



2021

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce represents more than 1,500 business organizations that employ more than 110,000 people living in and around Missouri's third-largest city. Our advocacy efforts are based on making southwest Missouri a great place to do business through a member and volunteer driven process.

The Chamber's public policy efforts are focused on impacting the business climate and helping to grow jobs, develop the workforce and drive investment in our region and our state.

Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the Chamber has prioritized business assistance for COVID-19 response and recovery. The Chamber continues to be a leading voice for the Springfield region's businesses as they navigate the impact of the pandemic.



Governor Mike Parson speaks to Chamber members at 3rd annual State of the State event.



BUSINESS CLIMATE



WORKPLACE ISSUES

Missouri's business climate should foster job creation and growth. Balancing and strengthening the state's employment laws will protect both employers and employees through fairness and transparency.

The Chamber supports:

- Legislation that will shore up the unemployment insurance trust fund including linking unemployment benefits to the rate of unemployment.
- Right to work legislation because of the impact it would have on Missouri's future economic prosperity.
- Legislation that allows employers to access prior workers' compensation claims for prospective employees to screen for a history of fraudulent claims.
- Legislation to clarify that, in order for a specific medical treatment to be covered under workers' compensation, a work injury must be the prevailing factor causing the need for that medical treatment, mirroring the standard for determining the workers' compensation claim.
- Legislation that would end joint and several liability and hold a defendant liable for only the percent of harm the defendant has caused.
- Continued review of Missouri's existing prevailing wage laws to further improve certainty and predictability.

- Legislation to simplify and clarify the test to determine independent contractor status.
- The continuation of efforts initiated in response to the coronavirus pandemic to ease applicable statutory and regulatory burdens to streamline processes and promote business efficiency.
- The protection of intellectual property and safety balanced with an appropriate level of consumer access and ability to repair equipment.

The Chamber opposes:

- Legislation that would mandate limitations on an employer's ability to fully screen a job applicant at any time during the hiring process.
- Legislation that would increase workers' compensation costs by requiring employers to cover the cost of care provided by employee-selected healthcare providers.

LEGAL CLIMATE

An improved legal climate in Missouri is critical to business attraction for the state.

The Chamber supports:

- Safe harbor liability protections for businesses that have followed government health and safety guidelines during COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.



BUSINESS CLIMATE CONTINUED

The Chamber supports:

- Liability protections for manufacturers that produced Personal Protective Equipment, and for healthcare workers who provided medical care, when reasonable efforts were made to protect public health.
- Continuing to strengthen requirements for making claims under the Missouri Merchandising Practices Act (MMPA).
- The establishment of an Asbestos Transparency Act in Missouri.
- Implementation of a reasonable statute of repose in Missouri.
- Legislation that reforms current law to require written notice to employers about wage rate discrepancies and a reasonable amount of time to correct the error before a claim for attorney fees can be made.
- Missouri's non-partisan court plan and encourages continued analysis of the plan to identify opportunities for improvement, including additional citizen participation.
- Adequate funding for Greene County Judicial Courts and facilities to ensure safe and efficient access to justice, including an increase in the state's allocation to jail inmate per diem funding and increased funding for the public defender system.
- Continued funding of the Pretrial Witness Protection Services Fund.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A strong pro-business climate is critical in competing for jobs and economic growth.

The Chamber supports:

- Proven tax credit programs that are competitive, performance based, provide a positive return on the state's investment and are not subject to the appropriations process.
- Programs that leverage private investment and stimulate employment.
- Policies that would provide for regional equity for key tax credit programs.
- The restoration and funding of Missouri's research and development tax credit.
- Equitable access to economic development tools among all regions of the state.
- Continued full funding of the Missouri Partnership.
- Policies that strengthen domestic agriculture, promote exports and ensure a safe and stable food supply.
- Reforms to the state's low-income housing tax credit program.
- Maintaining the current structure of local economic development tools including Community Improvement Districts (CID), Transportation Development Districts (TDD) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF).
- The designation of the City of Springfield as a Qualified Local Program provider for land disturbance in order to eliminate the redundancy of state and local permits and fees.

The Chamber opposes:

- Legislation that would allow businesses to discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity because of the anticipated negative economic consequences for the State of Missouri.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT

The Chamber supports initiatives that would positively enhance the small business and entrepreneurial climate in the state to encourage growth and development in this critical sector.

The Chamber supports:

- Programs that incentivize capital investment, startup and small business assistance and access to early stage capital and support.
- The development of an angel investor tax credit to increase entrepreneurial access to risk capital.
- Strategic investments to support Missouri's research base, including innovation centers.
- A climate that fosters entrepreneurship and innovation, including restoration of funding for the Missouri Technology Corporation.

November 2020 groundbreaking for OTC Center for Manufacturing – a top Chamber legislative priority.





EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Developing and training the state's future workforce is the key to our economic growth. Access to qualified workers is a top priority for businesses. Missouri has made significant progress to enhance the state's workforce efforts and become more competitive with other states by taking a more flexible and innovative approach to workforce development. As we look to the future, investment in workforce will continue to remain key to the state's economic recovery and future success.

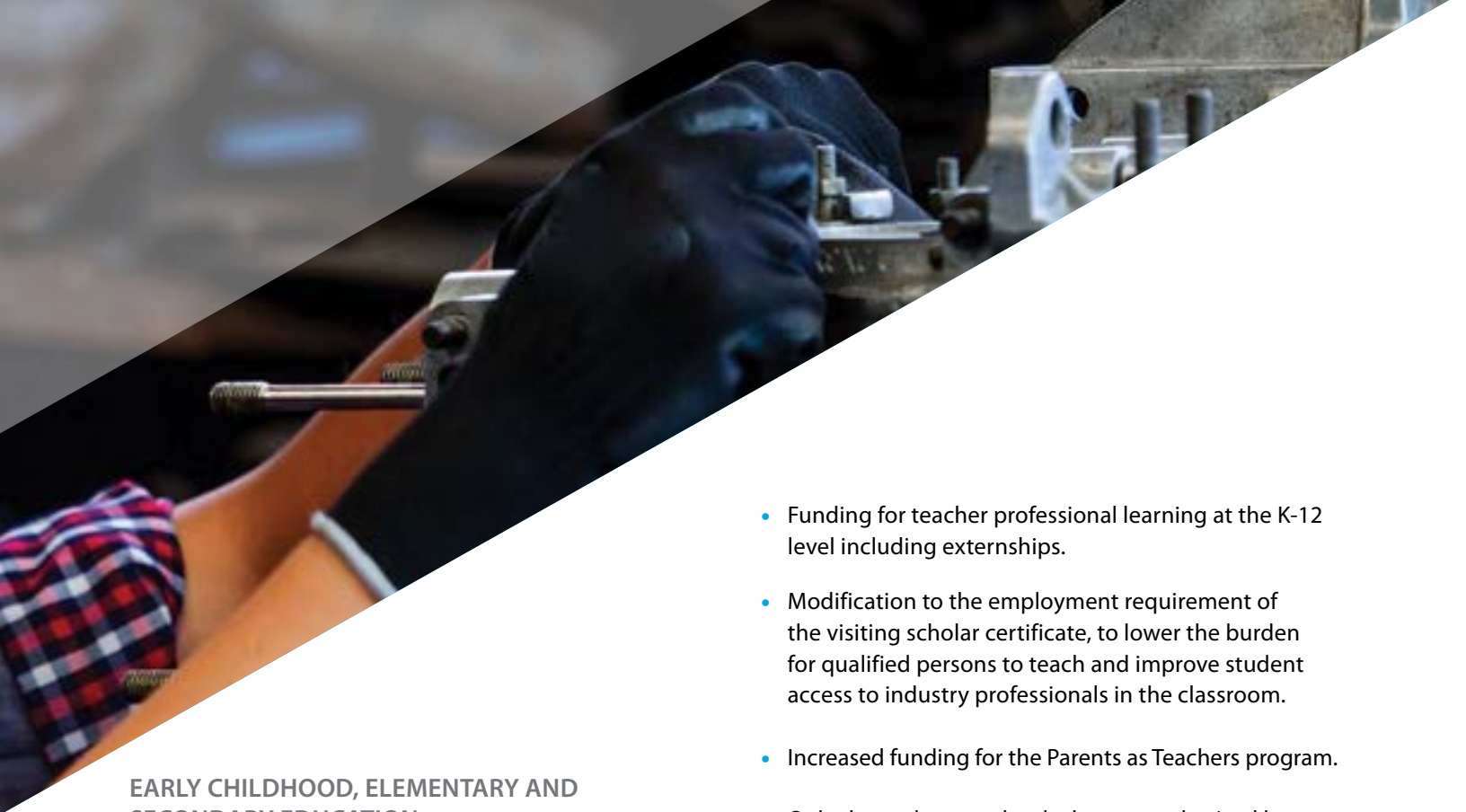
The Chamber supports:

- Funding for Missouri One Start, to ensure a comprehensive, robust approach to workforce development to incentivize industry to grow or expand in Missouri and meet employers' current and future needs.
- Funding and enhanced flexibility for the Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant program to increase degree and certification attainment among adults and enhance Missouri's workforce.
- Supplemental state funding to match federal workforce training dollars to remain competitive and meet expanding employment needs.

- Apprenticeships and the use of Industry Recognized Credentials to enhance skills, better train individuals and increase workforce productivity.
- Legislation to authorize the Hand-Up Pilot Program in Greene County, allowing recipients to receive transitional childcare benefits to encourage working parents to seek increased skills and higher wage jobs.

EDUCATION

Continued investment in all levels of public education will ensure that a properly trained workforce will be available to meet the needs and expectations of Missouri employers.



EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Chamber supports:

- Reinstating and maintaining full funding of the current foundation formula for K-12 public education to ensure Missouri's educational system is competitive and capable of effectively preparing tomorrow's workforce.
- A set of rigorous standards for the fundamental coursework that students encounter at each grade level, while preserving local control of curriculum and instructional choices by educators to achieve such standards.
- The protection of the authority of locally elected school boards to make decisions that impact students and families within their districts.
- The reduction or elimination of mandates for the state's public-school systems that aren't properly funded.
- Innovative approaches to education that encourage more students to move into high-demand fields such as IT, including support for programs such as GO CAPS and the availability of a computer science teacher certification.
- The use of school waivers approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to encourage innovation in K-12 public schools.
- Funding for teacher professional learning at the K-12 level including externships.
- Modification to the employment requirement of the visiting scholar certificate, to lower the burden for qualified persons to teach and improve student access to industry professionals in the classroom.
- Increased funding for the Parents as Teachers program.
- Only those charter schools that are authorized by local boards of education and subject to the same accountability standards as other Missouri public schools.
- Efforts to incentivize school districts to partner with businesses to improve employability and life skills beyond standardized test scores of academic standards.
- Increased appropriations for K-12 transportation to meet the statutory funding level.
- The current structure of the Springfield Public Schools Board of Education comprised of seven at-large positions with three-year terms that expire in April.
- Changing the minimum number of petition signatures to certify a candidate to run for the Springfield Public Schools Board of Education to 250.

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- The completion of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as a high school graduation requirement with appropriate exemptions.
 - Enabling legislation to allow voters within Greene County to consider a ballot measure to fund early childhood education initiatives.

The Chamber opposes:

- Efforts to establish programs that would divert state dollars from Springfield Public Schools or other high performing districts.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Investment in higher education is key in developing Missouri's workforce. The state's current level of funding for higher education puts Missouri at a disadvantage to peer states that invest at significantly higher levels.

The Chamber supports:

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- Restoration of core operating appropriations for all public colleges and universities.
 - An equity appropriation increase to address the per student funding disparities between institutions around the state, specifically for Ozarks Technical Community College.
 - Appropriations for public higher education capital projects at Missouri State University and Ozarks Technical Community College, including Ozark Technical Community College's Center for Advanced Manufacturing.
 - Increased support for Missouri's A+ Program and the ability to maximize access among high school students.
 - Need and merit-based scholarship programs such as Access Missouri and Bright Flight.



FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY, GOVERNANCE & TAXATION

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY & GOVERNANCE

The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce encourages responsible stewardship of state finances and a balanced state budget without placing undue tax burdens on the business community or reducing the effectiveness of essential state programs.

The Chamber supports:

- Legislation that would improve the existing initiative petition system, ensuring a fair and transparent process.
- The development of an effective fiscal note process that accurately measures the total fiscal impact of proposed legislation, including an accounting of the anticipated revenue gains from proposed tax credit programs.
- Lessening term limit restrictions for members of the Missouri Senate and House of Representatives.
- Preserving the April option for municipal elections.

The Chamber opposes:

- Further broad-based tax cut measures until current reforms have been fully implemented and the state budget has stabilized.

TAXATION

The current tax rate is not a detriment to business attraction efforts for the state. State tax reform should be reasoned, data-driven, consider the long-term impact on the economy and support crucial state investments.

The Chamber supports:

- Legislation to create a mechanism to collect existing sales tax for online transactions without a simultaneous tax cut, to address the changing economy.
- Limits on the expansion of local permitting and regulatory requirements that add expense to business in excess of the cost to provide necessary government services.
- Modifying Missouri's timely sales tax filing discount for retailers and directing the savings to fund key priorities.

The Chamber opposes:

- The retroactive application of a new interpretation in taxation of businesses.





HEALTHCARE REFORM

The Chamber supports policies that make the delivery of health care services less costly and more efficient, address the needs of patients, providers and payers and protect the interests of business, without shifting the cost of the uninsured.

The Chamber supports:

- Establishing a comprehensive statewide statutory prescription drug monitoring program.
- Consumer-driven solutions that will help to control costs through the use of incentives and wellness and preventive programs.
- A transformation of the Medicaid program to include reasonable reforms that improve health outcomes and reduce costs.
- Funding to implement voter approved Medicaid expansion.
- Equity between managed care insurance companies and providers.





QUALITY OF LIFE

TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE

The Chamber supports the role of tourism, the arts, libraries, and cultural organizations as contributing to the economic health and quality of life in the region.

The Chamber supports:

- Enabling legislation that would allow Springfield voters to increase the City's authority to collect hotel-motel or convention taxes for capital investments to increase overnight travel and tourism.
- A revised funding formula for the Division of Tourism using the appropriation from the last fiscal year as the funding baseline, and fully funding that formula.
- Allocation of the non-resident professional athletes and entertainers income tax to the Missouri Cultural Trust and the Missouri State Library Networking Fund as defined by state statute.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

The region's natural resources and unique geologic setting are incredible assets. It is critical to our state's vitality to protect those assets without placing undue burden on the business community.

The Chamber supports:

- Reasonable environmental, water and energy policies that provide a balance between protecting the sustainability of natural resources while encouraging economic growth and promoting quality of life.
- Regulatory reform that reduces administrative requirements and the economic burden of regulatory compliance and considers the sometimes conflicting compliance requirements between state and federal regulatory bodies.

The Chamber opposes:

- Unfunded and underfunded legislative mandates.



TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE



Given the state's geographic advantage as a transportation hub, safe and efficient transportation infrastructure is a crucial element in supporting our continued growth and development.

The Chamber supports:

- Alternative sources of funding for transportation infrastructure to ensure increased investment in the statewide system; such funding should not negatively impact the state's limited general revenue budget.
- Raising motor fuel tax within the confines of the Hancock Amendment.
- Evaluating the viability of raising auto license and registration fees in order to fund transportation.

- Partnerships between MoDOT, the region's local governments, and the private sector, including the cost share program.
- Increased funding for multimodal transportation to improve port, rail, aviation and a dedicated source of state transit funding for Missouri's public transit providers.
- The expansion of broadband throughout the state.

The Chamber opposes:

- The transfer of state-owned roadways to local ownership and maintenance.

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