learned about energy storage, micro-grids, new solar technology and shale gas initiatives taking place right here in Berks County. Affordable and abundant energy is important to sustain and grow our economy.

A **Big Thank You** to **Partners in Advocacy & Community Leadership, Penn State Berks** and **BCIDA** for your support of this forum.

## BUSINESS IDEA CHALLENGE AWARD

The Chamber's Collegiate **Business Idea Challenge** brought together students from our local Institutes of Higher Education in an effort to cultivate entrepreneurs. Students competed by having their business idea evaluated by a shark tank panel of business leaders who selected the most original ideas for the top cash prizes. This year the award went to Onuku Industries from Penn State Berks which designs and manufactures high-quality, unmanned, multi-rotor aircraft capable of automated control.

A **Special Thank You** to **East Penn Manufacturing** - our Business Idea Sponsor.

## ENGAGE & CONNECT

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| June 11:      | <b>Opening Doors</b> to Corporate and Government Procurement Representatives and Business Resource Assistance Partners - <b>FREE</b> for Chamber Members! |
| June 12:      | Business & Community Advocacy Council Meeting<br>PA Senator Bob Mensch  |
| June 16:      | <b>Health Care in Transition Luncheon</b>   |
| September 16: | Regional Chamber DC trip - stay tuned!<br>The Chamber maintains an open dialogue with our Congressmen.  |

## STAY CONNECTED ~ TAKE ACTION

[GreaterReadingVoice.com](http://GreaterReadingVoice.com)  
[ReadingBridges.net](http://ReadingBridges.net)  
[@VoiceOfReading](https://twitter.com/VoiceOfReading)

## PARTNERS IN ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Community Priorities ~ Economy ~ Legislation/Regulations ~ Local Business Issues ~ Workforce Pipeline

Title Partner



Leadership Partners



Advocacy Partners



---

Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry | 201 Penn Street, Suite 501, Reading, PA 19601

Tel: 610.376.6766 | Fax: 610.376.4135

[info@GreaterReadingChamber.org](mailto:info@GreaterReadingChamber.org) | [www.GreaterReadingChamber.org](http://www.GreaterReadingChamber.org)

Follow the Chamber:

