



GREATER WACO CHAMBER

2015

Legislative Focus



WacoChamber.com

Legislative Policy Statement

As an organization dedicated to the economic well-being of McLennan County, the Greater Waco Chamber actively seeks to promote policies that are conducive to the further development of this region.

In accordance with its by-laws, the Chamber shall in its activities be non-partisan, non-sectional and non-sectarian; and shall take no part in or lend its influence or facilities either directly or indirectly to the nomination, election or appointment of any candidate for office in city, county, state or nation; and, shall not hold any partisan meetings of a political nature within the premises occupied by or under the control of the Chamber.

Believing that informed individual citizens are more effective by directly communicating with duly-elected representatives in the State Legislature and Congress rather than through the means of resolutions passed by organizations, it shall be the policy first to consider urging such communications rather than or, certainly, in addition to such resolutions.

Individual members may propose designated policies on issues within the scope of the Chamber's interests.

When such proposals are made, they shall be referred to the appropriate Chamber committee for fair and just consideration and recommendation. The Board of Directors shall have the responsibility of determining the eligibility and suitability of policy proposals.



**Legislative Committee Team:
Working for Business and Our Community**

2015 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair
David Lacy

<i>Past Chair</i> Debbie Keel	<i>GWC President/CEO</i> Matt Meadors
<i>Baylor Scott & White Hillcrest Medical Center</i> Glenn Robinson	<i>Baylor University</i> Rochonda Farmer-Neal
<i>City of Waco</i> Mayor Malcolm Duncan	<i>City of Waco</i> Dale Fisseler
<i>City of Woodway</i> Mayor Donald Baker	<i>Education Service Center Region 12</i> Dr. Jerry Maze
<i>GWC Senior VP, Economic Development</i> Kris Collins	<i>M. Lipsitz & Co.</i> Tom Salome
<i>McLennan Community College</i> Dr. Johnette McKown	<i>McLennan County Superintendents</i> Dr. Sharon Shields
<i>McLennan County</i> Judge Scott Felton	<i>Oldcastle Materials, Inc.</i> Ryan Lindsey
<i>Providence Healthcare Network</i> Brett Esrock	<i>Sheldon Real Estate</i> Rick Sheldon
<i>Texas State Technical College</i> Rob Wolaver	<i>Waco Business League</i> Dr. Roland Goertz
<i>WRS Group</i> Scott Salmans	<i>GWC Senior VP, Community Development</i> Ken Hampton
Focus Committees	<i>GWC Director of Community Development</i> J.D. Windham, Jr
Regional Relationship Organizations	



2015 FOCUS COMMITTEES

Working committees to drive economic development, education, healthcare, transportation, water and environmental priorities.

Economic Development

Education

Healthcare

Transportation

Air Services

Transportation

Water



Education, Public Schools—

To meet the staffing needs of our businesses and institutions and to prepare future generations to be productive citizens, the Greater Waco Chamber supports programs to ensure that every child is prepared for school and every student graduates. The Greater Waco Chamber supports Early Childhood development as the most valuable and cost-effective time to invest in education and development of our children's success. As such we support the following:

Establish a system of funding that meets or exceeds the national average for Pre-K-12 schools, including:

- Full-day Pre-K for ALL students,
- Assistance to school districts for facility acquisition and debt service,
- A funding stream to support collaborative efforts between universities/colleges and Pre-K-12 public schools.

COLLABORATION/ADMINISTRATION:

Develop an improved system for collaborative efforts between universities/colleges and PreK-12 public schools.

Align deadlines, state assessment reporting and notification requirements for teacher contracts.

Support school districts in the design and implementation of career and technology curricula, including:

- Dual credit CTE courses,
- Entry level certifications for high school students,
- Providing flexibility to use CTE courses for graduation plans,
- Reducing barriers such as six-hour concurrent dual-credit rule,
- Partnerships with business/industry/employers in the community.

Higher Education—

Waco is home to three outstanding institutions of higher education: Baylor University, McLennan Community College and Texas State Technical College Waco. Collectively, these institutions are essential to the economic, social and cultural strength of Waco and the surrounding Central Texas region through direct employment opportunities, innovative research, collaborative industry partnerships, cultural enrichment, lifelong community learning opportunities, and recreational and athletic programming. Waco's three institutions of higher education share a variety of unique partnerships and collaborations in support of



their respective students, the local community and Central Texas. Waco is poised to leverage its institutions of higher education along with its unique natural and commercial assets to produce vibrant economic growth by supporting existing and future businesses, organizations and attracting new, innovative and diverse industry partners. State support for Waco's institutions of higher learning is vital to the economic, social and cultural strength of Waco. This support is also vital to the surrounding communities as well as the state of Texas.

- **Baylor University**

Baylor University is a private Christian university and a nationally ranked research institution characterized as having “high research activity” by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Its mission is to educate men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community. The university, located in Waco, Texas, has a total enrollment of 15,364 students (12,918 undergraduate and 2,221 graduate/professional students). By blending interdisciplinary research with educational excellence and a committed faculty and staff, Baylor serves students from all 50 states and more than 85 countries. More than 85 percent of Baylor students remain in Texas after graduating.

For many students, accessibility and affordability is the key to attending an institution of higher education. In order to improve the success of our students, Texas has implemented several initiatives such as bridge programs and the Tuition Equalization Grant (TEG). With the bridge programs, Baylor is able to partner with community colleges such as McLennan Community College to provide a seamless transition for students to continue their higher education. Recently, Baylor entered into articulation agreements, “Baylor Bound” programs with three community colleges with the aspiration of entering into at least 10 such agreements around the state in the next five years. These agreements are complete with Major Academic Plans for each major. Resources and support of these programs are needed to increase the available workforce in Texas and opportunity for students.

It is vital that the Tuition Equalization Grant (TEG) program remain in place and is fully funded. Funding for the TEG program dropped more than 20 percent in 2011. The TEG permits first generation, lower income students the ability to attend private universities and ensures the diversity on Texas private institutions campuses. These state grants provide need-based scholarships to Texas Resident students attending independent and private universities including Baylor University. More than 3,200 students will receive TEG awards in the 2014-2015 academic year.

Continued strong support of the TEG program will ensure that young Texans



with limited financial means have access to a world-class private university and unlimited promise to better their personal lives and their communities.

- **McLennan Community College**

McLennan Community College (MCC) enrolls nearly 9,000 students each fall semester and has University Center partners that enroll nearly 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students on the MCC campus. The college represents Waco's primary allied health workforce provider with approximately 70 percent of nurses and other allied health professionals receiving their training from MCC. The college also provides a qualified workforce in such areas as emergency services fields, business, human services and computer information technology. More than half of MCC students enroll in programs preparing for transfer institutions across the state including Baylor University, Texas A&M University, Tarleton State University, University of Texas at Arlington, Texas Tech University, Texas State University and others.

The college's revenue from State appropriations has dropped from 75 percent in 1980 to 21 percent in 2014. This dramatic decline has occurred during a time that enrollment grew 140 percent from 4,249 students in 1980 to more than 9,000 students in 2013.

In addition to State appropriations, the college receives funding from the Texas Workforce Commission's Skill Development Fund to provide customized training to meet the dynamic and unique needs of its local employers. The MCC Corporate training department recently provided training to 4,800 employees from 10 major Waco employers.

State funding is critical to ensure tuition remains affordable for the many low income students pursuing higher education and a better way of life. Increases in state funding will ensure that MCC remains affordable for all students and will ensure that it continues to implement its many innovative initiatives to serve the higher education needs of Waco and the surrounding communities.

- **Texas State Technical College**

Waco is home to the Texas State Technical College (TSTC) System offices and the TSTC Waco campus. TSTC Waco is a critical partner in technical training for industry, both locally and statewide. TSTC is the only state supported technical college system in Texas with the Waco college offering associate degrees and certificate programs in critical and emerging technologies while producing more than 30,000 graduates in its 42-year history.

TSTC Waco utilizes its advanced labs to produce the highest number of associate degree graduates in Texas for engineering technologies and the



second highest for computer science among two year colleges. To continue its mission of offering an affordable and viable service to Texans and Texas employers will take support. By continuing to invest in Texas State Technical College, the state will be making one of its most important investments of all. That would be a highly skilled and trained workforce to ensure the economic viability of Texas' future.

Health Care—

Texas hospitals are powerful economic engines for communities all across our state; in fact, our hospitals help drive our state's economic growth and create additional value for our communities, providing capital investment and good-paying jobs. In our state alone, hospitals employ nearly 400,000 Texans with a payroll of nearly \$30 billion each year. Here in Waco and McLennan County, our hospitals employ nearly 5,000 people with an annual payroll of more than \$275 million.

The Greater Waco Chamber supports our hospitals in asking that the 84th Legislature:

- Support expanded health coverage for uninsured Texans in a manner specific to, and acceptable by, Texas and Texans (similar to the attempts currently underway in Arkansas and Arizona) to ensure the burden of indigent healthcare costs do not fall unfairly on local governments, hospitals or physicians;
- Oppose efforts to impose increased responsibility for the costs of Medicaid on local government; and
- Support allowing funding for the 1115 Waiver process to follow the patient population being served.

Economic Development—

The progress Texas had made in the past decade clearly shows the importance of its focus on economic development. Texas' tax structure, along with fair and rational policies, has enabled the attraction of businesses and potential employers nationwide. With the success Texas has enjoyed, it is important to remain steadfast in its economic development efforts and lead the nation both in investment and job growth.

To continue strengthening economic opportunities for job growth, entrepreneurship and competitive capital expansions, Texas must preserve and expand critical economic development tools, including those detailed in priorities of the Texas Economic Development Council Legislative Agenda. Greater Waco



also prioritizes statute revisions to encourage advancement of target industry sectors: advanced manufacturing, aerospace, health care, professional and financial services and supply chain.

Maintain both the Texas Enterprise Fund (with restored funding to a minimum of \$150 million per biennium) and Emerging Technology Fund (with restored funding to a minimum of \$140 million per biennium) to promote job creation and high growth entrepreneurial investment.

Revise the Texas Enterprise Fund to increase responsiveness to companies looking at Texas for possible investments. The current process allows 90 days or more for leadership application review. Many competing states provide responses in two weeks, or less, putting Texas at a competitive disadvantage.

Restore funding for Skills Development Fund to the 2009 level of \$90 million per year in support of customized job training partnerships between businesses and community colleges. Since 2012, this important tool has helped McLennan Community College secure \$2.7 million for customized training programs supporting 10 regional employers and more than 4,800 jobs.

Increase the flexibility of the Skills Development Fund to allow for additional training opportunities, including apprenticeship programs, job shadowing, skills gap training and others for both new employees and incumbent workers.

Continue funding the Spaceport Trust Fund (minimum \$15 million per biennium) for additional support of projects that increase Texas' spaceport footprint and serve as a catalyst for continued space industry growth.

Increase the allocations for Texas Enterprise Zone Program, the state's primary business retention and expansion tool, to a minimum of 200 designations per biennium.

Several state agencies affecting business are slated for sunset review including Texas Workforce Commission and Texas Workforce Investment Council. Participation by business leaders in sunset hearings will help ensure that our state remains competitive for new businesses. Our Chamber will seek to represent our business members and the Greater Waco region by participating in these hearings.

A primary reason for Texas' success in job creation in the past several years compared to other states is that Texas has a common sense business climate. A business climate where state and federal government regulations are created and enforced in a common sense way both enforces the area for which they are intended and works with the business community and the state's economy.



Before more and new regulations are created, an effort should be in place to learn if existing and enforced regulations do not satisfactorily solve the issue at hand.

Transportation—

An adequate transportation system is absolutely essential to the movement of people, goods and services and the preservation of economic opportunity in Texas. All modes of transportation that support our economy and jobs deserve support, as well as maintenance and modernization of our existing infrastructure. All methods of finance and alternative methods of state revenues will be essential to providing all levels of government the tools to plan, design and implement transportation projects that serve the needs of our state and region. We support priorities that:

1. Prioritize safety, connectivity and contextual considerations in local transportation network investments to facilitate private sector investment.
2. General Policy Priorities
 - a. Allow for greater flexibility to locally fund transportation projects.
 - b. Prioritize transportation infrastructure investments and plans that encourage private sector reinvestment and create more jobs locally.
 - c. Advance initiatives to accelerate investment in high/er speed rail to Greater Waco.
3. Fund and Complete I-35 Expansion through Waco
 - a. Review and update design for section through Waco.
 - b. Access ramp review.
 - c. Emphasis on quality design aesthetics and multimodal crossings at priority activity centers.
 - d. Main lane signature bridge to complement frontage bridges.

Environmental Protection/Air and Water Quality—

Greater Waco has water and air quality issues that are exacerbated by conditions outside our county. We are dependent on the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to monitor our air and water and take action to ensure its quality.

Air—To protect the attainment status of our community and other growing Texas regions, it is crucial to secure continued appropriation for programs aimed at



reducing mobile source emissions, such as Texas Emissions Reduction Plan and Aircheck Program, formerly Low Income Vehicle Repair Assistance, Retrofit and the Accelerated Vehicle Retirement Program.

Water—Texas is facing water challenges due to our economic growth.

Protection of water quality and existing water rights is a critical priority. We must further the reach of existing resources, programs to support conservation, reuse and recycling of water resources.

Huge increases in Texas population are projected for the future. The Texas Water Development Board (TWBD) anticipates that by 2060 the Texas population will nearly double, growing from 24 million to 46 million. As a consequence by 2060:

- Water demands will increase by 22 percent, while
- Water supplies will decline by 10 percent

The Texas water challenge must be addressed now. Failure to do so poses risks to the state's economy as well as natural resources. Actions to protect and conserve water and to increase supplies of useable water are essential.

We support the state in a water plan that will provide infrastructure to augment water supplies, treatment, processing and flood control.

Support Texas Water Development Board Plan

Long-range water planning is necessary for development of adequate water supplies by ecologically and financially sound means.

The Greater Waco Chamber supports:

- Protecting water as a precious natural resource
- Funding development of water supplies in ways both ecologically and financially sound
 - Maximize conservation and reuse.
 - Maintain and strengthen water supply and quality for the Greater Waco area.





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