



# 2017 Federal Public Policy Platform

**T**he Overland Park Chamber of Commerce supports reasonable, fact-based free-market efforts and solutions for improving our local, regional and national safety, economic vitality, and quality of life. When a problem arises that the market cannot adequately address, the Chamber supports developing reasonable, fact-based legislative and regulatory solutions that are developed in partnership with government and business. These solutions should reward outcomes and compliance and treat all companies and business categories in a fair, equitable and predictable manner.

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## 2017 TOP PRIORITIES

### GOVERNMENT / FISCAL MANAGEMENT

**Fiscal Responsibility** – The Chamber believes a balanced federal budget and a reduced national debt will promote the health of our national economy today and for future generations. The Chamber encourages Congress and the Administration to enact timely federal budgets (and all associated appropriations bills) and to work toward a balanced budget. The Chamber also encourages Congress and the Administration to modify maintenance of effort requirements in ways that ensure federal grants and cost sharing funds are spent for the purpose intended but do not otherwise impinge upon state and local elected officials' ability to appropriate funds or set policy.

### HEALTH CARE

The Chamber recognizes the importance of accessible and affordable health care for Kansas employers and residents and supports initiatives that result in an enhanced health care delivery system. The Chamber supports initiatives that include but are not limited to the following:

- Reconsider and reformulate the most onerous provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that adversely affect business, including the employer mandate and the new taxes that will be passed on to employers and employees in the form of higher premiums.

- Adopt a reasonable and balanced definition of what constitutes a full-time employee.
- Appropriate levels of funding from the federal government to cover the cost of providing health care services (including home and community based services) through Medicare, Medicaid and other such governmental programs, including the extension of full federal funding for three years for new state adoptions of Medicaid expansion programs.
- Reasonable, evidence-based governmental requirements and or mandates and corresponding funds provided to participate in the expansion of quality improvement, information technology and transparency initiatives.
- Appropriate level of support and funding for safety net clinics and other access points to encourage health care provisions at the most efficient and least costly stage.
- Protection of tax incentives and non-tax status for those providers documenting community benefit through various activities including, but not limited to, charity care.
- Greater emphasis on personal responsibility, healthy lifestyles and the resulting private and governmental program incentives and supports.
- Incentives for businesses to provide health insurance for employees.
- Incentives for individuals to purchase health insurance.

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- Investigate collaborative efforts with State efforts to provide high risk pools for individuals and employers to obtain health care coverage.
- Support reasonable medical malpractice liability reform to foster access to affordable, quality health care.
- Continue to evaluate and encourage proven alternatives to traditional health care delivery that will result in greater accessibility and affordability to Kansas employers and residents, reducing the number of uninsured and underinsured.

## WORKPLACE AND LABOR

**Overtime Eligibility Standards** - The Chamber opposes the recent unilateral regulatory expansion of overtime standards by the DOL, including excessive increases in the salary thresholds triggering overtime pay requirements and increases that do not make allowance for geographic base salary differences, that result in significantly increased compliance costs for business as well as unintended, adverse consequences for employees.

**Minimum Wage** - The Chamber opposes any unreasonable expansion of federal minimum wage and believes that any increase must be coupled with provisions that recognize the impact this will have on businesses.

**Employee Benefits** - The Chamber supports the family-friendly purpose of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), but favors clarification and simplification of the Act's requirements. The Chamber opposes efforts to expand leave or to mandate paid sick leave under the FMLA.

**Immigration** - The Chamber urges Congress to enact comprehensive and realistic immigration reform policies that support business workforce needs including:

- Establishing a reliable, efficient, accurate employment eligibility confirmation system that is easy to use and provides a good faith "safe harbor" to employers relying on the Employment Eligibility Confirmation System.
- Establishing an earned pathway to legalization for undocumented workers already contributing to our economy, provided that they are law-abiding.
- Continuation and expansion of permanent visa programs for highly skilled workers through the H-1B visa program and other programs that enable employers to access and keep the talent necessary for business to compete in the global market.
- Raising the cap or eliminating the cap entirely on H-2B visas. This seasonal worker program is vital to small businesses that depend on H-2B visa personnel to fill those positions that the local workforce cannot fill.

**Davis-Bacon Act** - The Chamber supports the repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act, which created a "prevailing wage," usually the union rate, for any construction contract over \$2,000 funded in whole or part by the federal government. The repeal of this Act would spur local economic growth by making it easier for state and local governments to fund federally-subsidized projects such as school construction and transportation infrastructure improvements and would decrease overall costs to taxpayers.

**OSHA** - Safety of employees is of utmost concern to business. The Chamber urges Congress to support workplace safety by encouraging shared commitments to safety between OSHA and employers. This would include cooperative partnership agreements between OSHA, labor organizations and employers. The Chamber supports an even-handed approach by OSHA that recognizes employers who are committed to protecting their employees while they continuously strive to improve their safety and health management systems, and opposes efforts to expand penalties including criminal indictments of individuals. Focusing on increased civil and criminal

finances and penalties against employers does not address the primary cause of accidents, injuries, and fatalities on job sites.

## TAXES

**Taxation** - The Chamber supports comprehensive pro-growth tax policies that preserve our region and country's competitiveness, and policies that increase a business's ability to grow, invest and create jobs. The Chamber supports efforts to simplify and reform the tax code, including measures to reduce loopholes, raise thresholds for tax information reporting, incent business start-ups, and increase investment in U.S. companies. The Chamber also supports efforts to close regulatory gaps, reduce burdensome fees and regulation, and allow financial institutions to serve as effective intermediaries for businesses and consumers.

To preserve and encourage economic growth, productivity and jobs, the Chamber supports repeal or further reduction of the alternative minimum tax and the capital gains tax. The Chamber supports current estate tax laws with addition of a permanent exemption of \$5 million per person, indexed for inflation, and supports stabilization of estate and gift tax laws. The Chamber opposes efforts to change federal tax policy that limit the option for qualified service providers to elect the cash method of accounting only to those firms with less than \$10 million (or other arbitrary caps) in annual gross revenue.

The Chamber supports a reduction in the corporate income tax rate and/or other policies that will enhance the global competitiveness of U.S. businesses and encourage the repatriation of profits by multi-national U.S. companies and reduce incentives for corporate inversions.

**Tax Incentives** - The Chamber encourages continued support of existing tax incentives including energy, environmental, and economic development tax incentives. These safeguards result in increased protection of the environment while encouraging investment in economic development.

**E-Commerce/Fairness** - The Chamber supports the Marketplace Fairness Act which would enable state governments to collect sales taxes and use taxes from remote retailers with no physical presence in their state, by mandating under federal law that those remote online retailers charge and collect sales tax regardless of sales situs. This Act ensures that brick-and-mortar retailers have a fair chance of competing with online retailers, who are required to collect tax only for sales within their own state. Currently the total cost burden for purchasers from many online retailers is lower than that from their brick-and-mortar counterparts because it does not include sales tax on those goods purchased online.

## TRANSPORTATION

The Chamber supports the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act that became law in December 2015 and provides multi-year funding for the nation's surface transportation infrastructure to maximize the benefits derived from our local, regional and national transportation networks. Federal investment should promote predictable and sustainable increases in national funding that adequately meets critical national, regional and local transportation needs.

To be sustainable, the Chamber believes that such funding should be derived from multiple sources that primarily reflect users' impacts on — and benefits derived from — our transportation networks. That's why the Chamber supports:

1. Increasing and dedicating revenue from fuel taxes and other user fees (e.g. gas tax has not been raised since 1993);
2. Inflation indexing of revenue sources to reduce the risk of inadequate transportation investment in the future;

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3. Dedicating specific resources and policies for defined transportation projects that significantly enhance the economic development of an area; and
4. Adding incentives and removing impediments to the use of private capital and resources in the design, construction and operation of public or public/private transportation projects that enhance local safety, economic development and quality of life.

To ensure that national infrastructure investments reflect important regional and local priorities, the Chamber further supports adoption of federal policies and procedures that optimize local and state flexibility in meeting regional and local transportation priorities, improving transportation network performance and streamlining transportation project reviews and approvals.

## 2017 IMPORTANT PRIORITIES

### ENERGY

The Chamber supports a comprehensive national energy policy that is innovative and economical. Policy should encourage energy efficiency and conservation, sustainability, and security, and it must also support the diverse energy portfolio of our region. Any proposed energy policy must consider all forms of available energy including natural gas, coal, nuclear, hydro, wind, solar and biofuels in order to meet growing demand. In addition, we support an energy policy that:

- Supports energy independence and efficiencies in production and usage, including reasonable expansion of domestic oil and gas exploration.
- Would not unduly raise energy costs.
- Encourages a diversified, sustainable energy supply and surplus.
- Upgrades and expands our national transmission and distribution infrastructure.

### ENVIRONMENT

The Chamber supports a system of environmental standards that provides a balance between ensuring the sustainability of natural resources while ensuring enhanced quality of life and economic growth in the region. Environmental policy should be based on sound, factual scientific data, not unsubstantiated health claims.

**Air Quality** – The Chamber supports federal air quality legislation that does not cause economic burden on industry and American job loss, and ensures public health protection.

**Emissions Mandates** – The Chamber supports balanced and reasonable national climate change policies that are equitable to all regions and industries, encourage innovation and economic growth, and achieve sustainable environmental benefits. The Chamber opposes policies that would raise energy costs for businesses in ways that jeopardize job creation. Carbon regulation aimed at impacting climate change should not be addressed and cannot be solved by state or regional approaches. The Chamber supports legislation that would encourage the accelerated development and deployment of greenhouse gas reduction technology and the reduction of barriers to the development of climate-friendly energy sources.

**Water Quality** – The Chamber supports efforts by local, state, and federal government for sound watershed management through the application of reasonable standards and educational resources.

The Chamber supports the Wet Weather Community Sustainability Act that offers both a technology-based and water quality-based approach to help municipalities manage peak wet

weather events in a cost-effective manner that is protective of the environment and public health and consistent with Clean Water Act (CWA) requirements.

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The Chamber supported the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Bank) and continues to support the Bank as a source of funding support that is of critical importance in leveling the international competitive climate for businesses that export goods and services and keeping them and their jobs in our state. The Chamber supports the timely nomination and Senate confirmation of board members, at a minimum needed to maintain a quorum and necessary for the efficient, effective and full operation of the Bank..

The Chamber supports international trade policies that encourage economic development in northeast Kansas and the rest of the state; reduce trade barriers; protect U.S. intellectual property; modernize export-control rules; eliminate unfair trade practices; and encourage efficient international trade assistance programs through cooperation and coordination among local, state and federal agencies. Additionally, the Chamber supports export promotion programs centered on small- and medium-sized businesses which account for the vast majority of all exporters.

The Chamber also supports international trade agreements (specifically including the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) that knock down barriers to U.S. businesses abroad and keeps our markets open to foreign goods and services.

### EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**P-20 Public Education System** - The Chamber supports policies and programs, and adequate funding thereof, that encourage the development of a robust P-20 public education system emphasizing a rigorous science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum based on globally competitive standards that prepare students to be college and career-ready for the future and fosters a well-trained, productive, globally competitive workforce. This includes support for:

- Increased funding for Graduate Medical Education in response to the shortage of physicians (especially in primary care).
- Increased investment in high-quality early childhood learning and development and child care programs that integrate early learning with K-12 education and are available to all children.
- Funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act at the authorized 40% level so that local school districts do not have to divert other education funding streams to make up the current funding gap.
- Policies and programs that promote workforce development.
- Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.
- Policies and programs that promote access to and affordability of higher education, such as student loans and grants and similar student financial aid programs.

The Chamber also supports continued and enhanced investment in veterans' education benefits

### TECHNOLOGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS; CYBER SECURITY

Outdated laws and regulations impede U.S. technological innovation, investment and deployment that are vital to the U.S. economy. The Chamber promotes market-based solutions where markets are properly functioning, and policies to pro-

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mote competition in instances of market failure. Competition fosters investment in technology research and deployment, and a market with multiple providers is the best means to ensure consumers and businesses get the internet access they deserve at the best possible price. In addition, the Chamber advocates for workable privacy laws that protect consumers without unduly inhibiting e-commerce.

The Chamber recognizes that continued technological development and deployment of broadband, which is so vital to small and large, urban and rural businesses alike, can only be achieved through significant private investment, which is driven by the forces of competition. Competition spurs private investment, furthers the principles of free enterprise, and stimulates business growth.

The Chamber supports the Email Privacy Act and other reasonable measures to protect individual's constitutional rights to privacy with respect to electronic records and transmission of information.

The Chamber supports the development of technologies, processes, practices and other measures designed to protect computers and computer networks, programs and data from unauthorized access, attack and damage.

## REGULATORY REFORM

The Chamber believes that the federal regulatory system must be operated in an open and transparent manner. Proposed regulations should undergo rigorous technical analysis and thorough review and comment by those affected to ensure that they are cost-effective, flexible, and minimize regulatory burdens on business.

**Small Business Size Standards** - Small business size standards define the maximum size that a business, together with all of its affiliates, may be if it is to be eligible for federal small business programs. Besides establishing eligibility for SBA's programs, all federal agencies use them to determine eligibility for federal contracts specifically designated for small business, and for their own programs and regulations. The Chamber:

- Urges the exploration of a mid-size business tier addition within the size standards methodology.
- Advocates for federal government contracts to be smaller and unbundled, enabling small businesses to pursue more contracts.

**Banking Regulation** – The market is the most effective driver in distributing financing to the right places. The Chamber supports policies that are not harmful to community banks' and credit unions' and other business' ability to grow and expand, because access to credit is a significant factor in economic development. The Chamber encourages federal staff to only support regulation that is based on core principles for banks that enable them to be successful during any economic cycle.

## SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

The Chamber believes that a secure retirement for American workers is fundamental to the country's growth and continued prosperity. Public policy should encourage individuals to save, invest and plan for their retirement. The Chamber supports programs that stimulate individual initiative to provide for retirement needs. The Chamber also supports policies and other reasonable efforts to sustain the long-term solvency of Social Security; however, it opposes exclusive reliance on increased taxes to reduce long-range deficits in the Social Security trust funds.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Chamber supports legislation that fosters entrepreneurship, innovation and job creation, including the Startup Act 3.0, which:

- Makes changes to the federal regulatory process to lessen

government burdens on job-creators;

- Modifies the tax code to encourage investment in new businesses;
- Seeks to accelerate the commercialization of university research that can lead to new ventures; and
- Provides new opportunities for highly-educated and entrepreneurial immigrants to stay in the United States where their talent and new ideas can fuel economic growth and create American jobs.

## STANDING PRIORITIES

**The Chamber's standing policies, which may or may not be introduced in any given Congress, are:**

- Support the University of Kansas Medical Center's effort to achieve National Cancer Institute Comprehensive Cancer Center designation.
- Support legislation and appropriate funding that would advance and promote the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor.
- Maintain funding for the National Bio and Agro Defense Facility (NBAF) in Manhattan, KS.
- Support increased funding for federal research agencies including the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, US Department of Agriculture, and other agencies that provide funding for life sciences research, development and commercialization.
- Support efforts to protect, improve and simplify S corporation tax rules.
- Support efforts to permanently extend both the work opportunity tax credit and welfare to work tax credit.
- Support efforts to expand the R&D tax credit and make it a permanent part of the tax law.
- Support a legislative overhaul of the U.S. tax code's antiquated foreign tax provisions, which prevent U.S. corporations from competing fairly with their foreign counterparts.
- Support a simpler, predictable, and less burdensome tax system.
- Support a "zero-based" budgeting process instead of a "baseline" budgeting process.
- Support restraining the IRS's ability to challenge the use of the cash method of accounting, which adversely affects the nation's small businesses.
- Support meaningful bankruptcy reform that rewards personal responsibility and restores fairness to the bankruptcy system.
- Support efforts to reduce burdens associated with anti-trust and pre-merger filings and eliminate needless reporting requirements and filing fees.
- Support product liability reform and additional tort reform measures that provide fair treatment of business in the courts and before regulatory agencies.
- Support the current arrangement of employer and union negotiation, including employees' rights to a democratic secret ballot process, and oppose initiatives to i.) abolish secret ballot elections in favor of card check majorities for union recognition, and ii.) promote the influence of federal government arbitrators in the union contract negotiation process.
- Oppose any and all unfunded mandates.