



2011 LEGISLATIVE POLICY PLATFORM

GREATER RIVERSIDE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

INTRODUCTION:

This policy platform is adopted by the Governmental Affairs Council (GAC) and the Board of Directors of the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce (the Chamber) to provide a basis for the Chamber to act on local, state and federal government issues and to support a vibrant business environment. The Chamber's Board of Directors has given authority to GAC to approve, on behalf of the Chamber, any positions of "support," "oppose," or "no position" that align with this Policy Platform, subject to the Board of Directors approval or modification.

PUBLIC POLICY PLATFORM

The Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce is the largest and most broadly based business organization in Riverside, and one of the largest Chambers in Southern California. The Chamber develops its policies and practices based on the underlying principle that creating and promoting a pro-business environment at the state and local level will directly enhance the base of private enterprise and quality of life. This base is essential to maintaining a vibrant market-based economy. In determining a position on proposed legislation and other public policy issues, the Chamber is guided by its mission to build a stronger local economy with emphasis on the following areas.

Promote a Pro-Business Environment:

- Facilitate a market-based economy by supporting rational regulatory and tax policies, promoting incentives for business expansion and supporting the efficient operation of regulatory agencies.
- Support infrastructure improvements related to energy, water, air, transportation and communications.
- Promote workforce development by supporting training and education.
- Promote better access to civil courts.

Promote Government Reform:

- Support the elimination of duplication and overlapping agencies.
- Promote improved communication between governing bodies.
- Monitor planning, spending and the implementation and progress of government programs and infrastructure projects.

Maintain an Active and Visible Chamber Presence:

- Actively recruit and support applicants for state and regional appointments and elected office.
- Keep governing bodies and decision makers on local, state and federal levels informed on important regional issues.
- Coordinate community, business, and government support for important regional issues.
- Regularly update members and create opportunities for their involvement and participation in the Chamber's legislative activities.

BUSINESS/REGULATORY REFORM

California, particularly Southern California, relies heavily on its vast natural and human resources and technological infrastructure to attract new investment. However, special assessments, taxes and fees represent a considerable added cost for businesses of all sizes and may deter investments. In order to sustain a climate in which a successful enterprise may be run, the Chamber believes we must reform our tax and tort system to enable and encourage, rather than stifle, growth and productivity among California workers and companies. We must remain competitive where it counts, on the bottom line.

The Chamber Supports:

- Efforts to secure tax incentives for research and development, high-tech innovation, and targeted work-training programs.
- Simplification of federal and state income, banking and corporate tax systems, and efforts to stabilize annual revenues and expenses.
- Efforts to minimize business litigation costs through legislation that limits punitive damages, protects Proposition 64, and encourages employers and employees to choose arbitration to resolve disputes.
- Legislation that protects businesses from frivolous or inequitable litigation.
- Tax conformity to simplify the process of complying with both federal and state tax obligations.
- Adoption of federal changes to bring greater uniformity and predictability to any taxation of e-commerce.
- Efforts to clarify, simplify and safeguard rules for businesses regarding independent contractor tax status.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Unnecessary state and local tax and fee increases affecting the Riverside business community.
- Taxation of a specific industry or group.
- Eroding research and development tax incentives, creating taxes on e-commerce, and other tax law changes that could stifle California's national and global competitiveness and leadership role in high-tech innovation.
- Any attempt to erode Proposition 13 protections for commercial properties.
- Project Labor Agreements, a comprehensive pre-hire collective bargaining agreement that is negotiated between a project's owner and an appropriate labor organization, which sets out the basic terms, and work conditions for that particular project.

EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE PREPAREDNESS

Operating a successful enterprise in the twenty-first century depends on an educated and highly skilled workforce. Access to well-qualified workers, workforce development training and the ability for ongoing training and advancement for existing employees is an ever-increasing challenge for employers. These factors are essential to maintaining a competitive position in a market with rapidly changing technology and increased demands for productivity. A variety of programs are essential to meet these needs, including industry-based training and apprenticeships, career technical education, continuing education, RCCD community college system, California Baptist University, La Sierra University, University of California, Riverside and their respective graduate programs.

Our community is faced with severe reductions for public education programs. It is imperative to have a coordinated effort to leverage the resources available to Riverside and within our region.

Our members play an integral role in advancing educational opportunities with our community by actively working to build awareness and supporting the educational goals of our community, region, state and nation. Our educational leaders are tasked and focused on meeting the graduation and achievement goals set by our state and federal government.

The Chamber Supports:

- Assessments and accountability of education standards.
- Investment in professional training for teachers, especially in the areas of mathematics and science.
- Stabilization and restoration of state funding with control at the local level.
- Creating structures for increased local control of education in matters of funding, effective governance and fiscal flexibility.
- Federal funding for the “Schools and Libraries Program,” which helps local libraries provide critical Internet and technology services.
- Increased support for the attraction and expansion of quality preschool facilities and private and charter schools.
- Policies that address the disparity of funding and revenue limits between K-12 school districts.
- Increased accessibility to current technology to prepare graduates with the tools necessary to meet workforce needs.
- Increased flexibility in K-12 school attendance accounting to allow for online and distance learning opportunities.
- Support maximum funding to expand Career Technical Education (CTE) course offerings and programs, especially with regards to Community College base funding for CTE programs.
- Integration of Career Technical Education curriculum into the core subjects.
- The retraining and professional development of the adult workforce to meet the changing needs of the community.
- Creating greater access to higher education systems including matriculation programs between institutions and CAL and Pell Grant funding.
- Differential funding for specialty programs at the community college level.

- Legislative funding for the continued growth of the University of California Riverside School of Medicine and biomedical program to increase physician supply and to serve the Inland Empire's underserved and increasing health care needs.
- The expansion of nursing and ancillary programs at the community college and university levels to ensure adequate health care staffing.
- Federation for a Competitive Economy (FACE) and other opportunities that increase collaboration between business, education and workforce development.
- Developing the Riverside Regional Technology Transfer Center (R-TECH).
- Communities Learning In Partnership (CLIP) as means to increase the college completion rate of students.
- Support to give greater local funding flexibility to higher education institutions to allow colleges and universities to better address budget reductions.
- Increased funding and legislation that supports the California School for the Deaf Riverside (CSDR) and Sherman Indian High School.
- Mentorship and internship programs in partnership with the business and civic communities to supplement and enhance classroom education.
- Local flexibility and authority in the areas of school employment law.
- A performance evaluation and compensation system to encourage outstanding teachers and administrators, and as a tool for evaluating, remediating, or terminating school professionals who do not perform adequately.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The costs associated with hiring workers, maintaining a safe workplace and complying with governmental regulation represents the largest ongoing cost for many companies. This is particularly true in California, where workers' health care costs, expansion of employer liability and wage hikes continue to increase costs, limit flexibility and confuse both employers and employees. The Chamber encourages the business community to aggressively address and seek reforms for policies that leave California at a competitive disadvantage in business attraction and retention year after year.

The Chamber Supports:

- Greater flexibility in work schedules for individual employees.
- The clarification and simplification of meal and rest period rules.
- Workers compensation reform efforts that balance employer liabilities and provides fair benefits to injured workers.
- Continued monitoring of and support for reform that provides a balance between family care/medical leave and unemployment insurance.
- The preparation of a cost/benefit analysis to ensure economic impacts are weighed before the imposition of regulatory statutes.
- Legislation to help businesses make a good faith effort to correct an alleged Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) violation before being subject to penalties and litigation. We encourage businesses to work with organizations that will help them identify possible areas of access corrections and assist them with applying for grants for such workplace improvements.
- Finding alternatives to minimum wage increases such as improving the educational and vocational skills of low-wage earners to help them move up the wage ladder.
- Laws and government regulations written in plain, simple language for workplace rules to ensure that employers know how to comply with the law and that workers are clearly informed of their rights.

The Chamber Opposes:

- State minimum wage increases.
- Laws and regulations that unfairly penalize employers.
- Efforts to establish the card check method of unionization and take away employees' access to a private ballot.
- Mandated health care costs/liability to employers.

ENVIRONMENT

On September 27, 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an unprecedented law, AB 32 (Nunez; D-Los Angeles), the “California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006” (Chapter 488). This landmark legislation establishes mandatory reporting requirements and caps greenhouse gas emissions produced by industries categorized as significant sources. With the passage of AB 32, California has distinguished itself as the only state that caps carbon. The state’s ambitious effort to curb greenhouse gas emissions will continue to be watched by states and nations across the globe. The Chamber recognizes the need to strike a balance between environmental improvement goals and sustaining economic development in the greater Riverside region. The Chamber will continue to monitor and advocate for sound policies relating to natural resources, waste, contamination and air and water pollution control.

The Chamber Supports:

- Advancing reasonable measures that provide for the equitable implementation of cap and trade, while allowing for continued economic growth.
- Advocating for environmental strategies that allocate responsibility equitably between the region and across all business sectors.
- Advancing the reasonable implementation and streamlining of environmental regulations such as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), so as not to negatively impact businesses.
- Environmentally friendly programs and measures that promote *voluntary* participation, such as:
 - Programs and efforts that encourage industries to participate in reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Policies that are dedicated to both energy conservation and the use of renewable energy.
 - Policies and guidelines using sustainable building design for new projects.
- Programs and initiatives that encourage voluntary phasing-in new “green” technology and provide local governments and business with adequate incentive to support such technology changes.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Green-based regulatory approaches or mandates that are unduly punitive or costly and that would unnecessarily damage the region’s competitiveness or cause significant loss of employment.

HEALTHCARE

There is a recognized and well-documented crisis in healthcare throughout the United States. In Riverside the crisis is compounded by a unique situation of a rapidly increasing and diverse population that is underserved by a shrinking number of physicians, nurses and related healthcare professionals. The Chamber promotes a quality healthcare system that is affordable, accessible and designed to support the overall health of Californians. It is critical to support efforts to contain costs while avoiding unnecessary and costly regulatory controls, including mandates that result in employers not providing healthcare coverage for their employees. The Chamber encourages the business community to actively participate in programs that encourage healthy lifestyles.

The Chamber Supports:

- Monitoring and communicating with legislative bodies the impacts of a federal healthcare proposal/plan on local businesses.
- Health education and available programs that promotes healthy lifestyle choices that can reduce healthcare costs.
- Policies to reduce health care costs and assure that all Americans have access to affordable, quality and efficient healthcare.
- Policies that reduce fraud and abuse within the healthcare system.
- Increased state funding of Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements to providers of healthcare, rather than attempts to further cut current reimbursement rates.
- Policies that encourage continued medical discoveries and innovations that improve quality of care.
- Competitive marketplaces to control pharmaceutical and healthcare plan costs.
- Actions that preserve the current voluntary employer-provided health coverage system.
- Efforts to contain costs by opposing mandates of specific health benefits.
- Legislation to allow employers to offer more affordable benefits plans that allow choices in coverage.
- Federal and state reforms that allow small businesses to obtain group coverage and increased advantages from tax deductible medical care saving accounts and association plans.
- Continued growth and expansion of clinical based education programs to train and retain the number of healthcare professionals in the region.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Proposals to establish a government-mandated health care delivery system that negatively affect local employers.
- Any new taxation to fund healthcare delivery plans.
- Efforts to overturn the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act (MICRA) of 1975, which provides affordable medical malpractice insurance for physicians, thus lowering the cost of healthcare services and increasing their availability.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration issues have a significant impact on California's economy that affect all facets of our commerce and our economy. Immigrants have always and continue to be an essential part of our state and national workforce. Unfortunately, having unsecured borders, lax enforcement of existing laws and the lack of an effective and comprehensive national policy regarding immigration has resulted in a multitude of challenges including high levels of illegal immigration and quotas for legal immigration that are too low to meet the demand for skilled and unskilled labor in the marketplace. To ensure California's future prosperity the Chamber encourages reform to the national immigration policy that includes an earned pathway to legal status by establishing a guest worker program, improvements to the visa program, steps to secure our national borders, and stricter enforcement of existing laws.

The Chamber Supports:

- Establishing a guest worker program that takes into consideration the needs of specific industries in determining time limits for certain workers.
- Providing greater border security through shared responsibility with neighboring countries.
- The provision of adequate resources to establish an earned pathway to legal status and detain and/or deport undocumented/illegal immigrants.
- A shared verification system that interfaces with state, national and international criminal and terrorist databases and appropriate state agencies.
- Penalties on employers and individuals who knowingly hire undocumented/illegal immigrants.
- Improving the efficiency of the visa program based on professional service requirements and market demand while ensuring the protection of opportunities for American workers.
- E-Verify, a voluntary electronic system to assist employers in verifying the employment eligibility of all newly hired employees.

INFRASTRUCTURE

As Riverside seeks to redefine its economic efforts to compete effectively for the future, we must continue to improve our infrastructure, particularly in the areas of energy, water, transportation, and technology. These systems provide the foundation for accelerated business growth, increased capital, job creation, investment, and an improved quality of life. Worthy improvements require smart investment, sound management, and a creative partnership between the public and private sectors. As government budgets continue to shrink, spending priorities will become more difficult to identify. The business community must emphasize the importance of continued infrastructure investment, as well as responsible and rational rate and policy-making decisions.

TRANSPORTATION

The Chamber Supports:

- Promoting fairness and competition for transportation infrastructure funding opportunities based on largest demonstrated need and impact. While this type of criteria is needed for all kinds of projects, it is especially important in evaluating goods movement projects due to the extraordinary impact and stress that international trade places on local transportation systems.
- Engaging the Chamber membership and leadership in policy discussions with local, state and federal representatives as it pertains to options for public/private partnerships and alternate funding for infrastructure improvements.
- The development of alternative transportation solutions as well as innovative means of delivering projects including design-build contracting and expediting of required environmental review processes.
- Facilitating regional support for increased funding for grade separations and additional projects that mitigate the impact of goods movement, such as securing federal funds from the reauthorization of the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equality Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA LU) and state funding from the Proposition 1B Transportation Corridor Improvement Fund program.
- Reauthorization of the Federal Surface Transportation Act and support our congressional delegation to ensure that California receives its fair share of federal transportation dollars. This should include expanded funding of the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program.
- Legislation, tax credits and incentives that promote more efficient goods movement on highways and rail lines in and out of the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the Alameda Corridor East.
- Create business-friendly port policies that restore port trade volumes to previous levels and incentivize economic growth and job creation.
- Advocating for regional transportation facilities and projects.
- Utilizing local sources of aggregate and construction materials in order to make projects more cost-effective.
- Toll roads as additional funding sources for transportation improvements.

WATER

The Chamber Supports:

- Measures that increase water supply and storage facilities within the region and allow for economically feasible water transfers solely within the system.

- Modernizing the Endangered Species Act to allow the development of water infrastructure, water supply conveyance and storage, and water quality projects while protecting the ecosystem.
- Measures to educate businesses on reducing usage and increasing efficiency and/or effectiveness of water conservation efforts, including the use of recycled water.
- Measures that mitigate emerging constituents so as not to impact the development of water infrastructure.

ENERGY

The Chamber Supports:

- State and federal regulations that will preserve the ratemaking authority of publicly owned utilities.
- Measures that promote additional transmission capacity and greater participation in the statewide grid improvement system.
- Support local control by allowing municipalities flexibility to proactively implement programs and policies that best suit the community.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Regulatory approaches or mandates that are unduly punitive or costly and that would unnecessarily damage the region's competitiveness or cause significant loss of employment.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

As one of the fastest growing regions in the country, international trade represents a major economic engine for both local and regional economies. Recognizing the importance of the continued development of international trade, the Chamber of Commerce supports policies that promote the expansion of free and fair trade whenever possible. Strengthening ties and increasing economic opportunities in the world's largest marketplaces is vital to maintaining the state's competitiveness in the global business community.

The Chamber Supports:

- Fair and equitable market access for California products abroad.
- Communicating public policy positions to the state and federal government on international issues of importance to the Riverside business community.
- Legislation that broadens and strengthens relationships and opportunities, while reducing barriers to trade and investment.
- Foreign trade zone programs as a vehicle to maintain global competitiveness.
- Maximizing Riverside's resources to promote and enhance trade and commerce between Riverside and the global marketplace as well as to attract international business to Riverside.
- Informing the Riverside community, including legislators and businesses, about the benefit of trade to the state's local economy.
- The allocation of funding for new customs inspectors dedicated to serving the needs of the Inland Empire.
- The expansion and development of March Air Reserve Base for the purpose of international commerce.
- A balance of international trade and infrastructure.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Disincentives that impede the international competitiveness of California and Riverside businesses.
- Legislation that leads to higher prices, limited choices for consumers and potential job loss in the Inland Empire.
- State and local legislation that imposes sanctions on businesses engaged in international trade and/or conflicts with federal international policies.

The Chamber Supports:

LOCAL

- Technology expansion within the City of Riverside boundaries.
- The uses of eminent domain as a critically important tool and resource for effective redevelopment, to be used only after all alternate avenues have been exhausted.
- Monitoring and assisting in the rational development and implementation of the City of Riverside's Renaissance Initiative.
- The preservation of local governance and the protection of government revenue.
- Urging local preference on bids with the city and county to utilize local businesses.
- Legislation to allow the City of Riverside to operate the California Citrus State Historic Park under a long term operations and maintenance agreement.

COUNTY

- March Joint Powers Authority in developing the joint use of the region.

STATE

- Legislation or ballot measures to return to a supermajority to pass state budgets.

FEDERAL

- Construction or acquisition of a Federal Building and Courthouse to meet the expanding regional business needs of the U.S. Courts and other federal agencies in Riverside-San Bernardino counties.
- The continued support and expansion of federal judgeships in ratio to the population and jurisdiction served.
- The repeal of Section 9006 of the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act", which requires 1099 information reporting by businesses with respect to non-credit card purchases of \$600 or more of goods or services from another business in a calendar year.
- Additional expansion of March Air Reserve Base and Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, Detachment Corona.
- Seeking federal funding and direction to relocate the National Guard Armory from Fairmount Park to March Air Reserve Base.