



PUBLIC & HIGHER EDUCATION (CONTINUED)

- Support public-private partnerships among universities, community and technical colleges, businesses and industries with local school districts in the flexible design and implementation of safe and meaningful career and technology education.
- Support legislation and rules, such as flexibility in the Texas College Work Study Program, so employers can better provide meaningful internships, apprenticeships, and other workforce training opportunities.
- Incentivize businesses to invest in education throughout the pipeline, from high-quality early childhood, to CTE and retooling schools to enhance experience-based learning.
- New funding mechanisms to finance workforce training.
- Maintain funding of Texas Tuition Equalization Grant to ensure opportunities for all Texans to attend an institution of higher education.
- Increase funding for institutions of higher education to ensure accomplishment of the 60x30TX higher education strategic plan.
- Support debt-free certificates and degrees for Texas students by providing additional resources for dual-credit in order to expand opportunities to pursue seamless academic transfer and technical career pathways.



TRANSPORTATION

Infrastructure

- Support for funding to complete the expansion of I-35 through Waco, to support the transportation of international and national goods on the full “loop to loop” segment of this nationally significant corridor.
- Support policies and innovative and alternate methods of financing transportation infrastructure, including public-private partnerships, changes to the gas tax or gas tax structure, user fees, and other funding mechanisms in order to allow local and state entities the ability to plan and execute infrastructure projects that meet our state’s growing needs.
- Support development of parallel or alternate routes through Central Texas.
- Support a regulatory environment that allows for expeditious

integration of new technologies in order to create a robust, multi-modal transportation system to meet the state’s growing transportation needs.

- Support policies and programs, such as inland ports, that would allow us to further develop Waco as a transportation hub.

Aviation & Aerospace

- Support policies, programs and a regulatory environment to further develop the commercial aerospace sector for our state.
- Support policies to boost and increase ridership of local air services.

High-Speed Rail

- Advocate for Greater Waco’s best interests in high-speed rail access, including funding support for study and design of high-speed rail projects and Waco’s connectivity to a future high-speed rail line.



WATER & NATURAL RESOURCES

Water

- Support innovative water management strategies based on most recent drought records, including reuse, conservation and conjunctive use of ground/surface water, along with providing incentives for the implementation of these strategies, to ensure adequate supply of water at fair costs that support future economic growth and development of the region.
- Ensure the existing structure of water rights is maintained and oppose any efforts to change the same in a way that would weaken the legal and property interest of existing holders of water rights.
- Support legislation to streamline surface water rights permitting process to facilitate permitting within reasonable timelines so businesses and entities can quickly complete new projects and maintain compliance while avoiding costly procedural delays. This streamlining process should include allowing outsourcing of certain aspects of permitting and technical review process where appropriate.
- Support flexibility in development of new water sources to meet the state’s future water needs, including reducing regulatory barriers to major projects such as new reservoirs and the movement of water from one river basin to another in the form of interbasin transfers.

- Support updating Water Availability Models for each river basin so that water right permitting decisions factor in to the most recent drought information.
- Support all recommendations from the McLennan County Drought Contingency and Water Supply Resiliency Plan.

Air Quality & the Environment

- Support policies and initiatives that improve air quality, maintain compliance, and promote development without compromising quality of life. Support incentive programs aimed at improving air quality, enhancing public health, and promoting economic prosperity.
- Support expeditious construction of transportation infrastructure projects to limit air quality degradation during construction phase.
- Support state law requiring that state environmental agencies evaluate economic impact and net benefits in proposed regulations, advocating for balancing critical investments in infrastructure or economic growth, along with environmental protections.
- Support legislation affirming the rights and powers of state government in environmental programs and appropriate regulatory oversight.



86th Legislative Session

STATE POLICY PRIORITIES



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PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVE

As an organization dedicated to the economic well-being of McLennan County, the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce 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 impacts; 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 work to 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.

- Support the Texas Enterprise Fund, the state's deal-closing incentive fund, and expand accessibility for existing businesses of all sizes throughout the state.
- Increase the allocations for the Texas Enterprise Zone Program, the state's primary business retention and expansion tool, to a minimum of 200 designations per biennium.
- Support Funding for Innovation and Technology Development, as well as a regulatory environment that is conducive to the commercialization of goods to market, bridging the gap between innovation and the marketplace.
- Maintain Chapter 313 for large capital investment projects.
- Protect the Economic Development Sales Tax (Type A, Type B).
- Support local control generally, and specifically as related to control of local incentives packages.
- Develop state tools for business retention in smaller communities.

Workforce

- Increase the state's share of public school funding to decrease the local property tax burden and assist in the development of a 21st-century workforce.
- Support funding of Texas Workforce Commission's Skills Development Fund and the Comptroller's Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) program.
- Support funding for partnerships among universities, community and

technical colleges, businesses and industries, and local ISDs in flexible design and implementation of career and technology education.

- Support solutions and programs that promote diversity, inclusion, and equality to strengthen the workforce and leadership pipelines.

Small Business & Entrepreneurship

- Support policies and programs that increase access to capital for small business loans.
- Encourage legislation focusing on issues of greatest importance to economic development and growth of our state.
- Advocate for statute reform for the payday lending industry to foster access to capital without exacerbating debt through predatory lending practices.
- Advocate for continued support of programs that provide resources to small business development.
- Support continued state funding in support of cultural arts development in Texas communities.

Trade & International Competitiveness

- Support policies to promote fair and open trade abroad that will spur innovation, expansion and job creation in all industry sectors.

STATE PRIORITIES 86TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION



Business Climate



Economic Development



Healthcare



Public & Higher Education



Transportation



Water & Natural Resources



BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Promote appraisal processes that are fair, retain local authority, include local input on valuation ranges, and promote business development and growth, sustaining the momentum of the revitalization of downtown by true market-based valuations.
- Oppose increases in local appraisal revenue growth mandated by state legislature in biannual budget planning.
- Address property tax and school finance reform with the goal of increasing accountability and transparency for a broken system.
- Enact tax provisions that spur private sector innovation and development and that encourage the formation of new businesses large and small.
- Ensure regulations reflect a cost-benefit perspective and support legislative efforts to maintain a regulatory climate that does not impose hidden taxes on employers through excessive fees and fines, but rather reduces excessive regulations to promote economic growth and job creation.
- Encourage efficiencies and transparency in government spending, focusing expenditures on areas most critical to increasing the economic activity and growth in our state.
- Support local control generally and specifically as to dedicated rights of way, water rights, and watershed protection.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Competitive Incentives & Development Tools

Support government tax policies and incentive programs that are effective in increasing investment to create new jobs and greatly expanding economic activity. 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. The Chamber also prioritizes policies that encourage local innovation in solving community challenges and promotes advancement of target industry sectors: advanced manufacturing, aerospace, health care, professional and financial services and supply chain.



HEALTHCARE

- Support expanded access to healthcare coverage to ensure the burden of uninsured care does not fall on local communities (counties, cities, hospitals, physicians, or other health care providers).
- Support legislation that encourages preventative healthcare, such as wellness and vaccine programs, encourages employees to be more involved in their health, and encourages education of employers and employees alike on health care costs and fees. Promote understanding that a healthy employee is a critical part of a productive workforce.
- Support legislation and funding for increasing access to behavioral healthcare, including through promoting usage of and reimbursement for quality telehealth services for psychiatric and behavioral care.
- Focus spending on behavioral health, such as mental health and substance abuse issues, on preventative and treatment focused strategies, over punitive strategies.
- Expand access to outpatient specialty, surgical, or aftercare for indigent populations.
- Support state funding of additional medical residency slots, particularly in areas of greatest physician shortage such as psychiatric care, over additional funding for any new medical schools.
- Support funding robust nursing programs in order to increase the number of highly-trained qualified nurses. Support allowing highly-trained nurses to practice within the scope of their expertise.
- Support a strong requirement for health plans to have adequate coverage and access within their networks to minimize exorbitant out of network costs.
- Promote alternative, non-opioid alternatives for ongoing pain management.



PUBLIC & HIGHER EDUCATION

- Increase the state's share of per pupil spending on public education, focusing restored or new funding on research-based strategies proven to improve student outcomes and post-secondary success in order to reduce the local property tax burden and prepare a 21st-century workforce.
- Ensure local tax dollars sent to the state for education are used exclusively on public education, not to fill other shortfalls or fund other programs.
- Support lawmakers in finding and utilizing objective data sources to determine adequate funding levels and ensure optimal student outcomes.
- Oppose limiting the flexibility of local school boards to make decisions that serve the best interests of their districts
- Support funding for high-quality preschool for eligible families.
- Support efforts to improve and expand access to quality Early Childhood Education and high-quality childcare programs to ensure children arrive at kindergarten school-ready, laying the foundation for future workforce-readiness.
- Fully fund performance funding first, over enrollment-based metrics, for community and technical colleges.