

# Business Advocacy

WAUSAU REGION  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
TIME TO GROW

Working to Inform - Educate - Advocate

*Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce*

## 2017-18 ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The below goals were established pursuant to the parameters provided by the Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce's (WRCC) "Legislative Agenda Guiding Principles" document. The WRCC has committed to undertaking actions supporting these goals to the best of its abilities during 2017-18 program year in order to influence the legislative and/or regulatory environment in Wisconsin and actively promote a stronger, healthier business environment in the Wausau region and beyond.

### **Legislative Goal #1: Improve Central Wisconsin's Workforce & Economic Development Environment**

- Advocate for policies and legislation that will attract and retain more people and businesses in central Wisconsin
- Support increasing and/or improving economic development tools for businesses and local governments
- Develop opportunities to increase the number of job experiences and exposures for students at the K-12 level
- Pursue development of an innovative and future-focused public transportation system to increase access to businesses for both workers and customers
- Encourage legislative and regulatory reform efforts to get more people back in the workforce

### **Legislative Goal #2: Better Manage Government Spending Through Budget Prioritizations and Tax Reforms**

- Support tax policy reforms that creates a friendlier environment for business growth
- Encourage a responsible solution for long-term transportation and infrastructure funding that does not rely primarily on local government resources
- Support broadband expansion proposals that will help businesses and residents across central Wisconsin obtain reliable and affordable broadband access
- Encourage the development of collaborations between different government entities in order to reduce duplication of services and provide cost-savings

### **Legislative Goal #3: Reduce and/or Clarify Burdensome Regulations Restricting Business Growth**

- Advocate for simplifying complicated or conflicting regulations that negatively impact businesses
- Demand legislation that ensures regulations are developed in a responsible manner with thorough oversight
- Support healthcare reforms that enable businesses to control costs while maintaining flexibility to provide robust, personalized healthcare to employees
- Encourage regulatory reforms that will help businesses grow in a fiscally-sustainable way
- Support environmental policies that appropriately balance the protection of our natural resources with the need to sustain business and economic growth

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## LEGISLATIVE AGENDA GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As the voice of business in the region, the Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce (WRCC) is committed to developing a competitive and vibrant business community. A healthy business climate leads to a better overall quality of life for our community and thus is at the core of the Chamber's existence. One of the most substantial impacts the Chamber can have in shaping and influencing the business climate is to engage in the legislative process. The Chamber provides an indispensable value to members by educating & informing them about current public policy issues and actively advocating to protect and encourage business prosperity in our region. In addition, the WRCC encourages its individual members to submit recommendations for actions related to legislative or regulatory concerns that could benefit from receiving support from the stronger voice of the full membership. In light of these goals, the Chamber has adopted the following guiding principles:

#### Principle #1: Regulatory Reform

*Business owners have consistently cited burdensome regulations and cumbersome legal systems as having a significant negative impact on their ability to effectively run their businesses. The WRCC understands this burden and will actively advocate for regulatory reform measures that move towards more effective and efficient systems.*

#### Principle #2: Healthcare

*Healthcare coverage encompasses a substantial cost for business owners and their employees. The continuing debate about the best methods for providing access to adequate healthcare has resulted in a frequently-changing legislative environment for healthcare. The WRCC will take actions to ensure all members are regularly informed and educated about the current healthcare environment in order to reduce confusion and support good purchasing choices and customer value.*

#### Principle #3: Taxation & Government Spending

*High taxes have combined with poorly-controlled government spending to create the image of an unfavorable business climate in Wisconsin. Recent government actions have worked to improve the business environment and the WRCC will continue to encourage legislative actions that will reduce the overall tax burden for both businesses and individuals while creating specific guidelines for proper government budgeting and spending practices such as establishing a 'rainy day' fund, implementing a long-term financial plan, authorizing regular debt affordability studies, and developing a policy on the use of one-time revenues.*

#### Principle #4: Workforce Development

*The development of a long-term, sustainable workforce is a significant need voiced by employers across all areas of business. The WRCC will promote an environment where educators and employers work together to ensure we are educating and training a workforce that will meet the needs of Wisconsin's work environment both now and well into the future.*

#### Principle #5: Economic Development

*Without proper economic structures in place, business cannot be sustained. The WRCC recognizes this need and will aggressively advocate for legislation that supports the region's efforts to create, attract, and expand quality businesses, industries, jobs, and related quality of life issues.*

## LEGISLATIVE AGENDA GUIDING PRINCIPLES CONTINUED...

### Principle #6: Infrastructure

*Without the means to efficiently transport products and people, businesses cannot readily access the goods necessary to support themselves. Maintaining modern roads, rails and air transportation to assist with the movement of products and goods to, from and within the region is a top priority for WRCC. In addition, the establishment of cost-effective communication systems, including broadband, that are readily accessible across the region is necessary to support the expansion of businesses, particularly in the region's rural communities.*

### Principle #7: Energy & Environment

*Excessively burdensome regulations related to energy and the environment are key factors in reducing Wisconsin's ability to attract and support businesses, especially in the key industries of manufacturing and agriculture. The WRCC will approve of actions that work to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens while still protecting the region's quality of life and natural beauty, thus making Wisconsin a more competitive and fiscally-attractive option for business.*

### Principle #8: Elections & Government

*Having elected representatives who understand the business perspective seated on legislative rulemaking bodies directly results in the passage of more balanced, budget-focused regulations. Therefore, the WRCC will work to create an environment in the region that is supportive of local Chamber members who desire to run for public offices at local and state levels.*

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## LEGISLATIVE AGENDA ACTION WORDS

To achieve a consistent message throughout the annual Legislative Agenda, the following “action” words have been defined as follows:

#### Advocate:

- Contact elected officials directly at least once either in person or in writing to clarify the Chamber’s position on an issue and explain the reason(s) why that position is the best one to support businesses in central Wisconsin.
- Notify Chamber membership of the Chamber’s position at least once and provide an opportunity for individual members to actively support the Chamber’s position through engagement with elected officials.

#### Demand:

- Contact elected officials at least once in person and at least once in writing to clarify the Chamber’s position on an issue, explain the reasons why that position is the best one to support businesses in central Wisconsin, and request they take an official position to support our stance.
- Notify Chamber membership of the Chamber’s position at least once and provide opportunity(s) for individual members to actively support the Chamber’s position through engagement with elected officials.

#### Develop:

- Actively work with elected officials and/or staff to create or update policies/legislation that support the Chamber’s position on an issue

#### Encourage:

- Contact elected officials directly at least once either in person or in writing to express support for the development of policies or legislation that align with the Chamber’s general position on an issue.

#### Oppose:

- Contact elected officials directly at least once either in person or in writing to explain why the Chamber does not support a piece of legislation/policy & how it could negatively impact businesses in central Wisconsin and ask them to oppose it.

#### Pursue:

- Maintain at least bi-monthly contact with the elected officials or staff developing policies on issues important to the Chamber to convey the Chamber’s position on the issue and provide ideas for developing a solution that supports business.

#### Promote:

- Notify Chamber members about new or pending policies/legislation that will positively impact business.
- Encourage utilization of the opportunities presented by the new policy/legislation by helping businesses access them.

#### Support:

- Contact elected officials directly at least once either in person or in writing to explain why the Chamber approves of a piece of legislation/policy & how it could positively impact businesses in central Wisconsin and ask them to support it.