



## Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Waco Chamber is a well-respected, high-profile economic and community development organization advancing a visionary agenda for economic growth and quality of life.

**Staff:** Professional team with 21 full-time employees, plus 2+ interns throughout the year.

**Facility:** \$4.3 million first green chamber building in America (LEED-Gold certified)

**Organizational Structure:** A comprehensive approach to mission fulfillment.

- Economic Development, includes housing and staffing for
  - Waco McLennan County Economic Development Corporation
  - Waco Industrial Foundation
  - McLennan County Spaceport Development Corporation
  - Foreign-Trade Zone #246 Administrator
- Organizational Development:
  - 1,600+ member businesses and non-profit organizations
- Public Policy
  - Regional Collaboration, spearheading 10-chamber McLennan County Chamber Alliance
  - State and Federal Advocacy

### Did You Know?

- Waco has one lake, two rivers and a 416-acre park with hike and bike trails near our vibrant downtown
- Waco was voted the No. 3 destination in Texas by *Texas Highways* magazine
- Waco is home to five institutions of higher learning, providing a skilled workforce for diverse industry sectors.



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Scott M. Felton,  
McLennan County Judge



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2017

# Federal Policy Priorities



# 2017 | Federal Policy Priorities

## Public Policy Initiative

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.

Our public policy initiative includes establishing positions on issues that impact our members and the overall community and economic development of the area; educating elected and appointed officials about these issues; actively educating the membership and the community on possible policy impact; and encouraging membership involvement in the Chamber's advocacy efforts and programs.

The Public Policy Committee provides a voice for Chamber members in economic, legislative and policy issues that impact community and economic development. The role of the committee is to be a liaison for our business community with

local, state and federal officials and various government entities. Listening to our members, we inform, educate, engage and advocate for businesses to our legislators on issues of importance for a thriving business environment for our community. While this work will always be non-partisan, it is political in nature. We work to engage elected and appointed officials of any party to educate and advocate for our community.

## Public Policy Committee: Working for Business and Our Community

Informing, educating, engaging and advocating for the Greater Waco business community regarding relevant public policy for community and economic development and growth.

## Economic Development

A focus on maintaining a business-friendly climate at all levels of government, and advocating for statewide programs, incentives and industries that strengthen economic opportunities for job growth, entrepreneurship and competitive capital expansions.

### Workforce

- Observe and adopt successful policies and programs that bridge the skills gap and ensure a dynamic workforce development system for the future.
- Support opportunities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to reboot sector-based partnerships that are employer led and advocate for demand-driven workforce development and training programs.

### Tax & Regulatory Reform

- Support permanent or long-term extension for tax credit programs that promote development and innovations, especially the Historic, New Market and Research and Development Tax Credits.
- Address tax reform with key goals of significantly reducing the corporate tax rate to levels comparative with international competitors and reducing the cost of compliance allowing companies to reinvest in themselves and workers.

### Small Business & Entrepreneurship

- Continued support for programs and agencies that aid small businesses and entrepreneurs, or foster community development and economic impact, including SBA, EDA, USDA, NIH, CDBG, MEP and NIST.
- Advance legislation that provides greater access to capital, such as the State Small Business Credit Initiative, as well as continuing support for existing access to capital programs like SBA's 504 and 7(a) programs.

### International Opportunities

- Continued funding for the SelectUSA program to support foreign direct investment in local economies across the US.
- Seek out new ways, such as trade agreements and a strong Export-Import Bank that protects American businesses, to expand access to foreign markets for American made goods and services to continue to grow our exports.
- Support immigration reform that leads to expanded access to student, worker and investor visas.

## Transportation & Infrastructure

Transportation is vital for the economic growth of Texas. We will advocate for policies and solutions to meet the transportation needs of the fastest-growing state in the nation. Keeping commerce going requires a consistent funding stream that offers long-term planning potential across all modes of transporting goods, people, and services.

- Support a permanent fix to make the Highway Trust Fund solvent and fund the complete expansion of the Interstate 35 corridor through Waco to support the transportation of international and national goods.
- Advocate for federal policies that encourage private sector investment in public infrastructure.
- Advocate for suballocation of Metropolitan Mobility funding through the Surface Transportation Program, without qualification based on arbitrary population cutoff limits. Policies should support disbursements reflecting changing population trends and growth.
- Increase funding to the Office of Commercial Space Transportation (AST) to allow for modernization and streamlined permitting to facilitate growing a national thriving space industry and economy.
- Advocate for discretion in the Airport Improvement Program funding to allow for increased spaceport funding.
- Oppose privatization of Air Traffic Control that would place an undue burden on business aviation fees.
- Support programs that support and fund diverse aspects of vital infrastructure projects.
- Advocate for the Greater Waco area's best interests in high speed rail access.

## Water & Natural Resources

We support policies and initiatives that improve environmental quality, maintain compliance, and promote development without compromising quality of life.

- Ensure the EPA evaluates the economic impact and job loss in its regulations, as is required by all major environmental laws, advocating for balancing critical investments in infrastructure along with environmental protections.
- Support the review and revision of the "Waters of the United States" Rule to stop its federal overreach under the Clean Water Act and protect local, regional and State primacy over its waters and water management.
- Support funding for federal programs that hasten compliance with the Safe Drinking Act, and other federal mandates.
- Support funding of the Bureau of Reclamation Title XVI Program as revamped under Section 4909 of the WIIN Act, to facilitate water reuse and conservation projects that will help meet our area industries' water needs and conserve our valuable water resources.
- Support legislation that affirms the rights and powers of the state government in environmental programs and appropriate regulatory oversight.
- Oppose Section 2014 of S. 601 in the Water Resources Development Act which gives the Army Corps of Engineers unprecedented discretion to adjust reservoir operations without Congressional authorization.
- Oppose efforts to implement or enforce the federal Waters of the United States final rule, which broadens the jurisdiction of the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers under the Clean Water Act to include "other waters" located in isolated places at the "Waters of the U.S." without requiring case-specific evaluation.
- Ensure the EPA evaluates the economic impact and job loss in its regulations, as is required by all major environmental laws, advocating for balancing critical investments in infrastructure along with environmental protections.
- Monitor water supply, ownership, and quality concerns, including property rights issues and drought management policy.

## Education

Children are the future of our communities and our workforce, and an essential part of future economic growth. As such, we will advocate for positions important to our educational systems- from early childhood development to preK-12 to higher education- that every child may arrive at kindergarten school-ready, graduate high school college-ready, and be workforce-ready to help build and strengthen a thriving city, state, and nation for future generations.

### Higher Education

- Support adequate funding to support inflationary increases to the Pell Grant maximum award without limiting eligibility and extend lifetime Pell eligibility to 14 full-time equivalent semesters.
- Reinstate the year-round Pell Grant to reflect today's student populations, allowing students to complete their degrees and enter the workforce more quickly.
- Support the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and focus on reforms that strengthen business engagement and ties between community colleges and local businesses, maintaining flexibility to better prepare youth and adults for careers aligned to local industry needs.
- Support the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act to support student access and success by improving student aid programs; granting institutions the ability to limit borrowing; revise cohort default rates by incorporating the percentage of students who borrow; excluding Pell Grant and SEOG funds from Pell Grant eligibility; simplifying the FAFSA; ensuring accurate and complete measurements of student success; reducing regulatory burdens; improving institutional support; and rejecting any proposal for institutional student-loan risk-sharing.

### Public Education

- Support equitable and adequate funding for Texas public schools, including in the flagship federal education programs such as Title funding and special education funding.
- Support funding to support high quality preschool for eligible families.
- Support efforts to improve and expand access to quality Early Childhood Education programs, to ensure children arrive at kindergarten school-ready, laying the foundation for future workforce-readiness.
- Support implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, with an emphasis on state accountability systems and providing for more local flexibility to make educational decisions
- Oppose limiting the flexibility of local school boards to make decisions that serve the best interests of their districts

## Health Care

We will inform and promote solutions for employers and healthcare providers alike that decrease cost, expand access, and increase the quality of healthcare, mitigating the rising costs and regulations of healthcare delivery.

- Support repair or replacement of the Affordable Care Act that keeps the administration's promise, protects businesses, and provides flexibility.
- Support an 1115 Waiver renewal that does not place at a disadvantage mid-sized communities who are neither rural nor major metropolitan areas.
- Address and reign in hyper-inflation of pharmaceuticals to promote market competition and promote innovation and value. New.
- Oppose reduction of 340b eligibility, so safety net hospitals and care providers may continue to provide assistance to low-income and indigent populations.
- Support Graduate Medical Education funding to ensure the training and availability of doctors, nurses and other health care providers in order to meet the growing demand of patient care.

## 2017 Public Policy Committee

**David Lacy**, *Committee Chair / Community Bank & Trust*

**Ashley Allison**, *Waco Foundation*

**Jessica Attas**, *Director of Public Policy, Greater Waco Chamber*

**Michael Baldwin**, *Oncor*

**Tate Christensen**, *Past Chair, Greater Waco Chamber / Barsh Construction*

**Kris Collins**, *Senior Vice-President of Economic Development, Greater Waco Chamber*

**Mayor Kyle Deaver**, *City of Waco*

**Brett Esrock**, *Providence Healthcare Network*

**Rochonda Farmer-Neal**, *Baylor University*

**Judge Scott Felton**, *McLennan County*

**Dale Fisseler**, *City of Waco*

**Kimberly Hilley**, *TXU/Luminant*

**Adam Hutchison**, *Texas State Technical College*

**Debbie Keel**, *Past Committee Chair / AT&T*

**Stewart Kelly**, *Chair, Waco Business League / Kelly Realtors*

**John Kinnaird**, *City of Waco*

**Ryan Lindsey**, *Oldcastle Materials, Inc*

**Dr. Johnette McKown**, *McLennan Community College*

**Dr. Jerry Maze**, *Region 12 Education Service Center*

**Matt Meadors**, *President & CEO, Greater Waco Chamber*

**Mark Reynolds**, *Chairman of the Board, Greater Waco Chamber / Extraco Banks*

**Glenn Robinson**, *Baylor Scott & White Hillcrest Medical Center*

**Scott Salmans**, *WRS Group*

**Tom Salome**, *M. Lipsitz & Co.*

**Rick Sheldon**, *Sheldon Real Estate*

**Dr. Sharon Shields**, *County Superintendents*

**Terry Stevens**, *Chair, McLennan County Spaceport Development Corporation*

**Michael Street**, *Atmos Energy*

**Jeffrey Stubbs**, *McLennan County Chamber Alliance / Hewitt Chamber of Commerce*

**Josh Tetens**, *McLennan County Chamber Alliance / Bellmead Chamber of Commerce*