

2021 REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

BLOUNT COUNTY, KNOXVILLE AND OAK RIDGE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

For three decades the Chambers of Commerce of Oak Ridge, Blount County and Knoxville have worked together to develop a regional legislative agenda to identify state issues of importance and increase job and business growth in the region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To attract, retain and expand business in our region, we:

- Support local governments' continued ability to promote economic development and affordable housing through public/private partnerships (TIF, PILOT, and Housing Tax Credits) and encourage the State of Tennessee to promote and support these efforts.
- Support the enhancement of infrastructure and training incentives, and the establishment of technology-driven incentives.
- Support the continuation of Tennessee's Right to Work status.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

To ensure a high-quality, capable workforce in the future, we:

- Encourage the State of Tennessee to implement a "Work in Tennessee" initiative to attract skilled and educated workers to our State to meet the needs of our existing and future employers.
- Support continued implementation in elementary, middle and high schools of the TN Ready standards, assessments, and their use in evaluating educators' effectiveness, with the exception of at least the 2020-2021 school year when teachers should be held harmless because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support an accountability model for Tennessee school systems that includes a measure of quality career and technical education, including industry-recognized certifications, work-based learning, dual enrollment and post-secondary opportunities, to help reach the state's goal of 55 percent of Tennesseans by 2025 holding post-secondary credentials.
- Support continuation of Tennessee Promise, Tennessee Reconnect and other initiatives that encourage attendance and completion of post-secondary training.
- Advocate for increased funding of public education, particularly to address learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of Internet access and to eliminate disparities among socioeconomic groups.
- Support targeted assistance and educational opportunities for workers dislocated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Oppose any state action that would result in mandating the election of school system superintendents.
- Enhance infrastructure and training incentives and establish technology-driving incentives.
- Seek to increase access to quality, affordable childcare.
- Support processes and policies to ensure funds allotted to the state and region through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are administered equitably, efficiently, and creatively by the East Tennessee Local Workforce Development Board.

HEALTH CARE

To encourage a healthy workforce while not creating financial burden on employers, we:

- Support health policies, particularly those addressing mental health, substance abuse and addiction, which improve the welfare of the state's workforce.
- Seek to make permanent state law that requires reimbursement of telehealth services at the same rate as in-person services as a method to expand delivery of medical services and close disparities in access to health care.

INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

To provide the infrastructure needed for business to succeed, we:

- Support efforts at the local, state and federal level to increase investment in wired and wireless broadband networks to improve education, medical care and economic opportunities for all Tennesseans.
- Support efforts to recruit low-cost air carriers to McGhee Tyson Airport.
- Support the efforts to develop the Oak Ridge Airport.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SMALL BUSINESS

To create a healthy ecosystem for entrepreneurial growth, we:

- Support restoring state matching funds for award recipients of the federal Small Business Innovation (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.
- Support allowing local governments to identify business license applications where the applicant has self-identified as a minority owner, where upon verification, allows for the delivery of targeted resources aimed at eliminating disparities.

