

2018-2019 Legislative Agenda

The Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce continues to be the voice of the business community in the Beaumont area. To that end, we develop a legislative platform on an annual basis, which is detailed below. The items below can, and do, change every year dependent on actions and activities in the state of Texas. While these specific items do change annually, there are several foundational areas that remain constant as they are essential for our business community to be successful, such as the elimination of unnecessary and costly regulations, the elimination or reduction of burdensome taxes and a focus on improving infrastructure in and around our community.

Economic Development

1. **Priority Issue –expediting the permitting process to move projects forward, creating jobs and upgrading infrastructure.**
2. Supports:
 - a. Incentives used for business attraction and retention including: The Texas Enterprise Zone Fund, tax incentives under the Texas Economic Development Act, the use of tax abatements, tax increment financing, reinvestment zones, R&D tax credits and the \$1 million small business franchise tax exemption all of which promote economic development and job creation. **HB 3143**
 - b. The continued focus and funding needed for today's and tomorrow's workforce including Skills Development Training Programs and Skills Development Fund with the Texas Workforce Commission. **SB 2, HB 3650**

Education and Workforce Development

1. Supports:
 - a. Legislation that incentivizes public school districts, community colleges, technical schools and universities to increase the number of graduates in critical fields including the promotion of dual credit programs and the promoting academic excellence in public schools with the emphasis on math, science, and skills required in the modern workplace as well as the promotion of career and technical education as career pathways. **HB 3, SB 1679**
 - b. Adequate funding for Lamar University, Lamar State College - Orange, Lamar State College - Port Arthur, and the Lamar Institute of Technology consistent with their growth and the needs of our future workforce. **SB 2**

Environment

1. Supports:
 - a. Efforts within the State Water Plan that would ensure adequate water supply throughout the state that does not infringe on Southeast Texas; preserving junior water rights protection from legislation on water resources and adequately compensating areas with surplus water resources as part of a comprehensive state water planning effort.
 - b. State control of the air quality permitting programs; state control of the permitting programs for greenhouse gases and legislation to streamline the permitting process to lessen the time for approvals. **SB 698**
 - c. Efforts to restore the hurricane damaged beaches and coastal wetlands which serve as natural barriers for residential communities and industrial assets. **SB 7, SB 1082**
2. Opposes:
 - a. EPA rule proposals for redefining navigable waters and overly expansive control of water conveyances.

Health Care

1. **Priority Issue- Retention of dedicated funding sources for critical local trauma services and promptly distributing those funds to hospitals and physicians who provide uncompensated emergency services.**
2. Supports:
 - a. Legislative action to reestablish an inpatient care facility in Orange County, Texas.
 - b. Non-government efforts to reduce the number of uninsured Texans. A Texas approach should require personal responsibility, responsible utilization of health care services, promotion of primary care and prevention resources, and should ensure fiscal responsibility and efficient management of public resources. We support a Texas solution to draw down federal healthcare dollars.
 - c. Programs for the mentally ill and programs for the developmentally disabled.

Insurance

1. Supports:
 - a. The restructuring of the catastrophic funding mechanisms to equitably spread the risk and the opportunity for affordable insurance rates while working toward private insurance competition in coastal communities. **HB 1900, SB 615, SB 7, SB 8**

Taxes

1. Supports:
 - a. Promoting a competitive business tax environment with all state and local taxes.
 - b. Help to insure no unfunded mandates from the state to local taxing entities.

Transportation, Energy, and Technological Infrastructure

1. Supports:
 - a. Legislation that enhances the competitive position of Texas ports, rail, highways, and pipelines that facilitate international trade. **SB 69**
 - b. The planning, design and construction on our roads including a new interchange at US Highway 69, 96, 287; State Highway 73; the expansion of I-10 from Adams Bayou to the Louisiana state line and the restoration of the State Highway 87 from Sabine Pass to High Island.
 - c. The Sabine Neches Waterway Improvement Project. **HB 3850**
 - d. A strong and reliable electrical system capable of attracting new business and industry with competitive energy costs.
 - e. The Texas Legislature's continued efforts to modernize, update and streamline communications laws and regulations that should lead to ensuring Texans have access to cutting edge networks and technologies including wire line and wireless IP broadband.