



## **Legislative Agenda 85<sup>th</sup> Texas State Legislature**

**The United Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce's agenda for the 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session builds on the progress of recent years while committing to address long-term challenges. The Chamber will continue to lead initiatives to strengthen our business climate, drive improvements in education, attract and retain the best and brightest workforce from around the world, promote a regulatory climate that offers stability and predictability to investors and advocate for public policies that strategically manage our region's growth to ensure a high quality of life for all.**

### **Economic Development: The Chamber supports**

- **Appropriating sufficient funding to maintain the Texas Enterprise Fund balance of at least \$200 million per biennium, to attract high-value companies to Texas. The TEF helps persuade large job-creating companies to choose Texas. Since its 2004 inception, the TEF helped Texas create more than 70,000 direct and 250,000 indirect jobs and \$21 billion in capital investment.**
- **The Texas Economic Development Act incentive program in Chapter 313, to attract capital investment projects to Texas. Since 2009, these projects have garnered more than \$21.1 billion in investments and a projected \$47.3 billion investment over the lifetime of the projects' agreements.**
- **Protecting economic development tools which attract new jobs and companies to Texas, including but not limited to: Skills Development Fund, CPRIT, Sales & Use Tax Exemptions (to include the R&D tax credit), Enterprise & Tax Increment Financing Districts, Miscellaneous Provisions Related to Planning (Ch.312, 380, 381) and the \$1 million small business franchise tax exemption.**
- **An exceptional item of \$9.5 million to allow the Lone Star Unmanned Aircraft System Center (LSUASC) to expand its UAS research and operations and facilitate the FAA's safe integration of UAS into the national airspace. The item would allow the LSUASC to further assist companies and state agencies with integration of UAS strategies into their operations; develop Texas as a leader in the emerging UAS industry; help prepare students and others for jobs requiring UAS expertise; keep Texas competitive with other states with test sites; and fulfill the university's education, research and commercialization missions.**

#### **Windstorm Insurance Reform: The Chamber supports**

- **Protecting the reforms achieved in SB 900, including the restructuring of the governing board to put policyholders on equal footing with insurance industry members, establishing TWIA financial structure that provides a stable, sustainable and affordable rate structure capable of covering a 1-in-100 year storm, requiring member insurance companies to pay allowable assessments sooner, establishing a small statewide catastrophic storm fund for excess losses, and structuring a more financially beneficial re-insurance program.**
- **Creating incentives to promote voluntary coverage of windstorm and hail policies on the Texas Coast.**
- **Pro- policyholder strategies and policies that promote and protect the Texas Gulf Coast.**

#### **Protecting Our Military Bases: The Chamber supports**

- **Excluding school districts from granting Chapter 313, Tax Code, tax abatements for wind farms within 30 nautical miles of a military installation**
- **\$60 million in funding for the Texas Military Preparedness Commission to support military value projects that enhance Texas installations' missions, improve operational efficiencies, and proactively address impacts from sequestration or future base realignment and closure activities.**

#### **Transportation and Infrastructure: The Chamber supports**

- **Policies that promote the efficient movement of goods and people which is crucial to fostering economic development and a desirable quality of life.**
- **Preservation of the funds from Proposition 1 (Oil & Gas Severance Tax) and Proposition 7 (Texas Mobility Fund) to continue the enhancement of the state highway system.**
- **The development of a multi-modal transportation network (roads, freight rail, passenger rail) throughout the state to improve mobility, support its growing population, support economic development, and enable Texas to compete in an increasingly global market.**
- **Protecting various “tools” for mitigating congestion, including toll roads.**
- **Local option funding sources that would be directed to improvements of the local transportation networks that support statewide connectivity.**
- **Funding for the Port Access Account Fund for infrastructure improvements at Texas ports to ensure the effective movement of cargo, essential to the economic vitality of Texas.**

#### **Talent Development: The Chamber supports**

- **The creation of a well-funded and updated school finance system, which includes: sufficient resources so schools prepare, determine and report whether Texas students graduate college and career ready, updated and utilized indices and weights, appropriate funds for English learners and low-income students, and**

formula-funded quality pre-K programs. State funding formulas have not kept pace with the changing demographics and educational needs of local communities.

- Investing to achieve the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30TX plan, including full TEXAS Grants awarded to eligible students. Increasing the number of Texas students who graduate with a college degree or certificate is essential to keep the state globally competitive, now and in the future.
- Maintaining funding for higher education formulas to ensure high quality teaching and support services that prepare students for the workforce.
- An exceptional item for Texas A&M University Corpus Christi of \$2 million to assist with the start-up of civil and industrial engineering programs, which will support the industrial growth underway in the Coastal Bend and also support university research programs in marine and coastal issues, geospatial science and unmanned systems.
- Adequate funding for Community College Core Operations, Student Success Points and Workforce Training is essential.
- Funding for the Texas Workforce Commission to enhance Skills Development Funds and Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grants to continue the critical workforce training capacity of community colleges.
- Opposition to legislation that is seen as discriminatory and would impact workforce recruitment and/or cause a negative economic impact on the state.

#### **Tourism: The Chamber supports**

- Oppose Proposals to Use Local Hotel Tax for Non-Tourism Purposes.
- Support Retention of Full State Tourism Funding.
- Positive changes to Local Hotel Tax Use Laws to include expansion of sporting facilities category to include additional sports activities; requiring communities to complete a financial feasibility study and statutory compliance review prior to pursuit of new or expanded convention center projects; clarifying the "primary usage" test for convention center funding regarding conventions and meetings that directly promote hotel activity and, clarifying state venue tax law to make the statutory wording consistent with legislative intent regarding "other facilities" as they pertain to convention center facilities.
- Utilizing the deep-water Port of Corpus Christi cruise option to foster economic opportunity statewide by developing the Cruise industry between Calhoun and Cameron counties, estimated economic impact-- \$2 billion.
- Preserving the Uniform School Start Date Law (4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August), which allows Texans to vacation through August, bringing millions of sales tax dollars to the Coastal Bend.
- Passage of Open Records Request Requirement for hotel sales data currently online via the Texas Comptroller's website.

- Legislation that would directly benefit parks, recreation, open space, trails, tourism, health and wellness (i.e. utility corridors and mobility), including legislation that would provide a fair and equitable distribution of the sporting goods sales tax revenues for state and local parks and a constitutional dedication of sporting goods sales tax revenues for use in state and local parks that would directly benefit parks, recreation, open space, trails and tourism.

**Energy: The Chamber supports**

- healthy economic growth in Texas by promoting the production of adequate supplies of all forms of energy at competitive prices.
- a balanced approach to expansion of the electric grid system in order to improve and expand the system and maintain reliable service.

**Environment: The Chamber supports**

- efforts by the Legislature to establish the authority of the TCEQ to acknowledge the contribution of foreign sources of air pollution
- efforts to ensure that TCEQ adopt flexible, aggressive plans for the approval of emission reduction credits to ensure the maximum degree of economic growth and business development in air quality nonattainment areas.

**Water: The Chamber supports**

- the development and implementation of a water strategy for the State of Texas to meet the long-term needs of the State, through conservation, surface water, groundwater, aquifer storage and recovery, inter basin transfers, rainwater harvesting, desalination, reuse projects or other strategies.

**Human Trafficking: The Chamber supports**

- Enacting comprehensive legislation to combat human trafficking. Texas' geographical size, location on the Mexico border, and busy ports, compel the state to take a lead role in combating human trafficking.

**Health Insurance Coverage for Low Income Adults in Texas: The Chamber supports**

- Developing and implementation of a flexible "Texas Way Program" to expand private market-based coverage to the uninsured, promote personal responsibility, and focus additional resources on prevention and wellness related to physical and behavioral health.
- Protect and strengthen access to behavioral health care (mental health and substance use disorder services) to create healthier communities as well as healthier workforce.

**Transportation Network Companies: The Chamber supports**

- **comprehensive statewide regulation of TNCs that is uniform, supports consumer choice and personal responsibility, creates incentives for technical innovation, enhances job growth and public safety and eliminates unnecessary and local government regulation**

**Other Issues: The Chamber supports**

- **Opposition to any legislation that would remove public notices from newspapers.**
- **Rejection of any effort to change the current title insurance market , including a move to “file and use” model, that would substantially increase risk, cause higher prices and send jobs out of Texas.**