

TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY CHAMBER

2019 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

ADVOCATING FOR
PIERCE COUNTY'S
BUSINESSES



Tacoma-Pierce County
CHAMBER
Business in Motion

THANK YOU TO OUR VALUED SPONSORS



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR VISIONARIES INVESTMENT LEVEL MEMBERS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES..... 4

GUIDING PRINCIPLES 5

TRANSPORTATION..... 6

HEALTHCARE..... 7

WORKFORCE TRAINING & EDUCATION..... 8

BASIC EDUCATION 9

VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS..... 10

WAGE REFORM..... 11

ENVIRONMENT..... 12

WORKERS COMPENSATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE..... 13

TAX AND FISCAL POLICY..... 14

THE CHAMBER'S GOAL, OBJECTIVE AND PRIORITIES

THE CHAMBER'S GOAL

Grow Businesses and Create Jobs

THE CHAMBER'S OBJECTIVE

The creation, retention and attraction of private sector jobs that benefit the Pierce County economy and local businesses.

THE CHAMBER'S PRIORITIES

5 TOP PRIORITIES

- Protect the Puget Sound Gateway/SR 167 project and embrace additional freight mobility opportunities in Pierce County
- Support continued investment in the University of Washington Tacoma
- Expand the rural sales/use tax exemption for data centers to urban areas
- Incentivize commercial office space development outside King County
- Support legislation that assists the Port of Tacoma and other manufacturing and industrial areas in their efforts to expand and preserve jobs and that streamlines the rules and regulations that affect their operations.

TRANSPORTATION

Ensure continued investment in transportation infrastructure to support business

HEALTHCARE

Support innovative private sector approaches and partnerships to healthcare

WORKFORCE TRAINING & EDUCATION

Invest in workforce training efforts that address talent shortages, workforce needs and skill gaps

BASIC EDUCATION (K-12)

Identify funding for basic education of all students while supporting innovative schools

VETERANS & MILITARY AFFAIRS

Recognize opportunities to improve partnerships with veterans, their spouses, the business community and the military

WAGE AND HOUR REFORM

Support predictable, inclusive & flexible labor law policies and reforms

ENVIRONMENT

Identify opportunities to support innovation with streamlined environmental policies

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Consider policies to reconfigure workers' compensation and unemployment insurance

TAX AND FISCAL POLICY

Support tax policies that encourage investment in Pierce County

THE CHAMBER'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE LEGISLATURE

The Legislature should strive for the creation and retention of private sector jobs by adopting a sustainable budget that prioritizes spending and implements spending controls and reforms that provide long-term financial stability. At the same time the Legislature should focus on adopting legislation that will streamline regulatory policies/rules, promoting job growth, enhancing the business climate, and closing our education and workforce gaps in the globally competitive environment.

LEGISLATION THE CHAMBER WILL SUPPORT

The Chamber will support legislation that positively impacts Pierce County's economy, promotes job growth and enhances the business climate so that all Pierce County businesses can be successful. The Chamber will support globally competitive policies that attract private investment, fund STEM education and workforce development, build infrastructure, and decrease the regulatory burden on businesses.

TRANSPORTATION

ENSURE INVESTMENT IN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS BUSINESS

The transportation network is the lifeblood of our community. It delivers people and goods throughout our region and the world. Improving these connections are key to maintaining a competitive edge in the world economy. To achieve this, the Chamber will

- Protect the Gateway/SR 167 project, its funding, and the reforms adopted to implement the overall Transportation Package adopted by the 2015 legislature and support efforts to shorten the final delivery date. The Chamber will support the Project's early implementation by supporting legislative proposals that continue the Project's on-time progress, authorize the necessary tolling on the Corridor expedite funding for the Project, and ensure Project cost savings are reinvested in the Corridor.
- Support road repair and methods for reducing road congestion so as to enable easier access to businesses including increased bus and light rail.
- Ask the legislature to reduce the patchwork regulatory systems that cause inefficient use of our transportation and by providing uniform state licensing of rideshare operations with common statewide standards.
- Support local transportation infrastructure policies and investments for Pierce County that improve freight mobility, provide congestion relief and system(s) reliability.
- Support legislation that encourages the use of multimodal commutes including the continuation of the commute trip reduction [CTR] credit for businesses that provide benefits to their employees to ease traffic congestion and create increased road capacity.
- Support the priorities, funding and implementation strategies from the WDOT SR 162 Study including completion of the design and construction work for the SR 410/SR162 interchange.

HEALTHCARE

SUPPORT INNOVATIVE PRIVATE SECTOR APPROACHES AND PARTNERSHIPS TO HEALTHCARE AND BEHAVIORIAL HEALTH

Healthcare is not only a critical service; it is also a major sector of the Pierce County economy. With roughly 30,000 people in Pierce County working in this area, it is one of the major sources of wages for our region. As the methods of providing and paying for care change, we must be flexible enough to respond while not placing increased burdens on our employers and their employees. While increasing access to medical services is a major goal of the Affordable Care Act, lowering costs and keeping coverage affordable for consumers and employers is also part of the Triple Aim (Better health means improved outcomes; better care means improved quality equals lower costs). Policymakers should balance access with cost containment measures so that coverage remains affordable for both the consumer and employers. For Pierce County specifically, the behavioral health needs in our community have grown and we need to address the complex and complicated items surrounding this need. To accomplish this, the Chamber will

- Oppose legislation that increases the cost of healthcare coverage borne by businesses and individuals.
- Support legislative efforts to encourage innovative, private sector approaches to cost containment, including health care cost transparency.
- Support policies that encourage, enhance or expand medical and behavioral health services - , especially in the rural areas of Pierce County.
- Ask the legislature to preserve Association Health Plans (AHPs) as a viable market option for small business to provide affordable healthcare to their employees.
- Ask the legislature to void adoption of policies that impose duplicative governing structures, mandates, and restrictions on the ability of providers to care for their patients, regardless of their income status.
- Support legislative strategies for increasing recruitment of health care professionals.

WORKFORCE TRAINING & EDUCATION

INVEST IN WORKFORCE TRAINING EFFORTS THAT ADDRESS TALENT SHORTAGES AND SKILL GAPS

Employers are choosing where to locate in part due to the availability of a skilled workforce. To maintain competitiveness, we must continue to invest in workforce training and educational opportunities beyond K-12. The Chamber believes policies and investments that address talent shortages in key industry sectors that support local flexibility in implementing workforce development and job training programs through Pierce County based entities including the workforce development councils, school districts, community based organizations, community and technical colleges, universities, and local apprenticeship programs. To do this, the Chamber will

- Support programs that foster alignment of education curriculum, including career and technical educational opportunities, with industry needs and increase funding to skilled trades and vocational certifications – especially in the health care, building and construction trades and behavioral health areas.
- Support expansion of University of Washington Tacoma to better serve residents outside of the Seattle area, including their capital budget design and construction funding requests.
- Ask the legislature to expand the State Student Need Grant for overall higher education funding.
- Ask the legislature to boost student success and employability by increasing investments and promoting policies that support work based learning that includes real life work experience.
- Support policies and legislation that expands and emphasizes job training in high demand fields with emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curricula. Maintain the current construction tax structures that dedicate dollars to counties for educational purposes.

BASIC EDUCATION (K-12)

IDENTIFY FUNDING FOR BASIC EDUCATION OF ALL STUDENTS WHILE SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS

A skilled workforce starts with basic K-12 education. Furthermore, quality workers are often choosing where to reside based on the quality of the educational opportunities for their families. We must ensure that schools continue to provide high quality education through innovation by providing them with sufficient resources. To achieve this the Chamber will

- Support the state constitutional requirement for provision of basic education for all children so that an appropriate allocation of resources and corresponds to expectations of such funding - such as local control, performance reviews, higher pay for positions of higher demand, and the like.
- Ask that the Legislature properly prioritize career and technical education within the K-12 curriculum.
- Ask the legislature to prioritize capital and operational funding in programs that have demonstrated an ability to enhance student learning that are coupled with clear expectations of outcomes and performance measures.
- Support legislation that encourages innovative learning models, like Charter Schools, and provides the greatest student achievement and performance-based management policies for teachers and principals.

VETERANS & MILITARY AFFAIRS

RECOGNIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH VETERANS, BUSINESS AND THE MILITARY

Joint Base Lewis-McChord is a major economic driver for Pierce County as its single largest employer. Fortunately, we are also one of the preferred locations of transitioning service members. This gives a great opportunity to show our support for federal investment and retain a high quality workforce. To do this, the Chamber will

- Ask the legislature to improve support for veteran's and their family members' transition into the civilian workforce and higher education like granting college credits for previous military work, training or experience and streamlining the transfer of professional certificates and licensures of service members and their spouses from other states.
- Support funding for "clear zone" studies and purchases to reduce encroaching land uses located within the McChord Field Clear Zone.
- Advocate for community compatible land use proposals to support the military mission of defense installations identified in the 2005 BRAC Report and the JBLM Joint Land Use Study (JLUS).
- Support opportunities to increase resources that match employers with military spouses and transitioning service members.

WAGE, HOUR & PAID LEAVE

SUPPORT PREDICTABLE, INCLUSIVE & FLEXIBLE LABOR LAW POLICIES AND REFORMS

The Pierce County and South Sound economies are complex and diverse. As different as one business is to the next, so too are its employees' needs. Each business strives to meet the needs of its unique employees in its unique way. The Legislature must keep in mind that what makes sense for one business does not always make sense for all businesses. To accomplish this, the Chamber will

- Advocate for legislation that preserves the paid family and medical leave requirements adopted by the 2018 legislature and legislation that recognizes the diversity of our state, its employers and its employees.
- Support wage reform that includes all wages paid and reported as income on employee W-2s.
- Support local labor/employment law pre-emption and phase-in periods for labor law reforms that allow business to plan their growth for years down the road.

ENVIRONMENT

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT INNOVATION AND STREAMLINED ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

Our natural environment is a major driver of our local economy from timber to tourism to drinking water. With Washington businesses' share of the greenhouse gas emissions decreasing over the last 20 years, they should be applauded for helping the economy grow while decreasing impacts. Washington must continue to encourage innovation in sustainability rather than new regulatory burdens and taxes. State policy makers should not be more aggressive than their counterparts in other states. Avoid adopting policies that will adversely impact the construction industry, our utilities and our transportation infrastructure. Enactment of additional policies to regulate Green House Gas (GHG) emissions threatens investments, especially capital investments, in Washington's economy. The Chamber will

- Oppose efforts to impose GHG policies that go beyond those required by the Federal Clean Air Act, like carbon tax schemes.
- Support efforts to expand upon Washington's current innovation sectors by supporting research and development for new and emerging technologies that reduce GHG and create jobs in Pierce County.
- Support policies that improve and incentivize the use of alternative fuels and the infrastructure necessary to supply those fuels in Washington.
- State government land use and environmental review processes should be streamlined to the fullest extent possible to eliminate unnecessary delay, duplication, and expense.
- Support policies that incentivize and further the safe, reliable and efficient use of electricity and natural gas transportation in Washington state to ensure that these alternative fuels are taxed in parity with traditional transportation fuels.
- Ask the legislature to place greater emphasis on environmental policies providing technical assistance to the regulated community that increase voluntary compliance with existing regulations.
- Support legislation that provides a predictable, cost-effective regulatory pathway to transition away from coal based electricity generation.
- Support reasonable changes to I-937 that support Pierce County businesses and/or utilities and their previous investments made to comply with the Initiative.
- Utilities continue to face a transformational change in their industry, responding to evolving customer expectations and rapidly changing technological advancements. Policies encouraging the use of performance and incentive-based regulation, along with appropriate glide paths and compliance tools - to aide in the reduction of GHG emissions on the electric grid - must be advanced to allow for the transformational changes desired from the utility sector.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

The State employee injury insurance programs have seen cost increases in recent years, consistently outpacing inflation. Washington must keep the costs associated with these programs under control. To do this, the Chamber will

WORKERS' COMPENSATION/L&I EFFICIENCIES

Allow for the right-sizing of Washington's broad statutory definition and coverage of occupation disease by:

- Restoring the original intent of the law that the system cover work-related exposures and conditions;
- Expanding the use and administrative simplicity of the claims resolution settlement option;
- Enhance appropriate claims management authority for retrospective ratings groups and self-insured employers;
- Address the high incidence and cost of occupation disease claims and the extremely complex process for calculating benefit levels;
- Support objective and independent hearing reviews and appeals without agency intervention wherein all agency hearings and appeals will be addressed by an administrative law judge assigned through the Office of Administrative Hearings or a separate independent state agency and not within the agency being reviewed.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Preserve previously adopted legislative changes and oppose increasing unemployment insurance rates.

- Encourage the adoption of cost controls within the unemployment insurance system
- Ask the legislature to avoid unnecessary benefit enhancements and eligibility standards
- Support the maintaining of reasonable reserves and like efforts to reduce the cost to business.

TAX AND FISCAL POLICY

SUPPORT TAX POLICIES THAT ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT IN PIERCE COUNTY AND WASHINGTON STATE

As taxes collected by the State go to fund services the State provides, they also reduce the amount of money that can be reinvested in research, innovation, and staff. Higher taxes not carefully considered can further discourage investment in Washington state. A set of simplified tax policies that targets specific growth sectors while reducing administrative burdens allows for a more acceptable tax code. To do this the Chamber will

- Support efforts to achieve a balanced state budget while promoting economic development opportunities, job growth and strengthened competitiveness.
- Oppose fund transfers from dedicated funds and accounts to the general fund or unrelated programs and purposes. Support efforts that restore previous diversions of these funds.
- Support legislation that equitably applies the sales and use tax abatement currently provided for data center investments in rural counties in nonrural counties.
- Support tax code administrative simplification that reduces administrative costs and tax burdens to Pierce County's businesses.
- Require cities with business license requirements to participate in the State's master business license application to reduce duplicate efforts by government and businesses.
- Ask the legislature to retain, extend and expand tax incentives that benefit the economy and support job growth in Pierce County such as Class A office, the urban data center tax incentives and permanently extending the expired (12/31/14) high technology research and development B&O and sales/use tax incentives.
- Making innovative financing methods of capital infrastructure an available economic development tool.
- Support tax and regulatory policies that result in the increased movement of goods through the Puget Sound gateway.
- Encourage capital budget expenditure of tax dollars on trade and export related infrastructure.
- Oppose a Washington state income and capital gains tax.
- Advocate for profits rather than gross revenues to be taxed as a better representation of earnings.
- Restore Associate Development Organization (ADO) funding from \$2.8 million to \$4.3 million per year, funded by the General Fund, and oppose efforts by non-ADOs to access these funds.
- Support legislation that assists the Port of Tacoma and other manufacturing and industrial areas in their efforts to expand and preserve jobs and that streamlines the rules and regulations that affect their operations.

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TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY CHAMBER

**MAKING THE SOUTH SOUND
THE BEST PLACE
TO DO BUSINESS
IN WASHINGTON STATE**

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