



2011 Legislative Issues

Economic Development

The Chamber supports continued development and implementation of disciplined, but competitive economic incentive packages, grant opportunities, direct assistance, tax credits and loan programs which create jobs and enhance the tax base. We support policies that make Bristol a “place of choice” for relocating new companies, expanding existing companies, and assisting small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Education

The economic growth of Bristol depends on an educational system that provides our citizens with the skills and competencies to compete in a global economy. We will work to strengthen our educational standards and encourage education completion. We will advocate for greater coordination among all governmental entities and the private sector for a better educated and skilled workforce. The Chamber supports efforts to adequately fund existing public education responsibilities and allow for benchmarks implemented through the Tennessee Diploma Project, Race to the Top and the Complete College Act.

Collective Bargaining

The Chamber opposes any state legislation that would allow government employees the right to strike or the right to collectively bargain over wages, benefits, or conditions of employment, even if limited in application. We oppose federal passage of an act mandating collective bargaining.

Energy and Environment

The Chamber supports a pro-growth energy policy that encourages and increases diverse energy supplies, improves efficiency and promotes environmental stewardship.

Healthcare

The Chamber supports responsible, market-based efforts to make healthcare more available and affordable. Skyrocketing health care costs stifle economic recovery and seriously impede the ability to grow and create jobs. The Chamber will work to lessen the burden of any new healthcare law while promoting strategies and solutions to help contain costs for employers and addresses the needs of the uninsured.

Legal Reform

The Chamber will work to end lawsuit abuse and to ensure that businesses have a fair, efficient and consistent justice system. Any legal reform should be comprehensive including court and administrative reform, product liability caps, medical malpractice caps and lawsuit reform.

Taxes

The Chamber is committed to pro-growth, pro-job tax policies that preserve our competitiveness. In fragile economic times, it would be a detriment to businesses to add any major tax increase.

Tourism

The Chamber supports funding for tourism programs that will boost our ability to compete in the global tourism arena and inform potential visitors. We support the development of a national tourism office.

Transportation/Infrastructure

The Chamber supports passage of a long term, sustainable source of revenue for transportation infrastructure improvements; and innovative funding solutions for freight rail. This includes highway improvements, exit interchange reconstruction, road widening, telecommunications, and energy and water networks. We support the establishment of a direct intermodal rail service between Virginia at Bristol, via Knoxville, Chattanooga and Memphis.

Workers' Compensation

The Chamber opposes government-imposed workplace regulations that don't protect employees, that restrict employer flexibility, and creates a burden without a greater benefit and generates litigation instead of jobs.

Workforce Development

The Chamber will continue to be a voice in calling for improved workforce development and training programs. The ultimate goal is to improve the caliber of the labor force, an objective critical to our economic progress.