



2019 TENNESSEE CHAMBER LEGISLATIVE POLICY AGENDA

The Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry is proud to present our annual legislative and policy agenda for 2019. As a statewide organization, the Tennessee Chamber maintains members in legislative districts all across our great state consisting of small, medium and large businesses, local chambers of commerce, and economic development professionals. We also serve as the Tennessee Manufacturers Association and the official state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers. Our agenda is generated from survey results and feedback from our member businesses. It focuses on ensuring Tennessee remains one of the best states in our nation to start and grow a business, while promoting economic growth. We seek to accomplish this by focusing on member-driven policies that responsibly reduce employer costs and provide economic opportunities for all Tennesseans, maintaining our status as the premier destination for business growth, expansion, and tourism.

ENHANCING TENNESSEE'S WORKFORCE - OUR # 1 PRIORITY

Strengthening Career Awareness, Technical Education, K-12 Programs, and Work Based Learning Partnerships:

Chamber members consistently cite workforce as a top concern. The evolving demands of a modern, globally-competitive labor market necessitate a continued emphasis on rigorous academics, career preparation, and skill development in our state's schools. Anticipated shifts in the distribution of current jobs due to technology require that both our K-12 education and higher education systems proactively work together to equip students with the educational tools they need that align with the high-skill demands of the jobs of the future.

The Tennessee Chamber supports the following K-12 education policies that set a firm academic foundation for postsecondary success and career-ready knowledge and skills:

- ⊛ **Tennessee Career Awareness and Preparation System (CAPS)** – Whether destined for a technical college or university track, students must know about all career opportunities and pathways. The CAPS system engages K-12 students to connect them with in-demand career knowledge. The Tennessee Chamber is seeking funding to implement this program across the state.
- ⊛ **Technical Education, Work Based Learning (WBL) and Apprenticeships** – The Tennessee Chamber supports efforts that will enhance participation and completion in our technical education systems. WBL and apprenticeships must be emphasized to enhance student work experience and to develop skills. We also support the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) as an additional assessment option for students, plus increased utilization of Advance Placement Computer Science Principles to ensure students are prepared for current and future jobs.
- ⊛ **Tennessee Reconnect / Drive to 55** – To enhance our workforce, we support both Tennessee Promise and Reconnect which provide tuition for incoming students and adult learners to attain a certification or degree. Tennessee Reconnect presents a great opportunity for adult learners and will help Tennessee to achieve our Drive to 55 goals.
- ⊛ **Tennessee Work Ethic Diploma** – The Tennessee Chamber is advocating for the increased utilization by school districts of the Work Ethic Diploma to enhance the development of employability, or soft skills, that are often cited by employers as a major concern. Our youth must develop the necessary skills for employment and life success.
- ⊛ **Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP)** – Support continued investments and expansions in Tennessee's LEAP program that contributes substantially to the efforts of local communities to develop workforce and industry partnerships and facilitate advanced placement, dual enrollment and industry certifications.

KEEPING TENNESSEE COMPETITIVE - SETTING A CLIMATE FOR GROWTH

In addition, The Tennessee Chamber will work in the following areas to advance and address policy:

- ⊛ **Justice System Reforms** – To enhance Tennessee's workforce, the Tennessee Chamber supports efforts to implement work training and skill development programs for inmates with minor offenses, who will soon reenter society. These programs can help address workforce needs, increase our workforce participation rate and reduce recidivism.

- * **Rural Economic Development / Business Taxes** – To ensure Tennessee’s continued economic growth, the Tennessee Chamber supports a tax and economic development climate that encourages investment in the Volunteer State and protects the confidentiality of all taxpayers. In addition, we will vigorously support efforts that enhance rural economic development and proposals that seek to restore our historical buildings. With fierce competition from surrounding states, Tennessee must remain competitive and work to ensure we are a welcoming state for all business and their employees.
- * **Healthcare, Mandates and Regulation** – The Tennessee Chamber will work against overly burdensome regulations, government and insurance mandates that are redundant, unnecessary and increase costs on private employers. We will support efforts to enhance the health of Tennessee’s population and sustainable economic policies that contribute to the growth and stability of our substantial healthcare sector. Association health plans are a beneficial health insurance option for employers to provide affordable healthcare coverage and we will support their utilization.
- * **Battling Drug Abuse** – Drug abuse is a problem that negatively impacts our citizens, hinders our workforce and challenges Tennessee’s economic growth. We will work to educate and provide resources for employers to combat and help to remedy drug abuse. The Tennessee Chamber will closely monitor proposals that expand the use of **medicinal marijuana** for unexpected consequences to our workforce.
- * **Environmental and Workplace Safety** – Tennessee industry is a leader in environmental compliance and workplace safety. We will work to ensure a fair and balanced approach for regulations protecting our natural resources, bearing in mind the total economic impact incurred to industry. Further, we will advocate for clear and reliable requirements in environmental permitting. The Tennessee Chamber will continue to demand predictability in our workers’ compensation, unemployment and occupational health and safety programs, as we continue to educate employers on compliance and injury avoidance, which reduce costs.
- * **Tort Reform / Legal Climate** – Approved in 2011, tort reform has enhanced Tennessee’s business climate; however, a recent federal court ruling has jeopardized these efforts. The Tennessee Chamber will support efforts to ensure our punitive caps are upheld to protect business from frivolous and extreme lawsuits and support efforts that ensure legal advertisements provide reasonable consumer disclosures and protections.

HOW THE TENNESSEE CHAMBER FORMULATED OUR AGENDA

The Chamber’s 2019 agenda is developed with input from regional meetings we hosted across the state with local businesses and chambers of commerce, input from the Chamber Board of Directors, and member surveys. Throughout our legislative agenda, we reiterate the Tennessee Chamber’s core principles of free enterprise and removing obstacles that impede job creation and slow economic growth. Our members provide input on policy and legislative strategy through workgroup conference calls and surveys on tax, human resources, health care, legal reform, education & workforce development, and environmental and energy policy issues. Throughout our process, we engage business leaders from across the state, and we are proud that our 2019 legislative agenda is reflective of their views.

The Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry is the exclusive state affiliate for our proud national partners.

