



Government Affairs Council 2022 Public Policy Platform

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote and support the success of the regional business community through effective advocacy, education and relationship building.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of our lives – including our ability at times to move forward with the Fresno Chamber’s Public Policy Platform. While it is not our intention, circumstances beyond our control may unintentionally affect the GAC’s priorities during the ongoing pandemic.

PRIORITY ISSUES

AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The American with Disabilities Act of 1992 changed the lives of millions of Americans and helped ensure that citizens with disabilities are provided with accommodations. The Chamber supports the reasonable application of and compliance with the policies of state and federal ADA law.

The Chamber Supports:

- Legislation and policies that help businesses comply with ADA requirements.
- Legislation that reduces frivolous ADA lawsuits on businesses.
- Efforts to ensure that reforms passed in recent years to curb the problem of small businesses being victimized by unscrupulous ADA shakedown lawsuits are maintained.
- Efforts to clarify businesses’ obligations to accommodate people with disabilities on their websites and other electronic media.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Legislation that mandates expert reviews (such as mandatory CASP inspections) or disclosures on businesses and property owners.
- Lawsuits that seek to impose state or federal ADA in contexts outside of their original intent, such as on users of websites of online-only businesses.



AIR QUALITY

Given the Central Valley's geographic position, air quality is a significant issue. The Chamber supports the promotion of reasonable solutions to address concerns over our region's air quality. The Chamber believes that the business community and the effect on jobs must be taken into consideration during the policy formulation process.

The Chamber Supports:

- Viable alternative energy methods that businesses can efficiently & cost-effectively use.
- Methods to develop infrastructure for the use of long-term viable alternative fuels.
- Legislation that reduces the expensive mandates placed on businesses when considering ways to conserve energy.
- Policies that aim to improve the quality of the air while not adversely impacting competitiveness of California businesses.
- Policies that are in line with complying with 2017 Cap and Trade legislation.
- Policies that will not adversely impact the competitiveness of California business as a

CITY & COUNTY BUDGETS

The Chamber supports the responsible and transparent formulation of city and county budgets, which detail and execute the best use of the public's funds.

The Chamber Supports:

- Encouraging city and county leaders to adopt budgets that require controlled spending, limit excessive employee compensation packages, and establish a "rainy day" fund.
- Encourage city and county leaders to budget with a 5-year revenue & spending forecast.
- Encourage city and county leaders to engage the business community in their budget planning processes to help look for more efficient ways to operate government including the possibility, where applicable, for privatized services.
- Review and evaluate all proposed city and county tax increases to ensure they do not unduly target or burden business.
- Intra-governmental collaboration where practical.
- Evaluate all fee increase proposals and support those fee increases that are consistent with providing more efficient services without unduly harming the business climate.



CLASS-ACTION LAWSUITS

The Chamber supports:

- Legislative efforts at the local, state, and federal level that will provide relief to business owners from frivolous lawsuits.
- Reforms to ensure timely compensation for plaintiffs.
- Legislative and judicial efforts that limit the standing of class action plaintiffs to those who are harmed.
- Reforms to ensure that settlements result in greater aggregate benefits for the class than the plaintiffs' attorneys receive in fees.
- Reforms to ensure that government agencies cannot settle lawsuits as a means to impose regulation without the required regulatory process.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Privacy laws or regulations that permit class actions for violation of privacy protections, except for data breaches of unencrypted personally identifiable information that result in actual harm to victims.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber is committed to encouraging and participating with government and other industries in creating and attracting jobs to Fresno and the Central Valley.

The Chamber Supports:

- Private enterprise and development projects that enhance economic development and create jobs.
- Programs that provide tax credits or assistance to businesses.
- Programs that support businesses' ability to hire and retain qualified employees.
- Downtown revitalization efforts.
- Legislation that reduces the excessive regulations, fees and unfunded mandates placed on businesses that interfere with economic vitality, competitiveness, or job creation.
- Policies that allow for improved contracting opportunities for small businesses.
- Policies which provide additional amenities and infrastructure that improve the quality of life in the region.



EDUCATION

The Chamber is committed to working with educational partners at the k-12, Community College and University levels to help create a job-ready workforce in Fresno and Central Valley.

The Chamber Supports:

- An educational system that prepares students for jobs/careers starting in middle school.
- Programs that provide student internships.
- Promotion programs that provide incentives for local companies to hire students.
- Promotion of vocational and career technical training programs at the high school and post-secondary levels.
- Treating charter and private schools equally with public schools and based on their services to students and their students' learning success.

EMINENT DOMAIN

The Chamber Supports:

- Advocating for cities/counties to strictly follow the law when utilizing eminent domain.
- Private property rights and the use of eminent domain only as a last resort.
- Monitoring the use of eminent domain on a case-by-case basis.
- Providing for the return of property taken, but not used as part of a project, to the original property owner.

ENERGY

The Chamber supports efforts and opportunities to educate the Fresno-area of the importance of our county and region's energy resources, and their importance to California's economy.

The Chamber Supports:

- Streamlining oil and natural gas well permitting processes in Fresno County, which is consistent with state and federal regulations and applicable zoning.
- The responsible use of produced water from oil and natural gas production for agricultural purposes.
- Measures that invest in new transmission and transmission upgrades.
- Policies that are dedicated to load reduction.



ENERGY CONTINUED:

- Measures that lower the price of energy paid by customers.
- Exploration of alternative energy and the use of renewable energy.
- Cost-effective energy efficiency programs and strategies.
- Allowing individuals or businesses to sell excess power to utilities.
- Measures that permit environmentally sound and water-sensitive hydrocarbon extraction aided by hydraulic fracturing.
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- Measures that permit environmentally sound and water-sensitive hydrocarbon extraction aided by hydraulic fracturing.
- Preserve ability to utilize natural gas;
- Emphasize restaurant environmental efficiencies within “green jobs” movement:
Educate public on green restaurant practices;

GOVERNMENT-MANDATED WAGES & BENEFITS

The Chamber Supports:

- Free-market determination of wages for all employees.
- Unbundling exempt salaries from minimum wage increases and any automatic escalation of wages tied to the cost-of-living indexes.
- Elimination of daily overtime and promote return to a weekly overtime standard.
- The inclusion of tips in calculating minimum and living wages.
- Support flexibility for employers and employees to mutually set meal and break periods, a flexible workweek, and the scheduling and/or hiring of employees.
- The reform of prevailing wage laws on public works projects sensitive to the economies of each region in California.
- Policies that reform benefits to encourage workforce participation.
- Local hire programs/practices that encourage the training and hiring of local residents.



GOVERNMENT MANDATED WAGES CONTINUED:

The Chamber Opposes:

- Local living wage ordinances.
- Mandated sick pay.
- Legislation that eliminates the secret-ballot process or modifies the process for union elections as of November 2009.
- Project Labor Agreement (PLA) mandates.
- Government imposed labor agreements where required to obtain grants or other funding for the Greater Fresno Area.
- Project labor agreements that do not treat union and non-union shops and employees as being on substantially equal footing and training programs.

HEALTH CARE

The Chamber Supports:

- Legislation that allows employers to offer a minimum benefit plan, enabling small employers and their employees to buy health care coverage at a more affordable price.
- Measures that implement a moratorium on benefit mandates.
- Measures that streamline government regulations to increase efficiencies and reduce overall administrative burdens.
- The monitoring of state funding for Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements to providers of health care and fight future attempts to further cut reimbursement rates.
- Voluntary measures that promote wellness and disease management programs.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Mandatory single-payer healthcare in California.
- Legislation that creates a mandatory, tax-funded, government-operated health insurance programs.
- Employer-mandated health coverage.
- Legislation that penalizes businesses that do not provide health benefits to employees.
- Measures that place unfunded mandates on hospitals.



IMMIGRATION

The Chamber believes in the importance of a clear and functioning immigration system that promotes respect and compliance with federal law.

The Chamber Supports:

- Immigration Reform, that provides a responsible pathway to legal status for law-abiding and contributing undocumented individuals, and individuals under special status.
- An earned pathway to citizenship for immigrants who currently have legal status.
- An earned pathway to legal status for undocumented workers should be created but should not permit line jumping in front of the current immigrant visa backlog, and the immigration processing system should occur in a timeframe that is both expeditious and ensures safety, therefore encouraging legal immigration.
- Legislation to find a solution for those currently under DACA.
- Legislation that creates a comprehensive and accessible guest worker program. The guest worker program should ensure future economic needs for employees and deal with the status of undocumented individuals already in the United States.
- Legislation that strengthens national security by providing for a thorough screening of foreign nationals and creates strong disincentives for illegal immigration.
- An available employment verification system that is fast and reliable for employers and those seeking employment.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Immigration policies that will negatively impact the local economy.
- Immigration policies that lead to mass-deportation & separation of families in region.

LAND USE DEVELOPMENT

With a metropolitan area of nearly a million residents, the Chamber believes in the importance of strategically planning and developing residential and commercial amenities that will help attract jobs and economic investment to the greater-Fresno area.

The Chamber Supports:

- Market driven development which include a variety of development densities.
- Policies that streamline the development process at the City and County of Fresno.
- Cost-effective standards that minimize air pollution, energy use and water consumption.
- Policies that promote affordable housing in aggregate for the Greater Fresno area.



LAND USE DEVELOPMENT CONTINUED:

- Policies that promote future land development that will attract and retain businesses.
- Mixed-use, higher density development in aggregate for the Greater Fresno area.
- The Williamson Act Program and land valuations adhering to the act.
- Land use, planning, housing & zoning issues that encourage & promote business dev.
- Land use and zoning policies that allow for an adequate amount of light and heavy industrial use within the City/County limits.
- The monitoring of policies that impact developer fees.
- The monitoring of amendments to the GP & provide recommendations as needed.
- Reforming the California Environmental Quality Act to reduce development costs.
- Encouraging changes to the Endangered Species Act that consider economic impact.

PAID FAMILY LEAVE

The Chamber Supports:

- Policies that conform and unify current state and federal family leave laws without additional mandates.
- Policies that enact a small employer exemption from the Family Temporary Disability Insurance (FTDI) program.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Additional burdensome and costly PFL mandates that place additional burden on employers.

POLITICAL ACTION AND CAMPAIGN FINANCING

The Chamber Supports:

- Chamber programs that identify, recruit, and educate candidates for local offices, without regard to political affiliation.
- Efforts to make California elections more competitive through redistricting.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Legislation and policies that spend taxpayer dollars on political campaigns.
- Legislation and policies that tax or impose fees on businesses to fund political campaigns.



REVENUE BONDS

In California, a state where revenue bonds often find themselves on local and state-wide ballots every election, it is a Chamber priority to ensure that public funds are being expensed in a responsible and prudent matter. Furthermore, it is critical that bonds hold true to the promise and intent under which they were passed.

The Chamber Supports:

- Bonds that are defined and contain built-in cost controls.
- Encouraging public agencies to have a plan in place to insure accountability and efficient use of funds.

STATE BUDGET

The Chamber Supports:

- Encouraging state legislators to adopt a budget that promotes a healthy economy, provides for more efficient operations, curbs spending and allows for businesses to remain competitive in the global market.
- Encouraging state legislators to adopt a two-year budget cycle.
- Legislation that establishes a “rainy day” reserve fund.
- Ensuring that budget cuts or tax increases do not unduly target or burden California small businesses.

The Chamber Opposes:

- New programs/services that do not have a funding source or will result in tax increases.
- Changes to California property taxes that result in a split-roll for commercial or industrial properties.
- Appropriation of temporary or one-time funding sources to pay for ongoing or continuing program expenditures.

TOURISM

The Chamber Supports:

- Maintaining a strong relationship with the Economic Development Corporation and the Convention and Visitors Bureau to boost tourism.
- Efforts to include local businesses as convention hosts.
- Competitive funding from government entities for the CVB to improve tourism efforts and recruit more conventions to our community.



TRANSPORTATION

With the growth of the Greater Fresno area, the Chamber believes in the importance of visionary region-wide planning to ensure that transportation systems will adequately meet the needs of future businesses and residents.

The Chamber Supports:

- Policies and legislation that repair the local, regional, and state transportation system in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Efforts to improve the current transportation infrastructure to accommodate future economic and population growth.
- Providing input on the prioritization of Measure C projects in an effort to maximize the leveraging of funds where applicable.
- Efforts to bring a high-speed rail system to California with a station in Fresno and a maintenance facility.
- Encouraging the California High Speed Rail Authority to contract with local private sector businesses, utilizing resources found within the community to maximize opportunities for economic vitality and job creation.
- Monitoring the economic impact of fee increases at local airports.
- Efforts to bring more airline carriers to Fresno.
- Policies that would create a non-reimbursable port of entry status for the airport.
- Legislation that increases firefighting requirements at the airport.
- The designation of Highway 99 as an interstate.
- Local private sector business as an alternative to public agencies in the design and construction of infrastructure and transportation projects.
- The construction of Veterans Blvd and all efforts to secure additional funding.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI)

The Chamber Supports:

- Legislation that addresses ways to ensure the Unemployment Insurance fund has enough money to pay out future benefits.
- Support real efforts to overhaul the UI system to a) effectively process claims accurately and timely; b) eliminate opportunity for fraudulent activity; and c) ensure accountability for effective management of the UI system.



UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CONTINUED

The Chamber Opposes:

- Legislation that proposes higher unemployment taxes on employers.
- Penalizing employers by charging additional taxes and fees as a result of federal and state decisions.
- Legislation that extends additional UI benefits.

UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW

The Chamber Supports:

- Policies that protect businesses and consumers from unfair business practices.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Efforts to repeal limits on unfair business practice litigation.

WATER

The Chamber recognizes the importance of comprehensive policy that will deliver additional water to the Fresno area and is committed to working with lawmakers to achieve results.

The Chamber Supports:

- Policies and legislation that increase the developed water supply in California for agricultural and urban uses.
- Policies that increases both above and below ground storage capacity and improves through-Delta and other conveyance systems and encourages conservation.
- Encouraging changes to the Endangered Species Act that takes into consideration the economic impact.
- Using contemporary science for managing the state's water resources.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Legislation or regulation that places environmental restrictions on pumping water out of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

The Chamber Supports:

- Workers' compensation reform measures that reduce financial burdens on businesses

The Chamber Opposes:

- Changes to the Workers' Compensation Act of 2004.