

Shawnee Chamber of Commerce



2007 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



The Shawnee Chamber of Commerce recognizes the fiscal and philosophical legislative challenges facing the State of Kansas. In view of this, the Chamber supports initiatives deemed crucial to our business community including education excellence for the continued economic development in our City, County and State.

EDUCATION

Education excellence is the single most important factor to stimulate economic prosperity and growth in the State of Kansas. The Shawnee Chamber has in the past and will continue to support adequate funding for schools in order to provide quality education and to keep pace with the increasing standards of “No Child Left Behind”.

The Shawnee Chamber will continue to support the following initiatives:

- The State must provide an adequate and suitable education for all Kansas children.
- The state’s support should be the foundation for an adequate and suitable education, but not a ceiling on educational opportunities for school districts striving for excellence. Allow locally elected boards to determine budget priorities based on local needs without state imposed percentage requirements on selected categories of the budget.
- Support funding to allow school districts to provide all-day kindergarten.
- Support increased local authority allowing districts to provide programs that meet the needs and desires of local communities. State equalization assistance should be provided to districts with lower assessed valuation. The gap in the funding of districts should be closed by increasing high enrollment weighting each year.
- Support a redistribution of state funding to provide increased support for those districts that have unfunded excess special education costs.
- Support full funding to provide Special Education, ESL and At-Risk programs for students.
- Support change to the formula that recognizes differences in costs of school districts according to the geographic region of the state the district is located within.

AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE

Healthcare costs continue to rise at an alarming rate, which puts a tremendous financial burden on the business community to provide healthcare benefits to their employees. The Federal government has not been willing to address this issue in ways that result in incentives for business owners to provide health-care coverage for their employees. The Shawnee Chamber supports initiatives that result in an enhanced health care delivery system and initiatives, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Support legislative initiatives that ensure employers have the flexibility to provide cost effective healthcare coverage for their employees.
- Oppose health insurance mandates that put undue financial demands on employers who provide group insurance benefits for their employees.
- Support legislation to enhance the present small-business health insurance income tax credit by allowing the initial credit, \$35 per month per eligible employee or 50% of the total amount paid by the employer during the taxable year, to be extended to all small employers and maintaining the credit each year the employer maintains an eligible plan.
- Support state and federal programs to provide adequate funding for senior medical coverage.
- Support measures that will allow defendants to introduce evidence in trials that prove that the plaintiffs received benefits from sources outside the dispute.
- Encourage Health Savings Accounts (HSA's) as a way of controlling health care costs to businesses and individuals.
- In the event of passage of Association Health Care enabling legislation in the U.S. Congress, the state should ensure that the necessary legislation is in place in order to allow Kansans the immediate ability to pool risk and take advantage of this type of health care offering.

ECONOMIC GROWTH & JOB CREATION

A. Animal Health

The Kansas City region is home to more than 120 animal health and nutrition companies. Four of the ten largest global animal health companies have their US or worldwide HQ in Kansas City. This is an area for future growth that merits legislative attention:

- Support designating the region between Manhattan, Kansas and the Greater Kansas City Area as the “Kansas City Animal Health Corridor,” and declaring it to be the national center of the animal health industry.
- Support maintaining the Kansas Bioscience Authority’s revenue stream and preserving the agency’s flexibility and responsiveness to develop creative strategies to attract new and grow existing animal health companies and supply channel companies in Kansas.

B. Bioscience Support

In order to take advantage of new job creation in the frontier of biosciences, it is important that the Legislature continue to explore opportunities with the 2004 passage of the Kansas Economic Growth Act and the creation of the Kansas Bioscience Authority. This legislation will guide the state in the investment of over \$580 million to develop an infrastructure that positions Kansas as a center for bioscience research, innovation and commercialization.

- Support education and workforce development focused toward the life sciences including veterinary and agricultural programs.
- Support the continued development of the infrastructure aimed at increasing entrepreneurial ventures and commercialization partners.
- Support legislation, which would clarify cities authority in using this financing tool to attract the bioscience industry to Kansas. Encourage the legislature to continue to explore opportunities to position Kansas as the center for bioscience research, innovation and commercialization.
- The Shawnee Chamber will oppose legislation that restricts life sciences or its industry in Kansas. Prolonged state legislative debate could potentially prove detrimental to our state’s ability to attract cutting-edge research and commercial enterprises.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To continue to facilitate a strong and diverse economy, the Shawnee Chamber supports an environment that promotes business growth and expansion.

- Support funding of the Economic Development Initiatives Fund (EDIF) through the reauthorization of the Kansas Lottery. Furthermore, the Chamber supports either raising the \$50 million cap on lottery funds earmarked for EDIF or building into the reauthorization an annual percentage increase in funding for EDIF.
- Support reducing the administrative burden for small businesses to apply for state economic development incentives and tax credits.
- Support increasing the percentage of total state incentives and tax credits that are targeted to small business – a group that employs the majority of non-farm Kansans.
- Support the reauthorization of the Sales Tax and Revenue Bonds legislation (STAR) which would give cities the ability to further promote economic development projects.
- Support building in flexibility in the 2006 eminent domain legislation that would allow an alternate body to consider and approve/reject projects when the Legislature is not in session.
- Support the 2004 legislative initiatives of the Kansas Economic Growth Act and the creation of the Kansas Bioscience Authority.
- Support job creation through tax initiatives focused on technical and bioscience workforce training.
- Support tax policies that foster competitive positioning for Kansas businesses within national and global

STATE SPENDING CAPS

The Shawnee Chamber remains opposed to placing lids on state and local taxing authority or imposing artificial spending lids which restricts the ability of government to respond to growth in a timely manner or make needed investments in the future of the economy for the state. This includes opposing the “supermajority” vote by state or local governing bodies to approve tax increases.

OPEN RECORDS

The Shawnee Chamber believes the Kansas Open Records Act is an appropriate balance between the public’s right of access with individual privacy and the ability of businesses (including the city and county) to conduct essential functions. The Chamber strongly supports the retention of all current exceptions that protect the confidentiality rights and interests of private business, as well as other necessary needs.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

The Shawnee Chamber supports enabling legislation as a tool for a metropolitan funding mechanism should local and regional public agencies propose a public transit, greenways/trails expansion.

STATE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

The Shawnee Chamber recognizes the importance of basic infrastructure to the economic health, job growth, public safety and overall quality of life. The Chamber anticipates the next Comprehensive Transportation Program that will take effect in 2009, and in order to meet both highway safety objectives and to promote economic vitality, it advocates allocation of future transportation funding separately for safety and economic development purposes.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION TAX

Currently, the Kansas Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund is in excess of \$600 million. The Chamber would support legislation that reduces unemployment compensation taxes. Such legislation would provide tax relief for employers without compromising the overall integrity of the unemployment compensation trust fund.

CIVIL LAW-CONTRACT REFORM

Support legislation where businesses that breach their written contract to pay for goods or services be penalized for that breach by having the presiding judge award the creditor the costs incurred by the creditor for collection of the debtor’s debt. This would include attorney fees and/or any collection service fees. All businesses, including sole proprietors, will be subject to this law.

A CONSTITUTIONALLY IMPARTIAL JUDICIARY

The Shawnee Chamber will oppose specific legislation that would materially alter the independent status of the State’s judicial system. Legislation to change either the current selection process for Supreme Court justices or the process for judicial nominations would shift an inappropriate level of control to the legislative branch, threatening the separation and equality of powers between the three branches of government.

As prospective new businesses evaluate the environment in Kansas, they must be confident in relying upon the rule of law in our state and that political pressure is not unduly applied in the court system.

**2007 STANDING POLICIES OF THE
SHAWNEE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE;
ACTIVELY PROMOTED WHENEVER THE ISSUE OR
OPPORTUNITY ARISES.**

SUPPORT: An ongoing review of the taxation system to maintain an equitable, competitive and progressive position. Sales, income, property and other taxes should be reviewed and balanced to meet the needs of the State without compromising the economic competitiveness of the State.

SUPPORT: Formulation of a statewide energy policy.

SUPPORT: The Shawnee Chamber will support improvements to the worker's compensation system that would insure that businesses would not be liable for pre-existing injuries thus resulting in cost savings for Kansas businesses.

SUPPORT: Protection of tax increment financing tools (TIF).

SUPPORT: Elimination of the state's franchise tax.

SUPPORT: Allowing counties (and those cities within that county) with pari-mutuel tracks to vote on authorizing electronic gaming (slots) at those facilities.

SUPPORT: Continued full funding of the highway and transportation improvements planned under the 1999 Comprehensive Transportation Program.

SUPPORT: Enforcement of the tax law requiring fair market valuation of property taxes throughout the State.

OPPOSE: Sales tax on services.

OPPOSE: Changes to the current sales tax situs law on motor vehicles.

OPPOSE: Binding arbitration in employment disputes.

OPPOSE: Initiative and referendum.

OPPOSE: Tax policy changes that simply shift the tax burden to other areas of state government or to other levels of government.

OPPOSE: Tort laws that permit health plans or employers that administer them to be sued in state court.

The above positions are not presented in priority order.

**2006-07
Legislative Affairs Committee**

(Participating as of 12.11.06)

Kevin Tubbesing, LAC Chairman

Stag Commercial

Dave Holtwick, LAC Vice Chair

Home Builders Association of Greater Kansas City

Jim Allen, 2007 Chairman of the Board

State Farm Insurance

Kevin Bennett, 2006 Past Chairman of the Board

Bennett Bodine & Waters PA

David Blankenship

AXA Advisors, LLC

Chris Carroll

A T & T

Mike Clifford

Total Site Solutions

Jack Deyoe

Unified School District #232

Bill Grosz

Shawnee Mission Medical Center

David Herndon

First State Bank

Dave Huston

Olson Manufacturing & Distribution

John Miller, Board Director

Lake Quivira Country Club

Justin Nichols

Lathrop & Gage, L.C.

Roger Randall

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Paul Ridgway

American Family Insurance

Ron Rigdon, Past Chairman of the Board

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