



Chamber
Action Alliance

CHAMBER ACTION ALLIANCE TOOLKIT



The Chamber Action Alliance (CAA) is the state-wide grassroots advocacy coalition of Ohio chambers of commerce and business advocates coordinated by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. Together, the CAA identifies statewide policy issues facing the business community, educates and empowers alliance members to take action.

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Dear Chamber Executive,

With all the mechanisms and hurdles in the policy-making process, legislation can still move incredibly quickly and pass without an adequate opportunity or time window for the public to step in and voice support or opposition... if we aren't prepared for it.

In the past few decades, the impact of grassroots efforts in the political and legislative worlds has skyrocketed due to the blistering speed of modern communication tools, numerous new platforms to communicate on and the emergence of networks and coalitions ready and able to mobilize people through these channels.

We're growing our own grassroots network for the Ohio business community called the **Chamber Action Alliance**. The Chamber Action Alliance serves to ensure that all chambers of commerce in the state of Ohio have the opportunity, capability and drive to advocate for our business members during the legislative process. Our collective engagement on business issues at the state and local level allows us to fight for sound policy that promotes business growth and makes Ohio an attractive place to conduct business.

The attached packet is a guide on how to establish your chamber as an active advocate for and with your members on the government affairs front as part of the Chamber Action Alliance. Grassroots engagement is a powerful tool at the state and local level; and together, we can utilize it to be champions for businesses, from city halls to the Statehouse.

Best Regards,



Steve Stivers
President & CEO
Ohio Chamber of Commerce

ESTABLISHING A GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Overview:

Chambers of commerce at the local level are community organizations, serving to bring local businesses together in various ways. At the end of the day, our core mission is to support the success of our business members. One effective way for a chamber of commerce to support this mission is to create and maintain an active government affairs committee.

What is a government affairs committee?

A government affairs committee is a dedicated group of business leaders within your membership who focus on government policy that affects business.

What are the key responsibilities of a government affairs committee?

Two core priorities for a government affairs committee are:

1. Being aware of policies at the local and state level that may affect businesses, and
2. Having a readiness and willingness to engage in influencing those policies on behalf of members in the organization.

How should our committee be structured?

The group should be member-led but in concert with chamber staff. A committee chair is typically in charge of leading the group and meetings. The chair sets meeting agendas, staff schedules meetings and records meeting minutes. The chair can be elected or individuals can volunteer for the role.

A chamber looking to establish a government affairs committee can either put out a general inquiry to members to find interested participants or directly ask certain members. The group can include board members but should not be a requirement.

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Typical size of chamber government affairs committees is 5-12 individuals including the chair. A vice chair is recommended for flexibility but not a requirement. Term length for chair (and vice chair) is decided by the committee; chairs serving successive terms is not uncommon.

How often should our committee meet?

A quarterly meeting is recommended minimum. In-person is best but availability for calling in allows for more participation if flexibility is required. Meetings should be scheduled by chamber staff in coordination with member availability.

What is on a typical committee meeting agenda?

Meetings can take on different forms, but in pursuit of the two key priorities of the committee, some time should be set to discuss any pending local ordinance or state legislation relevant to business. Committee members can be aware of these developments by subscribing to certain newsletters, such as the [Ohio Chamber Legislative Update](#). Chamber staff receive these updates and can forward them to committee members. One easy way to address state-level legislation is by inviting an Ohio Chamber lobbyist through the political & grassroots director to give a policy update as a guest speaker.

It's usually a good idea to have a guest speaker at meetings, and sometimes multiple speakers. Suggested speakers are your state and local elected officials. "Meet & Greet" meetings with newly elected officials are a great opportunity to create a good relationship with them. Additional speakers could be relevant and helpful contacts at state or local government agencies, such as ODJFS or a county health department.

[See a sample Meeting Agenda](#)

How do we invite state legislators to meetings or events?

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce has close working relationships with your legislators, and the political & grassroots director can assist with getting invitations directly to them or make warm introductions to your chamber staff or government affairs committee members.



Should we have committee-sponsored events outside of committee meetings?

It's a good idea to foster opportunities to build closer relationships to elected officials. Periodic networking events, such as coffee or happy hour meetups, with featured legislators as guests is a common way to pursue this goal. These events are typically organized by the government affairs committee, promoted by chamber staff and open to all chamber members (not just the government affairs committee).

Should our committee be involved in local or state politics?

It's not recommended for this group – or your chamber of commerce organization – to be involved in any politics. A typical ask of a chamber of commerce by political candidates is for an endorsement, but it's recommended to have a policy against making any endorsements. Political involvement by the chamber can lead to challenges as a community organization and can inhibit the effectiveness of the organization when advocating on legislation or local policy.

However, it's a good idea to allow candidates to speak to the committee for their awareness of policy platforms and to develop connections that may be beneficial later on. Some government affairs committees may even host "Meet the Candidate" events. If you chose to host such events, it's important to stress the non-partisan nature of your committee and organization.

Distinction – engaging in political races is separate from engaging on local or statewide ballot issues, where sometimes an issue is worth engaging on if it affects your members.

If individual members of your chamber or government affairs committee wants to be politically involved with the business community outside of your chamber organization, they're highly encouraged to donate to the Ohio Chamber of Commerce PAC (OCCPAC) where they will have opportunities to grow their individual relationship directly with legislators. The Ohio Chamber political & grassroots director manages OCCPAC and can be contacted by interested members.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GRASSROOTS PARTNERSHIP

Overview:

Coordinating an active government affairs committee at a chamber of commerce gives your organization an important and effective tool to advocate on policy for our member businesses. There are a handful of ways to ensure your group can be as effective as possible by engaging with Ohio Chamber policy efforts when the opportunity arises.

Signing-on to Coalition Letters

There may be times where the Ohio Chamber may make a request for your chamber organization to sign onto a letter of support or opposition to a bill or policy issue. Some chambers will put that decision up to their board of directors, but this is most effective as a decision to be made by your government affairs committee if your board approves delegating out this responsibility.

[See sample letter](#)

Active Participation in Grassroots Campaigns

The Ohio Chamber will periodically launch a grassroots campaign centered around members of the business community reaching out to their elected officials in support or opposition of a bill or policy issue. These campaigns typically entail an "Action Alert," where participants are directed to a web page that explains the issue and the Ohio Chamber's position, along with a widget containing info fields and a pre-written note of support or opposition. When a participant fills their information in and submits the message, it automatically goes to their specific legislators.

continued

When the Chamber Action Alliance mobilizes as a collective and promotes participation in a grassroots campaign or "Action Alert" across our memberships, it results in a massive wave of support behind our efforts to advocate good policy for Ohio business owners and job creators.

The ask is whenever the Ohio Chamber puts out a policy campaign or "Action Alert," your government affairs committee participates and encourages other members of your organization to participate.

[See sample Action Alert](#)

Written or In-Person Testimony

One way to truly go above-and-beyond in a powerful way in support of the Ohio Chamber's advocacy efforts is for members of your government affairs committee to testify to legislature committees in support of Ohio Chamber positions on key legislation. There are two ways to testify: (1) Submitting a written testimony, which is a letter that goes into official record and read by relevant legislators, or (2) Testifying in-person at the Statehouse in Columbus. This option may require travel and might require sacrificing time away from business as committee sessions can last all day depending on the issue as every testimony is heard. Both modes of testifying are powerful since they share personal experience with the policy issue at hand. While there is no expectation from the Ohio Chamber for other chamber members to testify, it can give our policy team a tremendous boost of support and build upon all of our relationships with elected members of the legislature.

[See sample written testimony](#)

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

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The screenshot shows a document titled "Sample Government Affairs Committee Meeting Agenda" from the Chamber Action Alliance. The document is for a meeting on Wednesday, February 30, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. The agenda items are as follows:

Time	Item
9:30 a.m.	1. Call to order
	2. Introductions
9:40 a.m.	3. Ohio Chamber Policy Update
	Guest Speaker: Kevin Boehner, Director, Small Business & Workforce Policy, Ohio Chamber of Commerce
10:00 a.m.	4. Ohio Treasurer Community Initiatives
	Guest Speaker: Regional Liaison, Office of the Ohio Treasurer
10:15 a.m.	5. Policy Discussion
	6. Discuss & Determine Policy Action Items
10:30 a.m.	7. Adjourn

At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a navigation bar showing "Page 1 / 1" and zoom controls.

SAMPLE COALITION LETTER

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May 20, 2019

The Honorable Larry Obhof
President, Ohio Senate
1 Capitol Square, 2nd Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

The Honorable Larry Householder
Speaker, Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear President Obhof and Speaker Householder:

We are writing to respectfully request you remove a few provisions included in the proposed Operating Budget. Specifically, the language that reduced the business income deduction (BID) from \$250,000 to \$100,000 and the language that removes the 3% cap on pass-through income above the deduction. The fiscal impact of this budget change is a \$1 billion tax increase on pass-through entities in Ohio, most of which are small businesses.

We are concerned about the negative impact the reduction of the BID will have on our small businesses. We fear taking money out of businesses that they would otherwise use to buy equipment, expand operations, and/or increase wages will be detrimental to Ohio's overall economic growth.

The business income deduction was enacted to create tax parity between pass-through entities and general business C-Corps. Pass-through entities must pay both the Commercial Activity Tax (CAT) and the Individual Income Tax, while C-Corps simply pay taxes on receipts under the CAT. The proposed change in the House-passed budget impacts the parity between Ohio businesses.

These substantial changes were done quickly and unexpectedly. The BID has been in place in its current form since 2015, therefore we believe that such significant changes warrant a more robust analysis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ohio Chamber of Commerce
Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce
Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce
Greater Ashtabula Chamber of Commerce
Central Ohio African-American Chamber of Commerce
Southwestern Auglaize Chamber of Commerce
Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce
Cincinnati Regional Chamber of Commerce
Columbus Chamber of Commerce
Darke County Chamber of Commerce
Delaware Area Chamber of Commerce
Dublin Chamber of Commerce
Gahanna Area Chamber of Commerce

SAMPLE WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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May 23, 2019

The Honorable Matt Dolan
Finance Chairman, The Ohio Senate
Ohio Statehouse, First Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Dolan:

I am Tom Secor, President of Durable Corporation, and past Chair of the Ohio Small Business Council within the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

Governor Kasich had admirable desires to make Ohio a more attractive option for business growth, attraction and incubation. He, working with the legislation, set in motion a direction toward income tax reduction and elimination which was greatly appreciated. The only exception was that small business never seemed to get the same break as large corporate America, even though we presented the greatest opportunity to fulfill the goals of establishing a vibrant business economy in Ohio.

The Business Investor Deduction (BID) was ultimately created to provide some relief to this inequity, albeit with very cumbersome and complex filing requirements. The cost of filing compliance for small business is a burden much greater than that for large business and one that few elected officials ever seem to grasp. And now it appears there is a desire to cut 60% of the BID with what appears a quick decision to find over \$1 billion of revenue in the two-year budget.

While the new business filings have been growing in Ohio the past ten years, 2016 was up 7.4%, 2017 was up 11.8% and 2018 was up 6.6%, significantly higher than the preceding five years which only had one year above 6%. In addition, income tax revenues were up over 10% in 2018 while rates have been declining. It would certainly appear that the income tax reductions along with the BID have made a very positive contribution to the Ohio economy.

And where did this money saved go. In 2018, we completed an addition to our facility and added new equipment with an investment of over \$550,000.00. We also increased our employment by 2 additional people to 40 employees. This expansion and employee addition was completed to meet the increasing business opportunities we have and I am proud to say that we did it with no increased debt. The federal and state tax reforms that keep more money in our businesses do in fact allow us to invest for the future.

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SAMPLE ACTION ALERT

Protect the Small Business Investor Income Deduction

The Ohio General Assembly is currently working on crafting the state's operating budget for the next two years. Unfortunately, the budget bill, House Bill 166, contains a **\$1 billion tax increase** on small business owners over the next two years.



This tax increase was added to HB 166 by the House, and the legislation is currently pending in the Senate. Lawmakers need to hear from you about the negative impact this unnecessary change will have on small businesses and Ohio's economic competitiveness.

Today, small business owners of pass-through entities can deduct 100% of the first \$250,000 of business income from their personal income tax return, with additional income above \$250,000 taxed at a rate of 3%. The changes included in the budget would substantially reduce the business income deduction, from \$250,000 to \$100,000, and would eliminate the provision that caps the income tax at 3% above the limit, meaning all business income above \$100,000 will now be taxed at the corresponding marginal income tax rates.

The tax hikes on small business owners were sold as a way to finance the elimination of the two lowest personal income tax brackets and deliver an across-the-board rate reduction of 6.6% for the remaining five brackets. In other words, personal income tax cuts included in HB 166 were paid for by shifting the tax burden onto small businesses.

This trade will not make Ohio more competitive. These changes will harm our business climate and leave small businesses with less money for investments in improvements to their facilities, worker training, technology, new equipment, or increased wages.

Contact your legislators right now to let them know you don't support this massive tax increase on Ohio's small business owners.



Compose Your Message

- Governor
- Lt. Governor
- State Senator

Subject

Message Body

HB 166 contains a tax increase on small business owners of more than \$1 billion.

There are many good reasons why raising

Enter Your Info

Your Information

Prefix* First Name* Last Name*

Email*

Send me text alerts

Mobile Number*

Home Information

Street Address*

ZIP Code* Enter Zip for City and State

Business Information

Your Title Company

Street Address

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