



## 2018 Local, State & Federal Issues

*The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has endorsed the following position statements to serve as the foundation for the Chamber's advocacy efforts in 2018 and encourages all elected and appointed bodies to give these positions consideration prior to action.*

### **Transportation**

- 1) Edgemoor Road (Highway 170) Improvements
- 2) Oak Ridge Airport
- 3) Low-Cost Air Carriers

### **Education**

- 1) City of Oak Ridge/Oak Ridge Board of Education Working Partnership
- 2) Oak Ridge Preschool Building
- 3) Drive to 55/ Tennessee Promise/Tennessee Reconnect
- 4) Tennessee Standards
- 5) Board of Education APPOINTED Superintendents
- 6) School Vouchers ONLY as long as all schools adhere to same requirements
- 7) Full Funding for Higher Ed Outcomes Based Formula
- 8) Funding for Pre-K programs

### **Economic Development**

- 1) Oak Ridge Specific
  - a. Revitalize shopping centers
  - b. Legacy housing issue mitigation
  - c. Land Bank initiatives
  - d. Speculative buildings construction & improvements
  - e. Rowing promotion & improvements
- 2) Incentives for economic development
- 3) Manhattan Project Historical National Park
- 4) Expedite federal land transfers
- 5) Cleanup funding for reservation
- 6) Support UPF, Y-12, ORNL & ORAU

### **Workforce Development**

- 1) Initiatives to Empower Workers & Businesses

### **State & Local Government**

- 1) No Negative Impact on Local Government
- 2) De-Annexation

### **Quality of Life**

- 1) Medical Marijuana
- 2) Opioid Epidemic

*Approved by Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors  
January 3, 2018*



## **Transportation**

*Efficient and convenient transportation infrastructure is critical to our community's ability to attract and retain residents, employers, enhance tourism opportunities, reduce congestion, improve air quality and provide safe access to major employment centers, commercial and industrial development.*

The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce advocates for the following key transportation projects with both local and state officials.

- **Widening of SR 170 (Edgemoor Road) from SR 62 (Pellissippi Parkway) to I-75**

*Completion of this major commuter road is vital to ease congestion to major employment destinations such as the Y-12 National Security Complex and the associated Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) under construction, Oak Ridge National Laboratory and to recreational and tourism attractions such as Oak Ridge's nationally renowned rowing venue. In addition, widening of SR 170 will stimulate new development such as retail and commercial growth. SR170 is a two lane road connecting the largest regional employer with a significant portion of its workforce. Safety for those traveling SR170 is a concern.*

**Action: We encourage the Tennessee Department of Transportation, City of Oak Ridge and Anderson County to facilitate the land transfers and fund the project to ensure timely completion.**

- **Expand Regional General Aviation Capacity – Oak Ridge Airport**

*The Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority, in partnership with the City of Oak Ridge and regional stakeholders, has made significant strides in the development of a general aviation airport that will greatly improve regional air service and leverage the potential of one of East Tennessee's premier industrial parks. The Department of Energy has agreed to transfer the needed land and to remove runway obstructions at the East Tennessee Technology Park, the Environmental Protection Agency has awarded the site a Clean Parcel Determination, and the Federal Aviation Administration is currently reviewing the airport's proposed Master Plan.*

**Action: We urge all state and federal decision makers to continue their strong support of the airport project.**

- **Recruit Low Cost Air Carriers to McGhee Tyson Airport**

*To compete for business and leisure travel rates for air travel in and out of McGhee Tyson Airport must be competitive and cost effective. In addition, having low-cost carriers in our market stabilizes fares for all travelers.*

**Action: We urge continued efforts by local, regional and state authorities to recruit low-cost air carriers to McGhee Tyson Airport.**



## **Education**

*An educated, skilled, well prepared workforce is the key to economic growth and our success in the global marketplace. Legislation and policy determined at the State, Local and Federal levels have the potential for significant impact on prepared workforce.*

The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce advocates:

### **Local Level:**

- **City of Oak Ridge/Oak Ridge Board of Education Relationship**

*The high performing Oak Ridge School system has always been and continues to be the primary reason families choose to live in Oak Ridge. It is imperative to support the school system and to work towards improvements needed to maintain the positive reputation.*

**Action: We encourage both the City of Oak Ridge and Oak Ridge Board of Education to continue to work together for the betterment of the school system. Specifically, we encourage appropriate funding for the school system and development of a combined and prioritized capital improvement and maintenance plan for City and School buildings.**

- **Oak Ridge Preschool Building**

*Currently, the Preschool operated by Oak Ridge Schools is housed in an Manhattan Project constructed building. Oak Ridge's youngest and most vulnerable students are expected to learn and develop in one of Oak Ridge's oldest buildings.*

**Action: We encourage the timely completion of the new Oak Ridge Preschool building.**

### **State Level:**

- **Drive to 55 Initiative/Tennessee Promise/Tennessee Reconnect**

*The development and expansion of partnerships between K-12 school systems, community colleges, universities and technical schools to create programs for high demand, high wage careers requiring post-secondary education.*

**Action: Support and continue funding the Tennessee Promise program.**

- **Tennessee Standards**

*Implementation of evaluation methods that fairly assess students' learning achievements are necessary and are critical to continued improvement in our public schools and therefore our workforce.*

**Actions:**

- **Support the initiative to align testing and Tennessee Standards.**
- **Encourage elected and appointed officials to re-evaluate how school systems are graded.**

- **Board of Education Appointed Superintendents**

*The desired improvements in K-12 schools will require focused effort by strong, professional superintendents who are appointed by the district's Board of Education.*



**Action: Oppose legislation that would either directly or indirectly change the way K-12 superintendents are selected.**

- **School Vouchers**

*Private schools that seek vouchers should be required to adhere to the same requirements under which public schools operate.*

**Action: Oppose legislation that would allow vouchers unless all institutions follow the same requirements.**

- **Higher Ed: Outcomes-based Formula**

*Tennessee community colleges are funded on an outcomes-based formula that appropriates state dollars based on results such as job placement rates. Fully funding the outcomes-based formula is crucial to meeting the state's college completion goals (Drive to 55) and to workforce development. Fully funding the outcomes-based formula will also help ensure that tuition increases are as low as possible.*

**Action: Support full funding of the outcomes-based formula for higher education.**

- **Funding for Pre-K Programs**

*Historically it is proven that educating students beginning at age 3 builds a stronger foundation for educational success thereby leading to a more stable and educated workforce.*

**Action: Support funding Pre-K programs**

## **Economic Development**

*Opportunities abound for economic development in Oak Ridge. However, in order for these opportunities to advance towards success it will be necessary for the government bodies to provide support and funding through legislative action.*

### **Local Level:**

*The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce supports the following local initiatives and encourages local governments, business leaders and citizens to actively champion:*

- Not in Our City program, specifically:
  - add additional building inspectors;
  - revitalization of shopping centers; and
  - mitigation of the challenges associated with legacy housing
- Implementation of the Land Bank initiatives
- Implementation of the Chamber-led Housing Study recommendations
- Improvements to existing and construction of new speculative industrial buildings in Oak Ridge business parks
- Form based and mixed use zoning



### State Level:

- **Economic Development Incentives**

*Incentives for economic development must be consistent and flexible to encourage and support economic drivers unique to our region.*

**Action: We urge Tennessee's General Assembly to assist such ventures as needs arise as well as work with the Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development to educate businesses as to the incentives that are available.**

### Federal Level:

- **Manhattan Project Historical National Park**

*Oak Ridge holds a unique and important place in our country's history. It is critical the story be preserved for current and future generations.*

**Action: We support the construction for the History Center at K-25 and funding for the Manhattan Project Historical National Park presence in Oak Ridge.**

- **Land Transfer**

*Available land is a critical component for successful economic development. Expeditions transfer of U.S. Department of Energy owned land is needed. With transfers often taking more than one year to process, economic development projects are lost.*

**Action: We support any measures that will expedite the transfer of surplus property for economic development purposed at no, or extremely low, cost with appropriate indemnification.**

- **National Missions**

*Oak Ridge continues to be a leader in our country's energy, environment, science, research, education and national security missions. The advancements in Oak Ridge have international impact and are the epicenter for international recognition.*

**Actions:**

- **Support ongoing modernization of the Y-12 National Security Complex including construction of the Uranium Processing Facility.**
- **Support Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Oak Ridge Associated Universities' science and education programs.**
- **Support announced plans to expand the SNS footprint and impact on science research.**
- **Ensure funding continues at adequate levels to complete the environmental cleanup on the Oak Ridge reservation in safe, timely and effective manner.**

## **Workforce Development Support**

*Workforce Development initiatives contribute to the economic success and security of workers, businesses and communities. Workforce development principles should be designed to demonstrate commitment to connect potential and current employers with*

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*the citizens and a culture of continued learning throughout the professional life of our employees and citizenry. This process and endeavor should be characterized by:*

- *Strong collaborative relationships with corporate sponsors.*
- *Transparent and responsive relationships with customers.*
- *Support for the development of incumbent workers.*
- *Support for the attraction of new citizens and its corporate entities.*
- *Support for a diverse workforce.*
- *Strong efforts in career services and placement.*
- *Low employment rates.*

*These efforts should be characterized by building strong relationships with state and local resources to provide skills based training, career coaching, and placement in current and future career opportunities.*

#### **Local Level:**

**Action:** We encourage dialogue between education and employers so the “supplier” and “consumer” understand the needs of each to ensure our community’s next generation workforce is prepared for the workplace.

#### **State Level:**

**Action:** We encourage the general assembly to continue to search for methods for empowering workers and businesses to succeed in a dynamic global marketplace.

## **State & Local Government Impact**

#### **State Level:**

##### **State Tax Reform**

*While we acknowledge the need for tax reform in our state, we strongly urge the State of Tennessee to not enact any new, or modify any existing taxes, that would ultimately result, directly or indirectly, in a financial negative impact on local governments.*

##### **Actions:**

- **We encourage the implementation of internet sales tax to “level the playing field” for the bricks and mortar businesses, while ensuring the local governments receive their share of the tax collections.**
- **We strongly discourage expediting the phase out of the Hall Income Tax.**

##### **De-Annexation**

*In 2016, the General Assembly established a study committee to examine the process related to de-annexation from municipalities in Tennessee. Testimony received by the study committee suggests that few problems exist across the State with regard to City plans for services being fulfilled. De-annexation of property owners from municipalities would impact local bond ratings due to population loss and ability to pay for capital projects, particularly educational facilities and public infrastructure.*

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***Action: Urge the General Assembly to limit de-annexation to situations where City plans for services are NOT being fulfilled. Cities must be included in the de-annexation decision-making process, which should also have a mechanism to allow municipal “exit strategies” that protect “in town” residents. Members are urged to use municipal information and expertise during legislative review for actual impacts, particularly capital infrastructure. We urge the adoption of the Senate amendment.***

## **Quality of Life**

### **Medical Marijuana**

*Efforts to expand the approved uses of medical marijuana are concerning to the business community. The concern is that expanding the availability will lead toward legalizing marijuana for recreational use thereby impacting employers.*

**Action: We encourage the approved uses for medical marijuana be kept at current uses.**

### **Opioid Epidemic**

*The national opioid epidemic is impacting all aspects of society. We encourage and support government officials, law enforcement and employers in their efforts to address the epidemic.*

**Action: Encourage the opioid epidemic be addressed through education and prevention, and encourage thorough and thoughtful discussion of any legislation that might be introduced to address the epidemic.**