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## 2019-2020 PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



# NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS AT THE STATEHOUSE, WE ARE THE VOICE OF OHIO BUSINESS.

Over the past eight years, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce advocated for and helped achieve numerous public policy victories that have contributed to improving the state's economy and enhancing Ohio's business climate. However, as a new two-year session of the Ohio General Assembly – and the term of new Gov. Mike DeWine – begins, there's still more to accomplish to foster our state's economic competitiveness.

At the beginning of each new legislative session, the Ohio Chamber develops a list of Public Policy Priorities that make it clear to legislators what Ohio employers expect from their state legislature. The priorities that comprise this member-driven agenda underscore and emphasize the Ohio Chamber's mission to "aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans."

While some of the priorities for this session build upon the accomplishments of the past eight years, others are new to the list, and each will be integral in stimulating job growth and fostering a competitive business climate that makes Ohio a great place to do business.



Since the beginning of 2017, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce Research Foundation has been conducting a quarterly survey of business leaders, called the *Prosperity Pulse*. The *Prosperity Pulse* measures the economic health of Ohio companies, taking into consideration the future outlook of five key indicators: profits, employment levels, unfilled openings, capital expenditures, and overall economic optimism. The issues identified by our state's business leaders in the *Prosperity Pulse* were used to inform and shape several of our Public Policy Priorities.

## TOP 5 CONCERNS *of* OHIO BUSINESS LEADERS

1. Cost of Healthcare
2. Ohio's Political Environment
3. Cost of all Employee Benefits
4. Attracting/Retaining Qualified Employees
5. State Government Regulations

## OUR MISSION

As the state's leading business advocate and resource, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce aggressively champions free enterprise, economic competitiveness and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.



# POLICY COMMITTEES

As a member-driven organization, we uncover the needs of Ohio employers through our eight issue-area committees. We encourage every member to participate on one or more of our committees. Your input ensures our advocacy efforts reflect the needs and concerns of your business.



## EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Ohio employers depend upon a well-educated, prepared workforce, yet virtually all of them are experiencing workforce-related challenges. Strengthening the talent pipeline, incentivizing the hiring of recovering addicts and former felons, and ensuring better coordination among entities responsible for workforce programs are all components of successfully building Ohio's workforce for both today and tomorrow.

- Pursue programs aimed at keeping the best and brightest in Ohio.
- Advocate for a one semester course in financial literacy as a requirement for high school graduation.
- Identify solutions to address the "benefits cliff".
- Incentivize Ohio businesses to hire recovering addicts.
- Support efforts for better alignment amongst state agencies responsible for workforce initiatives and streamline existing workforce programs.
- Strengthen school district Business Advisory Councils to assist in building a stronger relationship with local employers.
- Support Ohio BOLD workforce recommendations to develop and attract talent to the four innovation platforms.

## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

From energy mandates to wind turbine setbacks to the future of coal and nuclear power plants, a serious debate over reforms to energy policy has been a constant at the Statehouse over the past four years. We support efforts to create a comprehensive energy policy that balances a diverse portfolio of energy sources and technologies and provides for reliable sources of energy. We also know that economic development and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive objectives and will work to ensure that environmental regulations are crafted without imposing undue expense and regulatory burdens on Ohio businesses and industries.

- Protect businesses from the escalating costs of energy efficiency mandates while advocating for market determination of cost-effective utility energy efficiency and demand-side management programs.
- Ensure Ohio EPA programs are no more stringent than their federal counterparts, achieve standards without being overly burdensome, are cost-effective, and can be applied in real-world settings.
- Monitor federal and state activity on greenhouse gas emission controls, including participation in U.S. EPA rulemaking activity on the Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) proposal.
- Advocate for prudent, necessary, and cost-effective investments in energy infrastructure and expand access to all forms of Ohio's energy resources.
- Work to ensure water quality legislation or regulatory actions are not overly burdensome on industry and are based on sound science.
- Support incentives for remediation of brownfield properties and redevelopment of those properties to support economic development, in addition to environmental benefits.
- Ensure that Ohio EPA funding and other environmental budgets are sustainable and that any fee or user fee increases are necessary and appropriate.

## HEALTH CARE

The Ohio Chamber's Research Foundation conducts a quarterly survey of Ohio business leaders to gauge their perceptions of our economy. For seven straight quarters, the cost of health care has been their top concern. We support meaningful reform aimed at lowering the overall cost of health care so it is more affordable for employers and we oppose the enactment of any new health insurance coverage mandates.

- Empower consumers to spend their health care dollars wisely by promoting access to timely, accurate, appropriate, uniform and user-friendly information on the quality and cost of their health care.
- Continue to oppose health insurance coverage mandates that could raise employer premiums.
- Eliminate barriers to the efforts of employers to encourage healthy behaviors and reward employees for taking steps to be well.
- Encourage broader utilization of the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS) to combat prescription drug diversion and abuse.
- Identify and address legal and regulatory obstacles that could limit the scope and scale of value-based contracting.
- Support the retention of Medicaid coverage for individuals made eligible under the Affordable Care Act, consistent with our original rationale.

## LABOR & EMPLOYMENT

Employers need to be able to manage their workplaces and financial resources free of undue interference from all levels of government. In addition, reform is long overdue to our nearly insolvent Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. The time to fix the system is now, while the unemployment rate is low.

- Address the long-term solvency of the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund.
- Preserve employers' right to decide whether to prohibit or allow the carrying of concealed handguns onto their property.
- Protect employers' ability to regulate their workplace in regards to medical marijuana.
- Defend against onerous government mandates that drive up labor costs.
- Continue to stress the need to ultimately make Ohio a right-to-work state.
- Amend state wage and hour laws to clarify that de minimis amounts of time spent on electronic devices are not used when calculating overtime pay.







## LEGAL REFORM

Ohio is a leader in the national legal reform movement and must continue to work to maintain, strengthen and improve the state's legal climate and protect employers from excessive or frivolous litigation. Common sense reforms to bring balance and predictability to employment discrimination laws and bring Ohio law into better alignment with federal law and the laws of other states will help ensure Ohio businesses don't find themselves at a competitive disadvantage.

- Conform Ohio's employment discrimination law to federal employment discrimination statutes.
- Ensure employers aren't forced to defend against discrimination claims in both administrative and courtroom proceedings.
- Grant an affirmative defense to employers who take claims of workplace discrimination seriously and act quickly to resolve them.
- Ban the practice of third-party litigation financing for cases involving class actions.
- Reduce Ohio's statute of limitations for written contracts.

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Decisions made in Columbus can have a significant impact – positively or negatively – on a business's ability to compete and operate successfully. Therefore, there is a need for them to engage in both the public policymaking and political processes, in order to protect their interests and to ensure the values of the free enterprise system are not overlooked. This ability is crucial and must not be undermined. In addition, with special interests increasingly seeking to bypass the deliberative legislative process and take issues directly to the voters, the time has come to enact meaningful reforms to the ballot issue process.

- Proactively battle ballot initiatives proposed by anti-business special interest groups.
- Safeguard the Ohio Constitution by requiring broader public support for proposed amendments.
- Clarify and reinforce laws governing the ballot issue petition process.
- Preserve the First Amendment right of businesses to unrestricted political advocacy.

## SMALL BUSINESS

The needs and concerns of Ohio's small businesses – while the same as any other business in most areas – can nonetheless be unique. For example, complying with state rules and regulations can often represent a more significant burden on small businesses. That's why continuing to build on the major regulatory reforms of the past decade and further empowering the *Common Sense Initiative* are critical for the growth and vitality of small businesses.

- Retain the Small Business Income Tax Deduction.
- Advocate for responsible, increased price transparency for health care services.
- Oppose policies such as health care mandates that contribute to the rising costs of health care.
- Address and work to reduce the regulatory impact of existing statutes as well as future legislation.
- Expand the scope of responsibilities assigned to the *Common Sense Initiative*.
- Preserve the Governor's Small Business Advisory Council and advocate for direct OSBC involvement on the Council.
- Explore options to lower workers' compensation costs for employers.

## TAXES

Perhaps in no other policy area has as much been done over the past eight years to make Ohio's business climate more competitive. Now, the important improvements to lower overall rates, reduce the tax burden on small businesses, and substantially streamline Ohio's complicated municipal net profits tax must be protected, along with making additional reforms to clarify and modernize Ohio's tax code.

- Repeal the existing sales tax on employment services.
- Modernize and clarify the rules regarding what constitutes electronic information services and their sales and use tax treatment.
- Reform the taxation of pass-through entities, including withholding requirements, and revise Ohio law to address federal tax law changes pertaining to the auditing of partnerships.
- Support efforts to ensure adequate and reliable funding for Ohio's transportation system.
- Prohibit municipalities from retaliating against companies that seek to take advantage of the new option to file just one municipal net profit tax return.
- Enhance newly-created Opportunity Zones by incentivizing their use in order to drive investment opportunities to Ohio.
- Support research and development incentives in next generation technologies consistent with the Ohio BOLD recommendations.
- Work to improve the tax review process to ensure an efficient and fair tax system.

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Over the past eight years, average private employer workers' compensation rates have declined by 37%, and the Bureau of Workers' Compensation has delivered nearly \$4.5 billion in rebates back to employers. Nonetheless, several reforms to the system need to be made in order to continue to provide timely benefits to injured workers while minimizing employer costs.

- Make claimants more responsible for their care.
- Require employees to report their alleged workplace injuries to their employer in a timely manner.
- Ensure that non-medical benefit payments are only payable for loss of earning capacity.
- Specify that claimants are not entitled to compensation if their economic loss was due to circumstances other than a compensable workplace accident.
- Establish performance, outcome, and cost metrics by which providers can be measured and ranked.
- Ensure employers are not unreasonably penalized for an employee's failure to attend medical or other appointments.
- Examine ways to prevent claims from being open longer than necessary due to bill payment issues.
- Require a claimant to reach maximum medical improvement prior to filing a claim for permanent partial disability.

## ADVOCACY & ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES

To accomplish our public policy objectives, lawmakers must understand how their decisions may impact Ohio employers. As the state's leading business advocate, the Ohio Chamber has a team of issue experts who work daily at the Statehouse to protect and advance the interests of Ohio employers. However, that's not sufficient. Lawmakers need to hear from member companies. They, too, must be engaged, to share their real-world perspective. That's why we'll be providing an array of opportunities for members to take action.

- **Develop and implement political education and grassroots strategies that complement direct lobbying efforts.**
- **Identify, encourage, endorse and support pro-business candidates for the General Assembly.**
- **Lead the business community in monitoring judicial decisions and engaging in judicial elections and educate the public about the role and importance of the judiciary.**
- **Enhance awareness of the Ohio Chamber's General Assembly voting record, the Free Enterprise Index.**