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 announced as the No. 2 Travelers’ Choice Destinations On The Rise Awards for 2018 by TripAdvisor.com
- Waco is home to five institutions of higher learning, providing a skilled workforce for diverse industry sectors.
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, 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, adopt and adequately fund successful policies and programs such as work-based learning or arranging the Work Opportunity Tax Credit 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 and expanded CTE state grant funding for programs that an employee led and advocate for demand-driven workforce development and training programs.
- Support immigration reforms that are responsive to our workforce needs and lead to expanded access to talent, domestically or internationally, boost economic growth, create jobs, and spur innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Support legislative solutions that promote diversity, inclusion, and equality to strengthen our workforce and leadership pipeline.

Small Business & Entrepreneurship
- Continue supported for programs and agencies that aid small businesses and entrepreneurs, foster community development and economic impact, including SBA, EDBC, USDA, NREDC, 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 504 and 7(a) programs.
- Support policies and programs as a regulatory framework that supports entrepreneurship and innovation.

International Opportunities
- Seek out policies and 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 repositioning and modernization of NAFTA that allows for maximum benefit of NAFTA for our state economy, job creation and business

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 losses 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 provide a reasonable measure for considering how jurisdictional waters are determined and the scientific basis for how these waters are regulated, protecting local, regional, and State priority over its water and water management.
- Support legislation that affirms the rights and powers of the state government in environmental programs and appropriate regulatory oversight.
- Support federal regulatory reforms to streamline water infrastructure and project permitting.
- Support funding for federal programs that enhance compliance with the Safe Drinking Act, and other federal mandates.
- Support funding of the Bureau of Reclamation Title XIX Program as reauthorized under Section 409(b) of the WRA Act, to facilitate water reuse and conservation programs that will help meet our area industries’ needs and conserve our valuable water resources.
- Oppose Section 404 of S. 501 in the Water Resources Development Act which gives the Army Corps of Engineers unprecedented discretion to adjust reservoir levels 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.
- Support the review and revision of the Affordable Care Act that keeps the administration’s promise, protects businesses, and provides flexibility. Repel teams that increase premiums, such as the excise tax, HIT, and medical device tax.
- Improve flexibility for tax-preferred accounts that encourage healthy care spending, allowing accessible and accountable.
- Support for improving and increasing access to mental health treatment programs prioritizing preventative and ongoing services and care, and coverage of these programs through insurance.
- Address and reign in hyper-inflation of pharmaceuticals to promote market competition and promote innovation and value.
- Oppose reduction of I&I eligibility, so safe 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.

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 strategy 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 ensure a fair rate of return and fund the complete expansion of the Interstate 35 corridor through Waco to support the transportation of international and national goods.
- Support recognition of previous state investments in infrastructure, such as Propositions 1 or 2, or a potential leverage for any state or private sector match required for federal infrastructure dollars.
- Ensure any new transportation funding formulas are based upon most recent and accurate U.S. Census population data.
- Advocate for federal policies that encourage private sector investment in public infrastructure.
- Advocate for subsidization 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 airport 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.

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.
- Advance successful ideas from the private sector that reduce costs, advance quality, and improve health outcomes.
- Support workplace health and wellness programs in order to improve employee health and worker productivity.
- Support repair or replacement of the Affordable Care Act that keeps the administration’s promise, protects businesses, and provides flexibility. Repeal teams that increase premiums, such as the excise tax, HIT, and medical device tax.
- Support workforce development and educational programs that encourage healthcare professionals and business leaders to invest in education programs.
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- Increase access to critical services for vulnerable populations, including those with limited access to healthcare services.
- 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.

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 pre-K to higher education — that every child may arrive at kindergarden school-ready, graduate high school college-ready, and be workforce-ready to 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.
  - Expand the year-round Pell Grant to support short-term credits sought by local employers.
  - Support the现代化ization and increased funding of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and focus on reforms that strengthen business engagement and link between education institutions and local businesses, maintaining flexibility to better prepare youth and adults for careers aligned to local industry needs.
  - Support the modernization of the Higher Education Act to support student access and success by improving student aid programs; granting institutions the ability to lend/servicing, reserve cohort default rates incorporating the percentage of students who borrow; including Pell Grant and SEOG funds from Pell Grant eligibility; simplify the FAFSA, ensuring accurate and complete measurements of student success, reducing regulatory burdens, improving institutional support and transparency, and rejecting any proposal for institutional student-loan risk-sharing.
  - Increase SNAP Employment & Training investments in Farm Bill reauthorization, and modernize TRAP program to support high-quality workforce training programs.
- Public Education
  - Support equitable and adequate funding for Texas public schools, including in the flagship federal education programs such as Title I 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 workforce development, streamlined regulatory 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.

Fiscal Policy & Regulatory Relief

We support policies that support the long-term fiscal health of our competitive and growing economy, stabilize debt, foster economic growth and broader prosperity, streamline regulations, and simplify compliance while encouraging fiscally responsible policymaking.
- Support policies that reduce long-term debt, achieve long-term fiscal stability and promote economic growth.
- Support regulatory reform and streamlining across all industry sectors that take into account the views of communities and businesses, and evaluate the impact of rules on jobs and small business.
- Address tax reform implementation with key reducing the cost of compliance allowing companies to reinvest in themselves and workers.
- Support Private Activity Bonds as a key tool in driving development.