

Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce & Manufacturers Association of the Southern Tier

2017-2018 Public Policy Priorities

Introduction

One of the primary objectives of the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers Association of the Southern Tier is to be an advocate for business. The overriding goal is to create a climate of growth and success for all businesses and residents of Chautauqua County.

There are a wide variety of issues faced by the business community throughout the year. The following priorities have been developed to guide the organization's course of action and outcomes throughout the 2017-2018 year.

Top Priority

- **Directing Members to Resources and Tools for Mitigating Taxes**
 - **Local Action:**
 - Assure members are cognizant of tax incentive programs such as 45B.
 - Identify and communicate the resources available for businesses to mitigate taxes.
 - **State**
 - Advocate that tax assessment challenges be handled by small claims court versus superior court. Taking a challenge to superior court can become costly.

Priority Projects

- **Advancing High Quality Education Aligned with Regional Workforce Needs**
 - **Local Action:** We will promote and encourage local initiatives that help increase the quality of education and align education with the needs of employers.
 - Support the work of the Chautauqua County Education Coalition that is aligning resources and building capabilities to meet the evolving workforce requirements of the community. Advocate for funding and support of catalytic projects that emerge from the Coalition
 - **State Action:** We will work with our community partners to advocate at the NYS level for investments that support evidence based initiatives that enhance our regional workforce.
 - Support investments in early childhood programming that improves long term educational outcomes including Parents as Teachers and Quality Stars.
 - Support the state's commitment to enhanced education standards.
 - Support New York State P-TECH program sustainability and expansion.
 - Support funding streams for incumbent employment training.
 - Support the continued development of CTE and STEM education initiatives.
 - Advocate for a streamlined process to approve college programming through SUNY and the NYS Department of Education to help Universities and community colleges be responsive to the needs of employers.
 - **Federal Action:** We will work with our community partners to advocate at the federal level for investments that support evidence based initiatives that enhance our regional workforce.
 - Support investments in early childhood programming that improves long term

educational outcomes including Parents as Teachers and Quality Stars.

- Support efforts to make career focused certificates and non-credit programming eligible for Pell Grant funding.

- **Improving Water Quality and the Health of Our Lakes to Support Our Local Economies**

- **Local Action:** We will advocate locally for the health of our lakes and communicate the economic importance of the lakes to our businesses and communities.
 - We encourage and support the formation of the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance as a means of bringing together important stakeholders around a strategic effort to preserve Chautauqua Lake as long as this organization remains accountable to the goals that it has established.
 - We support and will advocate for the development of sewer infrastructure completion around Chautauqua Lake.
 - We support and will advocate for the implementation of the Northern Chautauqua County Inter-municipal Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan.
 - We support and will advocate for the formation of the Northern Chautauqua regional water system.
- **State Action:** We will advocate at the State level for sound initiatives that will improve and maintain the quality of our lakes and maintain them as economic engines for our region.
- **Federal Action:** We will advocate at the Federal level for sound initiatives that will improve and maintain the quality of our lakes and maintain them as economic engines for our region.

- **Maintaining Focus on Upstate Economy**

- **Local Action:** We will encourage and support a clear strategic direction for County Economic Development Efforts with a focus on the following priorities:
 - Support Wind Projects that are economically feasible
 - Protect the Western New York Hydro Allocation allotment
 - Support investment in Main Street Programs
- **State Action:** We will communicate the importance of critical economic development efforts of Chautauqua County at the State level.
 - Support the agenda of the Fair Apportionment of Infrastructure Revenue (FAIR) committee to deliver adequate infrastructure funding for our region.
 - Active participation in the Regional Economic Development Council process
- **Federal Action:** We will communicate the importance of critical economic development efforts of Chautauqua County at the Federal level.

- **Strengthening our Cities**

- **Local Action:**
 - City of Jamestown
 - Encourage the City to focus on long range economic growth and financial planning.
 - Maintain affordable electrical utility rates in the greater Jamestown Area.
 - Discourage the City of Jamestown from using the BPU financial resources as a means of subsidizing City operations.
 - City of Dunkirk
 - Encourage the City to focus on long range economic growth and

financial planning.

- **State Action:** Identify collaborative opportunities to work with Cities to encourage regulatory changes and/or secure funding to help address City challenges.
- **Federal Action:** Identify collaborative opportunities to work with Cities to encourage regulatory changes and/or secure funding to help address City challenges.

- **Achieving NYS Mandate Reform and Regulatory Changes that Support Business Growth: Policy Positions on Specific New York State Government Reform and Investment Opportunities**

1. Maintain Budget Discipline

Adopt a sixth-consecutive on-time state budget that keeps state operating spending growth under two percent. New York's fiscal discipline has allowed the state to adopt important tax reforms and avoid the significant budget challenges – and pressures for new or increased taxes – faced by a number of other states.

2. Small Business Tax Reform

Following on state and New York City corporate tax reform adopted in 2014 and 2015, adopt business tax reductions for small businesses organized as pass-through entities, including Sub-S corporations, LLCs and partnerships, by increasing the business income tax exemption under the personal income tax and decreasing the corporate franchise tax rate for small businesses.

3. Worker's Compensation Reform

We will work with State leaders to encourage reform including reworking the guidelines for determining the schedule of loss of use awards and encourage longer use of preferred networks for medical care. Worker's Compensation premium increases have been driven by higher maximum benefits which have doubled since 2007 and became fully indexed to the average state wage. Worker's compensation costs are now among the highest in the nation. Fully realize the cost savings of duration caps on permanent partial disability benefits, by generally commencing duration caps at two years after an injury. Finalize and implement administrative updates to medical guidelines on scheduled loss of use awards, and mandate the use of panel providers for the first ninety days of medical treatment. Reform indexing of maximum benefits to reflect regional average weekly wages.

4. Infrastructure Investments

Dedicate the nearly \$2 billion in remaining financial settlement "windfall funds" to infrastructure programs, including roads, bridges, water and sewer projects. Assure a fully funded road and bridge program in conjunction with adopting a five-year MTA capital plan. Increase funding for the Environmental Protection Fund to support important programs including pollution prevention, agricultural business projects, green energy and others.

5. Energy Assessment

Repeal Section 18-a energy gross receipts assessment, effective 1/1/16, avoiding the collection of an additional \$200 million from business and residential ratepayers. Adopt measures to provide price protection to large energy consumers from energy assessments. Adopt a self-directed energy program with a cap on percentage energy assessments as a percentage of energy assessments. Exclude large energy consumers from the cost associated with residential customer system upgrades

associated with the Reforming Energy Vision.

6. Energy Infrastructure Investment

Expand access to natural gas for manufacturing facilities, including: dedicate state energy assessment resources to pipeline extensions; expedite the state review of applications for expansion of natural gas infrastructure; authorize real property tax exemptions for the increased assessed value attributable to new natural gas distribution facilities; and repeal the outdated requirement that the Department of Transportation creates certified LNG transport routes.

7. SEQRA

Adopt legislative reforms to the State Environmental Quality Review Act to provide more certainty in project reviews, including: clarifying the standard for complete applications; heightening the standard for issues to be subject to administrative adjudication; making adherence to state review timetables mandatory; and assuring application of statutory and regulatory standards.

8. Scaffold Law Reform

Reform the antiquated Scaffold Law by adopting a standard that assigns comparative negligence similar to that in place for other forms of liability. Currently the Scaffold Law allows for absolute liability.

9. UI Experience Rating

With the state's UI fund returning to long term solvency, we would like to see restoration of the five UI tax table rungs repealed in Chapter 57, Laws of 2013, to reflect the lower costs imposed by stable employers. These applied to employers with positive account percentages above 10.75 percent.

10. Contract Procurement

Update and extend the "Procurement Stewardship Act;" adopt reforms that provide post-award debriefings for unsuccessful bidders; streamline MWBE certification and recertification process and revisit the net worth threshold.

11. Reject Wage/Benefit Mandates

Oppose new pay mandates, including significant additional increases in the minimum wage; authorization for municipal-level minimum wages; extension of public works prevailing wage to private sector activities; new paid leave mandates.

12. Taylor Law Reform

We will advocate for reforms to the Taylor law. The Taylor has had the effect of placing key decisions concerning salary and benefits of local public safety employees outside the control of local officials and property taxpayers. There are four areas that would mitigate municipal workforce costs including defining the 'ability to pay', prohibit consideration of non-compensation issues, limit access to binding arbitration and add transparency to the arbitration process. Repeal of the Triborough Amendment that prohibits a public employer from changing any provision of an expired labor agreement until a new agreement is reached.

13. Property Tax Cap

We will advocate in favor of making the property tax cap permanent. With some exceptions, the State's Property Tax Cap limits the amount local governments and most school districts can increase property taxes to the lower of two percent; or the rate of inflation.

14. Medicaid

Medicaid is a significant cost driver of County property tax rates. Advocate for New York State's full takeover of the financial responsibility of Medicaid. Encourage that the bill include provisions to reform the Medicaid program and system.

Maintaining and Building Coalitions

We will advance CCCC's and MAST's mutually cooperative relationship with national, state and local business organizations particularly around those initiatives that strive to ease the overall tax burden and governmental mandates on business. This is not a fully inclusive list of advocacy organizations as there are many other local, state and federal organizations that may share a common objective on a particular issue. We will remain flexible and work with a variety of organizations as the opportunity presents itself.

Advocacy Partners

US Chamber of Commerce	National Association of Manufacturers
Business Council of New York State, Inc.	Chamber Alliance of New York State
Unshackle Upstate	WNY Chamber Alliance
Buffalo-Niagara Partnership	Manufacturers Alliance of New York State *
Buffalo Niagara Manufacturers Association	

**Organizations on which the Chamber has board representation.*

Advocacy Coalitions

New Yorkers for Affordable Clean Energy - BCNYS	
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