



## **The Vision of the Chamber and Its Partners**

The Olathe Chamber of Commerce works with its member businesses, the City of Olathe and area educators, including the Olathe School District, in pursuit of a common vision for the Olathe community. The Chamber and its partners support a full-service community with a diversified tax base, full employment and exceptional quality of life. The Chamber and its partners believe that this vision is best achieved by effectively funding targeted economic development activities, efficient municipal services, and infrastructure and quality education. Although the Chamber sets legislative priorities on an annual basis, prior to each session of the Legislature, it relies on this vision as a basis both for its own activities and advocacy of governmental action.

## **Preparation of the Federal Platform**

Each year the Chamber of Commerce prepares a platform of its priority issues for consideration by legislators representing the Olathe community. We are pleased to have substantial member input in establishing priorities for 2016. The proposed legislative platform was reviewed by the Executive Committee and proposed to the Board of Directors for its approval. Our Federal Legislative Platform reflects the views of our membership, as expressed through appointed committees and the elected Board of Directors.

## **Legislative Priorities**

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 work toward a balanced budget. Transportation: Our national transportation system is a tremendous asset built over generations. It has fueled economic growth, enhanced our competitiveness, and created a strong economy. If well-maintained, it will continue to deliver outstanding benefits to all Americans. Therefore, the Chamber thanks Congress for its commitment to fund adequately the needs of our nation's transportation system and meet the needs of the business community. Our members support adequate,

predictable funding of America's strategic transportation needs, including important regional and local priorities, using revenue sources that reflect users' impacts on – and benefits derived from – our local, regional and national transportation networks. The Chamber urges Congress to maintain their renewed commitment to enhance and streamline the process that ensures completion of transportation projects. In addition, state flexibility as well as partnerships with local and state governments and agencies is vital to assure improved transportation performance and better coordinated transportation investments.

**FAA Reauthorization:** Olathe Chamber of Commerce urges Congress to complete, in the very near term, the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Airway and Airports Trust Fund. The nation's aviation system, once a leader in the world, is failing to keep pace with modernization and is not able to keep up with the increasing number of passengers and suffering from insufficient improvements. In addition, the state of the air traffic control system is at the heart of the nation's aviation problems and its modernization must be a national priority. Congress must act to transform the aviation system to meet the expected massive increase in passengers over the next ten years by expediting air traffic modernization and providing adequate investment to increase the system's capacity.

**Economy & Taxes:** The Olathe Chamber supports comprehensive pro-growth tax policies that preserve competitiveness and encourages adoption of policies that increase the ability of businesses to grow, invest and create jobs. We believe a successful economy depends on a predictable tax code that rewards achievement, encourages investment, and promotes growth. To preserve and encourage economic growth, productivity, and job creation, the Olathe Chamber supports:

- Simplification of the tax code to improve compliance and reduce the cost of tax administration, including measures to reduce loopholes, raise thresholds for tax information reporting, create incentives for business start-ups, and increase investment in U.S. companies.
- Efforts to close regulatory gaps, reduce burdensome fees and regulation, and allow financial institutions to serve as effective intermediaries for businesses and consumers.
- Lowering business tax rates to a level that will enable U.S. businesses to compete successfully in the global economy, attract foreign investment to the United States, increase capital for investment, and drive job creation in the United States.

- Preservation of existing tax incentives including energy, environmental, and economic development tax incentives, which safeguard the economic environment while encouraging investment in economic development.
- Repeal or further reduction of the alternative minimum tax and the capital gains tax as well as preservation of marginal individual tax rates.

Banking Regulatory Environment: The market is the most effective driver in distributing financing to the right places. We support policies that are not harmful to community banks and businesses' ability to grow and expand, as access to credit is a significant factor in economic development. We encourage federal staff to apply only regulation that is based on core principles for financial institutions to be successful in any type of economic environment.

Trade: The Olathe Chamber supports international trade policies, which encourage open markets and the exchange of foreign goods and services. Trade policies which reduce barriers, protect intellectual property, eliminate unfair practices and offer efficient international trade assistance programs encourage economic development across the state of Kansas.

E-Fairness: The Olathe Chamber urges a fair resolution to the inequities in the collection of sales taxes between brick and mortar retailers and online-only retailers. The 1992 Supreme Court ruling that prohibits states from requiring remote sellers to collect sales and use taxes owed on in-state purchases unless the seller has a physical presence through a store, office, warehouse, or sales force is antiquated and made prior to growth of e-commerce. Congress needs to act and make clear whether states have the authority to enforce sales tax laws due to the dated nature, and varying interpretations, of the ruling.

Local Control: The Chamber supports the preservation of local authority of the municipality, township, county or regional planning commission or any municipal or county legislative body that has adopted planning and zoning regulations for all or the majority of land uses within the jurisdiction when considering location of tower and antenna facilities for industries such as Telecommunication and Technology.

The Chamber also supports economic investment and development through the rapid deployment of broadband and advanced communications services. Local authorities considering the location of tower and antenna facilities for industries such as

Telecommunication and Technology should act upon such location requests expeditiously so as not to delay the benefits of such services to local communities.

Support Regional Tourism Incentives: Tourism has extraordinary benefits and expanding tourism and business travel our economy will benefit. When travel is unnecessarily impeded, visitors get frustrated with long visa delays, and when they get hassled at an airport, America's bottom line takes a beating. The Chamber encourages Congress and the administration to:

- Expand the Visa Waiver Program and address delays, backlogs, and disruptions in our immigration and border management systems that impede the movement of legitimate businesses and tourists traveling across U.S. borders.
- Support "trusted traveler" programs to reduce airport screening delays and encourage and expedite travel for those who pass a rigorous background check.
- Ensure the travel and tourism industry, largely populated by small businesses, is not subject to undue taxes and regulations.
- Urge lawmakers to adequately fund infrastructure to make travel to and within the United States more efficient, quicker, and more hassle-free.

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 is focused on promoting effective private sector solutions to our health care challenges that will help control costs, expand access, and improve the quality of care. The Chamber supports initiatives that include, but are not limited to the following:

- Advocate for accessible and affordable health care for Kansas employers and residents.
- Repeal and reformulate the most onerous provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, including the employer mandate and the new taxes that will be passed on to employers and employees in the form of higher premiums.
- Appropriate levels of funding from the federal government to cover the cost of providing healthcare services through Medicare, Medicaid and other such governmental programs.
- Supports initiatives that result in an enhanced health care delivery system.
- 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 healthcare provision at the most efficient and least costly stage of care for those with no insurance or other resources.
- 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.
- 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. Alternatives may include but are not limited to: Association Health Plans (AHP's), Federal Savings Accounts, Health Spending Accounts and other tax incentive based options to save and pay for health.

Education & Workforce Development: It is imperative that all American high school students are college-ready or workforce-ready when they graduate. Efforts must be made to create a more rational employment and training system based upon streamlining federal employment and training programs as well as local flexibility in overseeing and administering programs to maximize efficiencies in the delivery of services and for targeting services to meet local needs. The system must also be employer driven. Training services should be offered in a fully competitive environment and performance should be developed to measure the effectiveness of the system in meeting both the employment needs of individuals as well as the workforce needs of employers.

The Chamber calls upon the Federal Government to:

- Match Title I Appropriations to Title I Authorization. Currently the Title I authorization is significantly lower than the authorized sum. Title I money is used to assist our schools by paying the salaries of reading and math specialists. The Chamber supports full funding for Title I.
- Investment in Quality Education; Full Funding of Special Education. The Chamber believes that an excellent education for our children is critical today and in the future and further, that an excellent, nationally recognized public school system is one of the most important economic development tools available for a thriving economy. Ensure that federal education and training programs focus on the elements necessary to help American workers obtain the high-wage, high-skilled jobs that businesses are creating. It is important to increase program

coordination with state and local chambers, local businesses, and education and training institutions.

- Support and maintain the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which includes a strategy and funding stream for education focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).
- Increase federal funding of special education as provided through the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Act; increase funding to the 40% originally committed by the Federal Government.

### Workplace & Labor

Union Organization: The Olathe Chamber supports the current arrangement of employer and union negotiation and opposes initiatives to abolish secret ballot elections in favor of card check majorities for union recognition and interference of federal government arbitrators. The Olathe Chamber supports employee's rights to a democratic secret ballot process.

Employee Benefits: To keep the economy vibrant and to continue to create opportunity for workers, we must ensure that new businesses can be launched and current ones can be expanded. The U.S. Chamber promotes workplace policies that will enhance, not inhibit, economic growth and job creation. The Chamber supports the family-friendly purpose of the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act but favors clarification and simplification of its requirements, and better coordination with the provisions of other legislation. The Chamber opposes efforts to expand leave or to mandate paid sick leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or other regulatory measures.

Immigration: Our nation's economy has thrived because we have attracted and welcomed the most talented and the hardest working people to our country. However, our immigration system is broken and failing to meet the needs of our society, economy, businesses, and workers. Commonsense immigration reform will boost economic growth, create jobs, and spur innovation and entrepreneurship. The United States needs immigrants. They help fill gaps and labor shortages in our workforce, which in turn protects American jobs because if companies can't find all the workers they need here, they will be forced to move the work somewhere else.

Congress and the Department of Homeland Security need to evaluate new measures implemented at the border for their potential negative impact on legitimate commerce while maintaining the need for security. The Olathe Chamber of Commerce would

oppose any legislation that hinders our workforce and our businesses' ability to fill jobs. Reform measures should focus on legitimate priorities, such as homeland security and not penalize legal and well-administered guest worker programs. The Chamber also supports a verification system that preempts state laws, includes limited subcontractor liability, covers only new hires and includes a phased-in timeline to address the needs of business owners, integrates all employment verification obligations (including I-9) into one system, and recognize a safe harbor for employers acting in good faith.

Essential Workforce (H-1 and H-2B VISAS): Foreign nationals that come to this country and to our area to work for sponsoring employers to fill seasonal positions under the H-2B visa program is an antiquated cap system that limits the number of seasonal workers who can enter this country and fill those jobs. Artificial and outdated caps as well as the bureaucracy that is attached to this program encourage illegal immigration. The Olathe Chamber of Commerce supports significantly raising the cap or eliminating the cap entirely on H-2B visas. This seasonal worker program is vital, particularly to small businesses that depend on H-2B visa personnel to fill those positions that the local workforce cannot fill.

The Chamber also advocates for the continuation and expansion of temporary and permanent visas 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.

Energy: The Olathe Chamber supports a comprehensive national energy policy that will be economical and sustainable. The Chamber supports energy independence and efficiencies in production and usage. The Chamber also supports efforts to provide a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions through existing environmental statutes, while encouraging a diversified, sustainable energy surplus. Environmental policy should be based on sound, factual scientific data, not unsubstantiated health claims. The Chamber supports environmental legislation that does not cause undue economic burden on industry and American job loss, and ensures public health protection.

Regulatory Reforms: While the Olathe Chamber believes federal regulations are necessary and appropriate in many circumstances, some are overly burdensome and costly for businesses. As such the Olathe Chamber supports rigorous technical analysis and thorough review and comment of all proposed regulations to ensure they are cost-effective, flexible, and minimize regulatory burdens on businesses of all sizes. In addition, it supports reasonable efforts to reform the regulatory process so that agencies are required to show that their regulations are the most cost effective, data-

and science-driven solutions and increase the level of legal scrutiny when regulations are challenged in court.

Furthermore, the Chamber opposes unfunded or under-funded mandates. The Chamber opposes legislation that hampers units of government in their response to taxpayers' needs. Unfunded and under-funded mandates place unjustified financial burdens on jurisdictions.