



ROUND ROCK CHAMBER

AGENDA FOR ECONOMIC VITALITY

The overarching purpose of the chamber is to help its investors, and the business community at large, succeed by creating a dynamic and growing economy. The chamber's strategy is build upon its eight pillars of economic generation: business attraction, business retention and expansion, economic data, business climate, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, talent development, and chamber enrichment.

The *Agenda for Economic Vitality* provides a framework for the chamber's public policy positions related to maintaining a positive business climate in the region. This publication is a vehicle for the chamber to express its broad and prevailing positions on vital issues that ensure that Round Rock and the surrounding areas stay optimally situated for economic growth and business success.

All the positions outline in the *Agenda* were developed by the chamber's community enhancement councils and voted on by its board of directors. The public policy positions in this document are outlined into four major categories that are aligned with the goals and mission of the chamber.

Round Rock Chamber
212 E. Main Street
Round Rock, Texas 78664
www.roundrockchamber.org

BUSINESS CLIMATE

Round Rock has a supportive and proactive economic environment, and the chamber is dedicated to keeping it that way. Our business climate efforts work on supplementary subject areas that can significantly impact the short- and long-term success of an operation.

Business Climate Issues

Taxation, Regulation, and Incentive Programs

Franchise tax

- Support a revenue neutral repeal of the franchise tax.

Sales tax programs

- Support continued use of a locally approved 1/2 cent sales tax collected by cities to fund economic development efforts.
- Oppose efforts to reduce local control of these funds or efforts to limit the uses of these funds.

Property tax system

- Oppose legislation that seeks to lower the current eight percent revenue cap (rollback rate).

Regulatory policy (i.e., fees and fines)

- Support legislative efforts to maintain a regulatory climate that does not impose hidden taxes on employers through excessive fees, fines, and unfunded mandates, but rather reduces excessive regulations to promote, rather than impede, economic growth and job creation.

Professional licensing

- Support legislative efforts to ensure that all occupations licensed by the state are necessary for public safety and health.
- Oppose any legislation that would further regulate the activities of a private corporation or other business entity that would require professional licenses of full-time employees. Licensing should only be required where deemed appropriate and where it would affect the public at large.

Economic competitiveness

- Continue support for the Texas Enterprise Fund, the Texas Enterprise Zone Fund and the tax incentives available under the Texas Economic Development Act under Chapter 313 of the Tax Code in order to support the cities of Texas in their ability to close deals important to the prosperity of our state.
- Support policies committed to increasing Texas's economic competitiveness by maintaining current non-discriminatory employment practices.

Title insurance reform

- Oppose any legislative efforts to alter the current title insurance system.

Skills Development Fund

- Support continued and increased appropriations for the Skills Development Fund program administered by the Texas Workforce Commission in order to support the training needs of a growing and changing workforce.
- Support reforms that eliminate invasive reporting requirements associated with the Skills Development Fund program grant.
- Support legislative efforts to increase access to these funds for small- and medium-sized businesses to meet their workforce training needs.

Healthcare

Advanced nurse practitioners and physicians assistants

- Support legislation that would expand the ability of advanced nurse practitioners and physicians assistants to provide primary care and would reduce physician oversight requirements and other restrictions on their practice. Increase the supply of advanced nurse practitioners and physicians assistants by expanding educational opportunities and by improving the practice environment.

Graduate medical education

- Support the creation of more Graduate Medical Education (GME) slots and additional GME program funding to ensure adequate residency training in Texas.

Telemedicine

- Support the expansion of telemedicine and oppose any increased restrictions on current, telemedicine laws. Support legislation that allows the commercial market the same, or greater, freedoms in this area that are found in the Medicaid program. Support the Federation of State Medical Board's interstate compact for medical licensure.

Natural Resources

Clean air attainment

- Support efforts to achieve attainment of national ambient air quality standards that help near non-attainment areas stay in attainment, ensure that the responsibility for emission reductions is shared equitably among all emission sources, and provide sources of emissions the maximum flexibility in obtaining permit authorizations in order to efficiently achieve reductions.
- Support efforts by the Legislature to establish the authority of the TCEQ to acknowledge the contribution of foreign sources of air pollution, incorporate foreign contributions into Texas' air quality implementation plans and petition the EPA for approval of such plans.

Environmental regulatory structure

- Support an environmental regulatory structure that bases state law on the enactment of federal environmental laws and regulations so that consistency is maintained, regulation occurs at the state level, and the maximum flexibility is afforded to Texas businesses as long as equivalent environmental protection is achieved.
- Support environmental regulatory structure based on sound science and introduces compliance changes at a business friendly rate.

Cost of federal and state regulations

- Oppose any new taxes to pay for additional environmental regulatory programs. Oppose the imposition of any new fees to recover the cost of regulatory programs unless the program can be shown to clearly address a critical environmental or public health need. Fees should only be assessed to recover the actual costs imposed on government by the activities of the regulated entities, must reasonably allocate costs between members of a regulated universe and must be adjusted periodically to actually match agency budgets and legislative appropriations.

Endangered Species Act

- Support reforms to the Endangered Species Act to ensure that sound science, economic impacts, and cost-benefit considerations are the foundation of species-protection strategies.

Statewide water plan

- Support appropriations to fund the state water plan.

Permit process streamlining

- Support legislation to streamline the permitting process to ensure that businesses can maintain environmental compliance and at the same time minimize roadblocks that result in expensive procedural delays.

Texas Emissions Reductions Plan funding

- Support Texas Emissions Reduction Plan funding to improve air quality, enhance public health, and promote economic prosperity.

Employment Law

Family and Medical Leave Act

- Oppose efforts to modify the FMLA, and oppose any initiatives to require employers to pay for FMLA leave with unemployment insurance taxes.

Fraud Control

- Support legislation to allow the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to hire outside contractors on a pay-for-performance basis to assist in efforts to detect and remedy unemployment benefits fraud.
- Support heavy sanctions and aggressive prosecution of workers' compensation fraud by both employers and employees.

Right-to-work

- Support efforts to maintain a strong right-to-work law in Texas and oppose agency shop legislation.

Wage and price controls

- Support efforts to eliminate wage and price controls of any kind.

Union dues payroll collection

- Oppose efforts to allow public employees, or to require private employers, to subsidize or promote labor unions or similar organizations through payroll collection of dues and contributions.

Entrepreneurship

It is critical that communities provide a nurturing entrepreneurial environment for those willing to take the risk of business ownership. The chamber is securing Round Rock's position as a place where the entrepreneur is welcomed, nurtured, and supported.

Entrepreneurship Issues

Economic and Small Business Development

Economic development programs

- Support continued and increased appropriations for the Skills Development Fund and Skills for Small Business programs administered by the Texas Workforce Commission in order to support the training needs of a growing and changing workforce.
- Support reforms that eliminate invasive reporting requirements associated with the Skills Development Fund and Skills for Small Business programs grant.
- Support legislative efforts to increase access to these funds for small- and medium-sized businesses to meet their workforce training needs.

Entrepreneurship education

- Support educational opportunities for non-traditional students to acquire the level of basic skills needed to start and operate a business.
- Support efforts to leverage partnerships between private industry and academia, which can provide Texas universities pathways to bridge innovation and the marketplace.

Investments and Financial Services

Access to capital and the current investment climate

- Support domestic venture and angel capital markets.
- Continue full funding of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT).

Incentives

- Continue to support local control and flexibility in the use of tax abatements, tax increment financing, reinvestment zones, and other incentives to promote economic development and job creation.

Small Business Administration funding

- Support increased funding for the Small Business Administration to support local business owners who seek access to resources to start and grow their businesses.

Taxation and Regulation

Employment law for small businesses

- Support maintaining a strong right-to-work law in Texas.
- Oppose arbitrary increases in minimum wage that cannot be supported by improvements in productivity and that deprive many entry-level workers of job opportunities.
- Oppose the Department of Labor's overtime final rule to update the salary and compensation levels needed for Executive, Administrative and Professional workers to be exempt.

Franchise tax

- Support a revenue neutral repeal of the franchise tax.

Professional licensing

- Support legislative efforts to ensure that all occupations licensed by the state are necessary for public safety and health.
- Oppose any legislation that would further regulate the activities of a private corporation or other business entity that would require professional licenses of full-time employees.

Property tax system

- Support a balanced state tax system that encourages the savings and investment necessary for the creation of jobs and that does not place a disproportionate share of the tax burden on business. Any revision in the business tax structure should reduce the percentage of state and local taxes paid by business or be revenue-neutral.

Regulatory policy (i.e., fees and fines)

- Support legislative efforts to maintain a regulatory climate that does not impose hidden taxes on employers through excessive fees, fines, and unfunded mandates, but rather reduces excessive regulations to promote, rather than impede, economic growth and job creation.

R & D tax credit

- Support the permanence of the R&D incentives to ensure the tax climate for innovation remains predictable.

Infrastructure

Estimates show the Round Rock community hitting a maximum population of approximately 250,000 people in the next twenty to twenty-five years. Properly supporting this level of residency requires a commensurate increase in infrastructure. The chamber recognizes this and focuses on partnering with city, county, and state officials to achieve well-developed solutions.

Infrastructure Issues

Mobility and Transportation

Sales tax programs

- Support continued use of a locally approved 1/2 cent sales tax collected by cities to fund economic development efforts.
- Oppose efforts to reduce local control of these funds or efforts to limit the uses of these funds.

Dedicated and long-term transportation funding source

- Identify and dedicate new revenue sources to fully fund the Texas's long-term transportation needs.

Fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees

- Support increasing the motor fuels tax and vehicle registration fees and indexing them to inflation.
- Support implementing a user-based vehicle miles traveled tax to eventually replace the motor fuels tax.

Local control and input in funding new transportation projects

- Support the continued efforts to enhance the ability of local communities to participate in the transportation planning, development process, and funding options that address local and state connectivity needs.

Multimodal transportation

- Support the examination of a comprehensive, multimodal approach to mobility that includes roads, air, rail, public transportation, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Public transit

- Support the development of a high-functioning public transportation system in Round Rock to increase regional workforce mobility.

Ridesharing programs

- Support flexible yet consistent licensing and operating standards for all transportation network companies and ridesharing providers, including taxis.

Right-of-way acquisition for future growth planning

- Support proactive efforts of local government officials to secure right-of-way for future growth planning.
- Support the city's development of a robust arterial road system with six-lane roadways.

Road maintenance and repair funding

- Support strong cooperation among all levels of government, as well as the community, to address the area's transportation needs.
- Support identifying, securing, and leveraging additional funds for transportation and granting flexibility in funding local transportation projects without increasing impact fees that are not supported by transparent, relevant data.

Telecommuting and alternative scheduling

- Support efforts to increase the region's telecommuting and alternative scheduled workforce.

Toll road designation

- Support the construction of toll roads where they are appropriate, have local support, and do not reduce transportation options available to users.

Land and Resource Management

Groundwater access and ownership

- Support innovative policies that account for landowners rights and communities' needs.

Local, regional, and state water planning

- Support proactive local and regional planning that incorporates cost-benefit analyses for short- and long-term water needs, which includes supply, delivery infrastructure, and conservation.

Regulatory authority available to municipalities in extraterritorial jurisdictions

- Support non-invasive annexation practices.
- Support legislative efforts to compel special utilities districts (SUD's) to provide proof of capacity to serve in order to ensure that SUD's can meet the highest and best use as the city develops.

Renewable energy

- Support legislative efforts to increase the supply of energy using a diverse mixture of fuels including oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear, applied in an environmentally safe manner and coupled with encouragement of conservation and the practical use of renewable energy sources.

Statewide water plan

- Support continued evaluation and improvement of the statewide water plan while ensuring sufficient funding is available.

Waste management

- Support continued efforts to ensure waste water management systems sufficiently support future growth.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

One of the most, if not the most, important aspects of a high-performing community is its ability to create and maintain a skilled workforce. To do this, it must have integrated coordination between its public and higher education systems and its business stakeholders. The chamber works to ensure that all of these entities are on the same page in order to produce top-flight talent.

Talent Development Issues

Higher Education

Community colleges

- Support education at the community college level as an important contributor to training students for jobs in the workforce and provide a path for certification.

Financial aid (for non-credit courses and part-time students)

- Support the availability and effectiveness of financial aid programs for part-time students and/or students enrolled in non-credit courses.

Graduate medical education

- Support the creation of more Graduate Medical Education (GME) slots and additional GME program funding to ensure adequate residency training in Texas.

Health-related institution funding

- Maintain funding sources of healthcare professional shortage programs and support approaches which will create more computer science graduates.

Higher education affordability and accessibility

- Support legislation that would provide that the funding of higher education institutions be based on the completion of courses, not based upon classroom attendance on the 12th day of the semester, to promote timely and cost efficient graduation.
- Provide more sustainable and predictable methods of funding post-secondary education.

Workforce ready graduates

- Support educational opportunities for non-traditional students, including adult learners who did not complete a secondary education credential.
- Support funding options to promote degree, credential, and/or certification completion.
- Support legislative efforts to promote programs that simultaneously allow adult learners to complete degrees, credentials, and/or certifications for the purpose of increasing workforce ready graduates.

Transfer pathways

- Support legislative efforts to maximize efficient student pathways and to offer more affordable educational opportunities such as through dual credit and early college start programs.

Public Education

Accountability

- Oppose any measures that weaken the current education accountability system.

Career and Technical Education funding

- Support legislation that simplifies the application process for receiving federal funds for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.
- Support legislative efforts to provide more flexibility to use federal resources to respond to changing education and economic needs and improve CTE alignment with in-demand jobs.
- Support increases in transparency and accountability.

Dual credit

- Support current K12 and higher education funding for dual credit courses and the TEXAS Grant scholarship limited income students who graduate college/career ready. Fund 100% of students eligible to receive TEXAS Grants.

Local control

- Support local control by school board members to provide for adequate funding of necessary programs.
- Support allowing local school administrators flexibility to deliver education efficiently in their own districts.

Partnerships to promote postsecondary and career readiness

- Support legislative action that promotes employers providing meaningful internships, apprenticeships, and other opportunities for students, such as a tax credit for companies offering a six- to eight-week internships for high school students in a recognized CTE pathway program.
- Support legislative efforts to encourage partnerships between higher education institutions, public school districts, and workforce that promote postsecondary readiness, particularly among at-risk students.

School choice

- Support accountability for taxpayer dollars and student achievement through state assessments for any form of voucher program (i.e. tuition tax-credit).

School districts' facilities needs and debt

- Support legislation to alleviate the current state of school district facility needs and debt and the removal of constraints or limitations exist across the state, particularly in communities experiencing rapid growth, to fund facilities at the local level.
- Support legislative efforts to adopt best practice models for facility efficiency and long term taxpayer savings.
- Support legislative efforts to ensure the current facility funding programs, the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) and the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA), to address school districts' facility needs and provide property tax relief.

Workforce Development

Adult basic education (e.g., computer literacy and English as a second language)

- Support educational opportunities for non-traditional students, including adult learners who did not complete a secondary education credential, to acquire the level of basic skills needed to enter the workforce.
- Support funding options to promote degree, credential, and/or certification completion.
- Support legislative efforts to promote programs that simultaneously allow adult learners to complete degrees, credentials, and/or certifications for the purpose of increasing workforce ready graduates.

Skills Development Fund

- Support continued and increased appropriations for the Skills Development Fund program administered by the Texas Workforce Commission in order to support the training needs of a growing and changing workforce.
- Support reforms that eliminate invasive reporting requirements associated with the Skills Development Fund program grant.
- Support legislative efforts to increase access to these funds for small- and medium-sized businesses to meet their workforce training needs.

Veteran Hiring

- Support tools to customize local workforce and education opportunity, better track veteran hiring.