



2025 Public Policies Agenda

The Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce accepts the responsibility to represent its members as the voice of business. Our goal is to ensure that the business community's best interests are always represented in the region's governments. A pro-business climate is critical to the superior quality of life we enjoy in the greater Chambersburg area. It allows us to attract new businesses to our community and expand the ones currently hiring, serving and producing. It also allows us to grow.

The Chamber's professional staff and board of directors monitor borough, county, state and federal activities and represent our members on issues and legislation affecting the welfare of businesses and the quality of life in the Chambersburg area. When there is cause to advocate publicly on an issue, our president and representatives from the board of directors meet with decision-makers to ensure the position of the thousands of businesses and employees that we represent are being accounted for.

The Chambersburg Chamber Public Policies Agenda is updated annually to reflect the issues currently facing our community. In addition to specific priorities outlined below, the board of directors may identify key issues throughout the year that the Chamber will advocate for on behalf of the business community.

Submitted for approval by the Board of Directors – March 2025.

Public Policies

Address Local Education and Workforce Development Needs

The Chamber and Chamber Foundation collaborate with Franklin County Area Development Corp., SCPaWorks, educators and business partners to develop ways to enhance student readiness for the workforce. The Chamber and Chamber Foundation also collaborate with the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership as part of PA Commuter Services to identify workforce development strategies in the Cumberland Valley. The Chamber encourages conversations to address local education and workforce development needs and will continue to collaborate with other community stakeholders as invited to do so.

Combating the prescription drug and opioid epidemic

Pennsylvania is facing a prescription drug and opioid abuse epidemic, particularly with injured workers. The Chamber seeks to improve Pennsylvania's workers' compensation system and help address prescription drug overuse and opioid addiction. The Chamber advocates implementing a prescription drug formulary for workers' compensation, which has helped mitigate prescription drug over-prescribing and addiction in many other states. Formularies offer a flexible approach that makes treatment of

typical patients more efficient, facilitates exceptions for unique cases and addresses the outlier instances of over-prescribing. The Chamber also supports the proper certification of Utilization Review Organizations to ensure qualified experts are holding all parties accountable to properly apply the formulary.

Opposition of Minimum Wage Increase

While all businesses would feel the impact, small business employers would be especially hit hard: on average they make just \$50,000 a year. Businesses with such thin profit margins may not be able to absorb an employee wage hike, regardless whether their employees are full-time or part-time. Small businesses are the most common employers to pay minimum wage and would be most likely to halt hiring or cut jobs as a result of the wage hike. With more than 60 percent of Chamber membership comprised of small businesses, the Chamber is dedicated to representing businesses and advocating for no increase in the minimum wage that would be harmful to local small businesses.

Opposition of Reverse Tax Appeals

The Chambersburg Area School District initiated an effort in 2015 to reassess the value of commercial properties to increase the property taxes owners must pay. A third-party consultant identifies properties as being appraised too low, and then the school board initiates a Reverse Tax Assessment Appeal. While this may provide financial benefits for the district in the short-term, it will have long-term negative consequences on the district, local businesses and the community.

Reverse Tax Appeals could lead to companies moving to other locations in the region where the taxes are significantly less. Property taxes paid by warehouses comprise a significant tax base for the school district and support over 1,000 jobs. If these companies leave Chambersburg for better tax rates and benefits, it could have a major negative impact on our business climate, and ultimately the entire community.

Widening of Interstate 81

Interstate 81 has grown in its importance as a major north-south economic engine to our region. The explosive increase in truck movements has occurred and will certainly continue to grow as both intermodal and distribution centers come online. The highway provides access to major markets on the east coast. While the Chamber represents the interests of the business community, we can unequivocally express the desire of the residents of the county to see action to expand the highway. It has been 14 years since PennDOT studied the corridor, but little in the study has been implemented. We need to move immediately toward the expansion of the highway. While we wait for action, congestion grows. The Chamber supported the 2013 PA transportation bill (Act 89) to raise approximately 2 billion when the five-year phased-in tax increases are fully implemented. We are also supporting a long-term federal highway solution.

Legislative Agenda of PA Chamber Adopted by the Chambersburg Chamber

Affordable and Accessible Health Care

High health care costs remain an impediment for many businesses who wish to offer a high level of quality care and accessibility for employees at affordable prices and without undue bureaucracy. The Chamber will continue to advocate for policies that will encourage competition in the provision of health care while also giving employers the most flexibility when making health care decisions.

Labor

The Chamber supports labor, workplace and employment standards that help foster a productive and safe work environment, and which are structured to promote fair and prompt resolution of disputes and avoid negative unintended consequences. This includes eliminating misuse of the unemployment compensation program and facilitating a workers' compensation system that focuses on returning injured workers to full health and function and roots out abuse. Employers oppose excessive mandates; artificial wage inflators, forcing individuals to pay union dues as a condition of employment, or labor relations policies that unfairly tilt the playing field.

Civil Justice

Pennsylvania's legal climate lacks protections that create a fair, balanced and common-sense civil litigation system. The business community supports legal reforms that help prevent lawsuit abuse while protecting the right of legitimate plaintiffs to seek justice. The Chamber supports lawsuit abuse reform proposals that give employers predictability and certainty; prevent unfair tactics like "venue-shopping," and change the judicial system to achieve greater efficiencies and unbiased justice, while always providing for full and timely compensation of parties legitimately injured.

Energy and Environment

Pennsylvania is a global energy leader and critical hub for both traditional and emerging energy markets. With a projected generation shortfall looming in the PJM region, the state is uniquely positioned to play a key role in addressing this urgent issue and ensure affordable and reliable energy in the Commonwealth. As such, the PA Chamber supports an all-of-the-above energy policy that strengthens our status as a global energy leader, while allowing our energy sector leaders to innovate and thrive. This includes leveraging our existing baseload resources while supporting energy innovation and new technologies, such as hydrogen and small modular reactors (SMRs), to power both our economy and communities throughout the Commonwealth.

The Chamber opposes the imposition of new, and expansion of existing mandates that hinder our economy as we continue to advocate for thoughtful, science-based development and flexible implementation of environmental law. The Chamber also supports a regulatory framework that encourages greater investment in the Commonwealth, including for projects that facilitate voluntary emission reduction strategies.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Pennsylvania must construct and maintain reliable transportation, telecommunications, wireless and utility systems, and other infrastructure, as these assets provide for a modern standard of living necessary to maintain a robust economic base, attract new employers, and facilitate the movement of goods and people in our state and to domestic and international markets. The Chamber will continue to advocate for greater efficiencies in their construction, maintenance, and delivery, including streamlined permit and regulatory processes. The business community supports opportunities for collaborative and thoughtful public-private partnerships to help the Commonwealth meet its infrastructure needs in a manner consistent with the imperative for fiscal restraint.

Education

The Chamber supports a public education system based on rigorous standards, with appropriate transparency and robust accountability measures, to help ensure Pennsylvania students graduate high school as prepared as possible for the next phase of their lives. The Chamber further supports initiatives that help provide families with options to fit the specific education needs of students, so they are best qualified to ultimately enter the workforce. Finally, the Chamber recognizes the importance of early childhood education in preparing kids for further education and ultimately careers and will support policies that address childcare sector concerns, including related to staffing requirements, administrative burdens and insurance costs.

Supporting Higher Education

The Chamber recognizes the vital role that higher education institutions play in shaping Pennsylvania's workforce, leading in research and development, and driving economic growth in their communities. These institutions are major employers and key to developing the talent pipeline businesses need. We support policies that strengthen collaboration between academia and industry to align academic programs with workforce demands and emerging industries, and encourage further research and development, while opposing legislation that undermines the autonomy of higher education institutions, which is vital to fostering innovations and responsiveness to industry needs.

Responsible State Spending and Smart Government

The Chamber urges the legislature and Governor to work collaboratively on a responsible, on-time state budget that exhausts all opportunities for cost-savings and more efficient spending. Lawmakers should continue to focus on reforming state government operations, particularly where the investment of resources is greatest, including public pension systems, the criminal justice system and mandated programs. The Chamber also supports collaborative and thoughtful public-private partnerships and opportunities to privatize those government services that could be more efficiently provided by the private sector.

Improve the Business Tax Structure

Policymakers should build on recent tax policy improvements and continue to reform the Commonwealth's tax structure with pro-growth initiatives that will make Pennsylvania more competitive. We urge lawmakers to accelerate, or at least maintain, the scheduled phase-down of our

corporate net income tax rate, as provided in Act 53 of 2022. We further urge improvements to Pennsylvania's treatment of Net Operating Losses in Act 56 of 2024 to provide relief for employers who already made investments in Pennsylvania. The Chamber will advocate for comprehensive changes to the state tax structure that embody the principles of competitiveness, predictability, fairness and simplicity and that better align our laws with the pro-growth provisions of the Internal Revenue Code. These changes include addressing the manner by which local taxes are levied and administered and reforms that specifically benefit small businesses.

Workforce

Employers in Pennsylvania continue to experience severe workforce challenges that are detrimental to our economy and prospects for growth. We urge lawmakers to build on past efforts and focus on policies that will help students prepare for a future career; facilitate upskilling opportunities for incumbent workers; encourage those on the sidelines to transition back into the workforce including eliminating impediments to employment; and make Pennsylvania an attractive destination for individuals starting careers or relocating.

*Continuing Improvements to State Permitting (new)

The Chamber supported and is encouraged by the recent passage of legislation that created the Streamlining Permits for Economic Expansion and Development (SPEED) program. This program is designed to reduce delays in the issuance of certain state permits and provide faster responses for businesses and communities across the Commonwealth. The chamber urges policymakers and agency professionals to work closely with the business community and advocates to ensure the SPEED program is successfully implemented as intended, especially as we approach the launching of the program, which is expected to be in early 2025.

*Technological Innovation (new)

The Chamber supports policies that drive innovation, such as distributed cloud computing, adaptive security, internet of things, big data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous and electric mobility, biotechnology and robotics. Legislative and public procurement policies should also encourage companies and government to invest in and use the newest technologies that drive lower costs, greater efficiency, enhanced security, improve competitiveness and attract technology-oriented companies to the Commonwealth.