



## **2015-2016 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

The Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce is committed to placing a high priority on Legislative Advocacy to help shape policy on the state and local levels of government.

We work hand in hand with partners like the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance (GLRBA), Michigan Chamber of Commerce, West Michigan Policy Conference/Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce and Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance to help shape policy on the state and local level.

### **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

The Government Relations Committee brings together business leaders from our communities who volunteer their time to focus on the legislative initiatives of the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce.

The committee reviews policy statements and makes recommendations to the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors to adopt policy positions that will help create a healthy business environment for job creation and economic growth.

These policy positions are then used to advocate to government officials, membership and the public.

Chamber staff monitors legislative and policy issues at the local, state and federal levels and the impact of these issues on business and economic development in Saginaw County and works with legislators and other policy makers to communicate our position on issues.

The Government Relations Committee adopted the following legislative positions for 2015-2016:

- *TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING*
- *EMPLOYER RIGHTS*
- *EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT*
- *TAXATION*
- *LEGAL REFORM*
- *HEALTH CARE*
- *REGULATORY CLIMATE*
- *ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY*

## **Transportation Funding**

### **Goal:**

Chamber Members Advocate:

- Support measures that will provide adequate funding to fix existing roads/infrastructure.
- Provide stable, ongoing, long-term funding to ensure that Michigan roads and bridges and other infrastructure move us to a top-10 state, nationwide.

## **Employer Rights**

### **GOAL: Protect Employer Rights in the Workplace**

Chamber Members Advocate:

- Protecting employers' rights to manage their workplace by preventing and reducing state and local governmental involvement and regulations of terms and conditions of employment in areas such as leave time, workplace communications, wages and hours of work, controlled substances, weapons, hiring and freedom of association and contract in employment.
- Supporting the right of employers to enforce drug-free workplace policies for all employees, including medical marijuana users, without fear of being held liable for wrongful termination or being charged for unemployment or liable for workers' compensation benefits.
- Supporting freedom of economic choice by repealing the prevailing wage law, which artificially inflates the cost of publicly-funded construction projects, and protecting Michigan's Freedom-to-Work (aka Right to Work) law, which provides employees freedom from being forced to join a union and pay dues against their will.
- Opposing efforts to prohibit or limit employers, at any time during the hiring process, from asking job-related questions or taking into consideration a candidate's conviction history, pending charges or current employment status.

## Health Care

### **GOAL: Advocate Market-Friendly, Consumer-Driven Health Care Options**

Chamber Members Advocate:

- Supporting state and federal efforts that enable employers to provide cost-effective health care benefits, expand flexibility, competition and choice in the health insurance marketplace and promote and improve employee health status, while opposing efforts to further tax insurance claims or premiums.
- Opposing state and federal health insurance mandates and policy changes that ignore pricing differentials and/or the important role of the free market, especially in the area of benefit plan design, including benefit mandates, development of preferred network, pharmacy management tools and wellness programs.
- Reducing the most onerous burdens on job providers under the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act including the employer mandate, while promoting states' flexibility to implement strategies to help rein in health care costs, improve quality coverage and services and expand meaningful coverage to the uninsured.
- Protecting and funding the Healthy Michigan Plan because it works to reduce the uncompensated care cost shift to private health insurance purchasers and helps employers avoid payment of "pay or play" penalties under the ACA.

## Legal Reform

### **GOAL: Maintain a Sound Legal Climate**

- Protecting and strengthening current Michigan laws pertaining to general tort, medical liability, consumer protection and products liability, including Michigan's FDA Defense law.
- Opposing efforts to expand the types of claims that can be filed against Michigan job providers to mitigate their increased financial exposure.
- Supporting a no-fault automobile insurance system that balances the needs of injured drivers while protecting against fraud and excessive litigation and reforms that allow for flexibility, competition and choice in the marketplace.
- Supporting civil justice reforms, such as limitations on attorney fees, loser pay provisions and transparency in the legislative creation of new rights to sue, to ensure Michigan's legal system is fair, efficient and predictable.

# MICHIGAN'S TAX SYSTEM

**Goal:** Drive Economic Competitiveness by Further Improving Michigan's Business Tax Climate.

Chamber Members Advocate:

- Support measures to dramatically improve the fair administration of taxes and seek measures to hold the state accountable for failing to adhere to its own rules and court decisions.
- Seek improvements to state tax appeals processes, including elimination of Michigan's "pay-to-play" requirement for the Court of Claims.
- Ensure proper implementation of Michigan's voter-approved personal property tax reform and support expansion of personal property tax relief to all job providers.
- Oppose unnecessary expansion of sales, use, excise or other transactional taxes to goods and services.
- Support further reform to Unclaimed Property laws to simplify compliance and protect holder's rights.
- Oppose efforts to impose a graduated income tax on Michigan families, entrepreneurs and business taxpayers.

## **Local/County Tax Issues**

- Chamber members support public safety funding combined with efforts to implement cost-sharing whenever possible.
- Local units of government need to address pension and unfunded liabilities and move to more private sector models for retirement.

# Improving Michigan's Regulatory Climate

**Goal:** To promote the wise use of natural resources to create conditions favorable for economic growth.

Chamber Members Advocate:

- Further improving the environmental rulemaking process to provide stakeholders with a more substantive role, including the establishment of an environmental rules committee.
- Implementing the Office of Regulatory Reinvention's Environmental Rules Committee's recommendations regarding air and water issues.
- Reforming the Department of Environmental Quality's budget process and funding mechanisms to increase transparency, accountability and sustainability.
  - Evaluating long-term solutions for fees expiring in 2015-2016
- Ensuring the continued reinvention of the brownfield and cleanup programs.

## Moving Michigan Toward a Secure Energy Future

**Goal:** To promote an energy policy that strengthens Michigan's economic competitiveness and modernizes generation and infrastructure

Chamber Members Advocate:

- Championing a long-term energy policy predicated on cost-based rates which are formulated through a portfolio focused on generating safe, reliable, and affordable energy by
  - Eliminating costly and burdensome state mandates for renewable energy and energy efficiency going forward.
  - Supporting reasonable, flexible and cost-effective measures for implementing federal compliance requirements
  - Providing avenues to ensure energy rates remain competitive
  - Ensuring high intensity user rates are implemented as intended
- Working with legislative partners, energy providers and Michigan Chamber members to guarantee economically responsible generation and infrastructure are in place to avoid energy shortages
- Protecting Michigan's ability to responsibly explore for oil and gas while maintaining stringent standards that protect public health and the environment

## Technology

**Goal:** Oppose Net Neutrality Regulations

The Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce does not support recommendations coming from the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to regulate the Internet (aka Net Neutrality). We support a free and unregulated market to allow for additional investment in Broadband and Internet Technologies.

Some parties are pushing the federal government to reclassify Internet service providers (ISPs) as common carriers under Title II of the Communications Act of 1934. The popular belief is that Title II classification would allow the FCC to protect net neutrality.

If allowed to proceed, subjecting the Internet to Title II regulations would harm innovation, create economic uncertainty, endanger business competitiveness and job creation, and put the Internet itself at risk.

Internet traffic is already treated equally in the overwhelming majority of instances. Placing the Internet under Title II provisions invites burdensome Federal Communications Commission regulations on one of the freest and most innovative industries in human history.

As a result, this proposal could lead to several consequences:

- Investments and innovation would be stifled because of the sudden imposition of bureaucracy on what has always been a free and open system.
- This would affect job creation and investments in communities that need the latest information technology the most.
- Government power over information technology would be centralized.
- U.S. economic competitiveness could be stifled with an encumbered Internet.
- The Internet could be less free, less equal and less democratic.

**For these reasons, we advise opposition to efforts to place the Internet under Title II.**

**Government Owned Networks / Municipal broadband:**

The Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce does not support the use of taxpayer funds to compete with the private sector, including the building and maintenance of a Broadband Network.