



ROUND ROCK CHAMBER

AGENDA FOR ECONOMIC VITALITY 2020

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON APRIL 23, 2020

The Agenda for Economic Vitality is a vehicle for the Round Rock Chamber to express its broad and prevailing positions on vital public policy issues at the local, state, and federal levels.

The Chamber believes wholeheartedly that the entire community thrives when the local economy is strong. As such, our public policy efforts focus on issues that ensure Round Rock stays optimally situated for business success, economic opportunity, and a high quality of life.

Round Rock has a supportive and proactive economic environment, and the Chamber is dedicated to keeping it that way.

We encourage the business community to play an active role in shaping the business climate of our community through participation in our Chamber. As a convener for policymakers and the business community, the Chamber works diligently to facilitate meaningful, proactive communication where opportunities and challenges can be evaluated and discussed in order to enable us to move forward with a unified voice.



LOCAL



STATE



FEDERAL

212 East Main Street, Round Rock, TX 78664

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PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES



Tax Policy – The Chamber is committed to a stable, pro-growth, and predictable tax climate that supports economic growth and creation of jobs.

Property Tax

- Support policies that affirm municipal authority to provide and fund necessary services and infrastructure to meet the needs of their growing communities.



- Oppose policies that set artificial property tax caps that limit cities' ability to meet the needs of their growing communities. (revenue caps/rollback rate).



Sales Tax

- Support policies that ensure municipalities have the authority they need to plan for and fund future growth (Texas Local Government Code, Chapters 380 and 381).



- Support continue use of a locally approved 1/2 cent sales tax collected by cities to fund transportation improvements and economic development programs.



Franchise Tax

- Support revenue neutral reductions to or elimination of the franchise tax.



Fees

- Monitor new proposed fees and their potential impact to our community's economic growth.



Regulation - The Chamber is committed to ensuring regulations that allow for optimal business operations, promote economic growth and job creation, and offer stability and certainty.

Development Standards and Processes

- Support development regulations, standards, and practices that are clear, consistently applied, and provide predictable costs and timelines for developers.



- Support continued policies that streamline the development process and minimize procedural delays, while still ensuring that businesses maintain the safety of the work and compliance with building, construction, and zoning codes.



Professional Licensing

- Support policies that recognize the need for professional licensing to ensure public health and safety, industry best practices, and consumer confidence, while minimizing undue burden on businesses.



Regulatory Climate

- Support policies that maintain a regulatory climate that promotes economic growth and job creation (oppose excessive fees and unfunded mandates on small business).



Employment Law – The Chamber is committed to ensuring workplace regulations that allow for optimal business operations.

Right-To-Work

- Support maintaining Texas' strong right-to-work law.



Workplace Policy

- Oppose workplace regulations or mandates that impose undue burdens on employers, especially small business, including mandatory higher minimum wages and paid leave.
- Support policies that foster workforce recruitment efforts and oppose policies that complicate human resources administration and undermine the business community's commitment to diversity and inclusion.



Union Dues Payroll Collection

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



Economic Development – The Chamber is committed to accelerating economic growth through strategic business development, business retention, and business attraction.

- Support, preserve, and expand business recruitment and expansion incentive tools that lead to measurable, new economic activity and create a positive return on investment for Round Rock and the State of Texas.



- Support the Texas Enterprise Fund and the Texas Enterprise Zone Program.



- Support local authority and flexibility in the use of economic development tools available under the Texas Tax Code (Chapters 312 and 313) and the Texas Local Government Code (Chapters 380 and 381), and other incentives to promote economic development and job creation.



- Support the sales tax exemption for research and development.



Education and Talent Development – The Chamber is committed to promoting access to affordable, high-quality education, career paths that lead to jobs, and workforce initiatives that create a robust talent pipeline.

Child Care and Early Education

- Support high-quality childcare options and high-quality, full-day early education programs.



K-12 Public Education

- Support efforts to evolve the state's accountability system so that it is more holistic and recognizes outcomes outside current state assessments, such as completion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) coherent sequences and certifications, completion of college-level courses, and University Interscholastic League (UIL) academic activities.



- Support CTE education and public-private partnerships that enrich learning opportunities for students and educators in order to build a robust talent pipeline for high-demand careers (skilled professions, “hot jobs,” critical workforce shortages).



- Support efforts to continue and strengthen the Texas Legislature’s commitment to public education as provided by House Bill 3 (86th Texas Legislature).



Post-Secondary Education: Community Colleges and Technical Schools

- Support all postsecondary education opportunities (dual credit, early college high school programs, community colleges, technical schools) as important contributors to training students for jobs in the workforce and providing pathways for certification and/or further education (apprenticeships, certifications, two-year degrees).



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



Post-Secondary Education: Universities

- Support policies and funding requests that recognize the necessary growth of Round Rock-area universities that are critical for developing and maintaining a strong talent pipeline.



Workforce Development Programs

- Protect and support policies and programs that help communities attract and upskill their workforce and address the needs of employers based on timely local labor market data (Skills Development Fund, Skills for Small Business).



- Support policies and programs that incentivize employer-led internships, externships, apprenticeships, and other opportunities for students.



- Support policies that leverage partnerships between private industry and academia to ensure K-12, community college, technical school, and university pathways that bridge innovation and the marketplace.



Entrepreneurship and Small Business – The Chamber is committed to establishing and maintaining a strong startup culture so that entrepreneurs and small business owners are welcomed, nurtured, and supported.

- Support policies that improve the development of entrepreneurship infrastructure, including access to community, programs, and capital for startups and small businesses (mentors, technology, access to markets).



- Support policies that provide business certainty through consistent operations and policies that establish clear rules for small and growing businesses.



- Support increased funding for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Texas Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Program to support local business owners and entrepreneurs who seek access to resources to start and grow their businesses.



Mobility and Transportation – The Chamber is committed to ensuring a comprehensive, regional, multimodal approach to mobility that includes public-private partnerships, dedicated user-fees, and loan programs.

- Support identifying, securing, and leveraging additional funds for transportation and granting flexibility in funding local transportation projects.



- Support appropriation of sufficient funding to maintain the federal Highway Trust Fund.



- Support the enactment of a long-term federal infrastructure modernization bill.



Trade Agreements and Tariffs – The Chamber is committed to supporting trade and investment agreements that are fair and accountable.

- Support trade agreements that are fair, protect sensitive intellectual property, offer investment transparency, and ensure due process in government procurement.



- Oppose new tariffs and other barriers that threaten the competitiveness of businesses, endanger jobs, and/or increase costs to consumers.



Healthcare – The Chamber is committed to promoting healthcare policy that controls costs, expands access, and improves quality of life because overall health and wellness is crucial for our community, workforce, and, ultimately, our economy.

- Support policy that promotes value-based, high-quality, and coordinated care.



- Oppose cuts or delays to Medicaid, Medicare, and hospital payments.



- Support efforts to stabilize the health insurance marketplace and to provide accessible private coverage options.



Environment – The Chamber is committed to protecting natural resources in order to ensure a continued thriving economy and dynamic community.

- Support policies and funding that facilitate climate preparedness and community resilience, including water and watershed management, fire management, flood control, and drought response, to the extent that they ensure the economic well-being of our community and minimize undue burden on businesses.



Immigration – The Chamber is committed to supporting immigration reforms and programs that encourage job creation, a skilled workforce, and economic growth.

- Support policies that raise the cap on legal employment-based visa programs to enable employers to meet their workforce needs in a timely manner.



- Support immigration reforms that safeguard a legal, stable, skilled workforce through employment-based visas, particularly Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients and employment-authorized H-4 dependent spouses with Employment Authorization Documents (EADs).



Disaster Relief – The Chamber is committed to supporting the business community and the greater community and region during times of crisis.

- Support policies, programs, and services that support the business community and economy during and after disaster designations.



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