



# 86th Legislative Session Priorities

## McAllen Chamber of Commerce

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### **Economic Development**

- Support legislation that provides incentives to encourage business participation in education and workforce development.
- Support investment in world-class research to ignite groundbreaking innovation.
- Support the promotion and leveraging partnership between private and academia to bridge the gap in the marketplace in Texas.
- Support the development of a “proof of concept” funding to accelerate university tech and commercialization transfer.
- Support the development of a domestic “venture industry” through the use of long-term incentives.
- Oppose legislation that would broaden the current religious freedom Restoration Act or other legislation that is seen as discriminatory and would impact workforce recruitment and /or cause a negative impact on the state to attract major events, conventions, workforce and corporate recruiting.
- Support continued use of the locally approved half-cent tax collected by cities to fund economic development efforts.
- Oppose efforts to reduce local control of these half-cent tax funds or to limit use of these funds. These funds are local funds and should be controlled by local taxpayers.
- Support the removal of the county average wage restrictions that limit a local community’s use of these funds for local training purposes.
- Continue to support and protect local control and flexibility in the use of tax incentives financing, reinvestment zones and other incentives to promote economic development.
- Continue to support Texas 2050 plan. A program designed and developed by a by broad-based statewide business groups to support the long-term development of human capital, investment, investment capital, innovation and education to compete in a global market.

## **Education/Workforce**

- Support legislation that would exempt dropout and prevention and recovery schools from the Texas Education Agency's A-F rating system.
- Support recess and other physical activities as part of school programming to promote health and wellness.
- Support expanded access to English as A Second Language (ESL) courses throughout public schools.
- Support efforts to promote Algebra II for students as a minimum requirement for college and access and readiness.
- Support increase funding for online curriculum and online testing.
- Support industry aligned early college models for industry clusters Innovation Academies that include career guidance mentoring and apprenticeship programs.
- Continue strong support for community colleges as important contributors to training, associates degrees, bachelor programs and continuous upskilling or reskilling opportunities.
- Support efforts that financially reward campuses for retraining students beyond the ninth grade.
- Support efforts that give school districts the flexibility to meet the needs of their students.
- Support innovative financial rewards based on performance effectiveness and quality campuses.
- Support funding of full-day Pre-K programs for all school districts and students.
- Support efforts to provide afterschool care for working parents with children the Pre-K programs.
- Continue strong support for higher education and the critical role it plays in talent development and allowing Texas to compete in the global market.
- Support reasonable regulatory oversight of the higher education system with reasonable goals and accountability.
- Support continuation of in-state tuition for long-term residents of Texas.
- Support incentives for companies offering apprenticeship programs for high school students.

- Support increased funding for Skills Development programs administered by the Texas Workforce Commission.
- Support additional alternative certification programs that provide school districts flexibility to hire qualified people holding bachelor's degree or higher who pass certification exams.
- Support increasing teachers' salaries beyond the initial growth of the first 3-5 years of a teaching career.

### **Taxes/Spending**

- Support legislative measures to equitably distribute the burden of business sector taxes among all businesses including service and manufacturing.
- Support legislation ensuring that homeowners and businesses share support for public education.
- Provide taxpayers equal interest rates on overpayments and underpayments.
- Allow taxpayers an automatic filing extension with federal extension
- Eliminate pay-to-play that currently requires Texas taxpayers to prepay or post a bond to obtain access to trial court level. Support maintaining the current equal assessment rate for franchise tax for both retail and wholesale entries and a graduated approach to tax for businesses that have sales less than \$1 million.
- Support exemption from franchise tax of all flow-through funds that are mandated by contract to be distributed to other entries.
- Support rebating any excess revenue collected from franchise revenue collected from those who paid it.
- Support reinstating the research and development tax credit and allowing to be carried forward.
- Oppose the imposition of a gross receipts tax in Texas.
- Support government tax policies and incentive programs that are effective in increasing investment to create new jobs and greatly expand economic activity.
- Support elimination or reduction of local inventory taxes. Texas is one of only six states that permit the levy of property tax on inventories.
- Oppose any additional local option sales tax increase the current two percent cap.
- Oppose unfunded mandates that shift the cost of financing programs to either the private sector or other levels of government.

- Oppose mandatory price disclosure on commercial real estate transactions.
- Oppose any new taxes or payment for additional regulatory programs.
- Oppose the imposition of any new fees to recover the cost of regulatory programs unless the program can be shown to clearly address critical public need.
- Oppose any efforts to reduce the budget of a fee-funded regulatory program for the purpose of redirecting the fee revenues to another purpose.
- Support legislative efforts to maintain regulatory climate that does not impose hidden taxes on employers through excess fees or fines, but reduces excessive regulation.
- Oppose any plan that splits the property tax rolls either by rate or by making one a statewide tax.
- Oppose any plan to or component that allows the state to treat business differently from homeowners.

### **Employment Relations**

- Continue strong support of protecting employers' rights to choose how employees are hired.
- Support transferring control over federal mandated unemployment insurance to states, thereby reducing employers' tax burdens and increasing local control over workforce related programs. Limit unemployment insurance benefits to 20 weeks if the state's average rate for the year proceeding the calendar year in which the claim takes effect is below five percent.
- Oppose attempts to restrict the rights of employers to conduct random and /or universal drug testing of employees.
- Support legislation that provides that a claimant who fails or refuses to submit to an employer-required drug test that is a condition of a job offer or refuses the offer of work without good cause would disqualify the claimant from receiving unemployment benefits.
- Support efforts to maintain employers' prerogative to control the workplace.
- Oppose efforts to dictate how private employers' interview and hire candidates for employment.
- Oppose legislation that would erode employment-at-will as a right for all Texas employers and employees. Oppose efforts to modify the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and oppose any initiative to require employers to pay for FMLA with unemployment insurance.

- Support allowing employers to seek an injunction on behalf of an employee to end workplace harassment without creating a new liability for the employer.
- Oppose the arbitrary increase in minimum wage that cannot be supported by improvements in productivity and deprive many entry level workers of a job opportunity.
- Oppose expansion of legislation previously passed that allows legally-owned firearms to be stored on a company-maintained parking lots.
- Support efforts to keep Texas a right-to-work state and oppose agency shop legislation.
- Support legislation to allow employers to apply part of their unemployment insurance taxes toward the cost of training workers for their businesses.
- Oppose efforts to allow public employees or to require private employers, to subsidize or promote labor unions or similar organizations through payroll collection for dues.

### **General Business**

- Support changes in state law allowing drivers to choose between the current system, in which they can sue for non-economic damages and a new system under which they would waive the option to recover non-economic damages.
- Oppose legislation that would create new causes for action against Texas employers that choose to allow guns at their place of business.
- Oppose legislation that restricts the ability of private parties to contract.
- Oppose measures that attempt to resolve federal comprehensive immigration reform at the state level.
- Support anti-fraud insurance legislation and enforcement. Fraud costs Texas businesses and individuals millions of dollars in the insurance market.
- Support reforms that would prevent uninsured motorist from collecting pain and suffering damages if they are in an accident with an insured driver.
- Oppose legislation that would make private entities subject to open records laws or force the release of proprietary information in government entities contracts with business.
- Maintain Texas' prohibition of direct sales of vehicles to consumers.

## **Environmental**

- Support the development of ambient air quality or other standards that are based on sound scientific evidence that is comprehensively peer reviewed, technically feasible and economical practical.
- Oppose the imposition of any enforceable ambient standard that is based on conservative screening levels for pollutants, rather than health risks.
- Support efforts to achieve attainment of national ambient air quality standards that help near nonattainment areas stay in attainment. In addition, ensure that the responsibility for emission reduction is shared equitably among all emission sources and provide sources of emission the maximum flexibility in obtaining permit authorization.
- Support efforts to ensure that Texas commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) adopt flexible, aggressive plans for the approval of emission reduction credits to ensure degree of economic growth.
- Support Texas law that requires state environmental agencies to estimate the cost and net benefit to regulated entities before adopting any major proposed rules. Oppose legislation that places additional requirements on business and industry without a firm technical basis or appreciable benefit to the environment.

## **Health Care**

- Support long-term extension of the 1115 Medical Transformation Waiver.
- Support legislation that will reduce the number of uninsured Texans by increasing the affordability of health insurance and will allow the most efficient use of public, group and individual insurance arrangements within the state budget constraints.
- Prevent the needless increases in cost and litigation through the expansion of any kind of medical liability. Support legislation to curb existing abuses and the filing of frivolous lawsuits.
- Oppose mandated government mandated price controls for medical products, healthcare providers services and health insurance.

## **Technology and Innovation**

- Support programs to increase awareness of how small and medium, sized businesses can protect themselves from cyber security threats.

- Support programs designed to increase supply of skilled workforce for cybersecurity sector.
- Oppose attempts to apply state regulations to internet services or providers.
- Support the development of a cyber insurance market focused on the needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Encourage and support business efforts to develop and disclose comprehensive, market-driven private policies. Oppose a patchwork of state laws that would hinder the growth of the internet commerce.
- Promote public and private investment in research and development through public funding for research through state universities.
- Support funding for the Texas Research Incentive Program ((TRIP).

### Tort Reform

- Support legislation that creates mechanisms and incentives for the use of alternative dispute resolution.
- Protect the comprehensive tort reform measures passed by the Texas legislature that have helped build a fair and balanced civil justice system in Texas.
- Support efforts to lessen or repeal various civil penalties throughout the various codes. There are currently over 1,500 statutes in Texas that result in civil penalties.
- Support legislation to reform jury service requirement and to streamline the process and encourage jury service.
- Protect legislative reforms enacted to address rising medical malpractice insurance costs.
- Support legislation encouraging zero tolerance for the presence of alcohol or illegal drugs on the job. Support efforts to make the intoxication defense stronger.
- Oppose legislative efforts to mandate worker's compensation coverage.
- Oppose legislation that attempts to reintroduce lump sum settlements, including medical lifetime benefits into the Texas Worker's compensation system.
- Support and preserve the current regulatory law that prevents lawsuits against employers and property owners who provide workers' compensation insurance.