

2022 REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Anderson County, Blount County, Farragut, 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. In 2021, the Farragut and Anderson County Chambers of Commerce joined this initiative. The following items will be the primary focus of this joint effort:

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 Tennessee's Right to Work status.
- Support Tennessee's Employment-At-Will doctrine.
- Work to balance the needs for mitigation of COVID-19 with the needs to minimize the economic impact to businesses.

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 an accountability model for Tennessee school systems that includes seamless pathways and a measure of quality career and technical education, including industry-recognized certifications, work-based learning, dual enrollment, and expand 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 any Tennessee worker that continues to be 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 and affordable childcare. Incentivize businesses offering childcare options to their employees and/or community.

- 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 misuse, abuse, and addiction, which improve the welfare of the state's workforce.
- Seek to extend the timeline of 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 and additional flights to and from key markets out of McGhee Tyson Airport.
- Support the efforts to develop the Oak Ridge Airport.
- Support efforts to repair, maintain, and/or build roads and bridges.
- Support efforts to ensure adequate emergency and safety services.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SMALL BUSINESS

To create a healthy ecosystem for business growth and longevity, we:

- Ensure any proposed data privacy/protection legislation targets large companies profiting from the sale of consumer data and protects small businesses that rely on digital tools for marketing, order fulfillment, and other business processes.
- Support efforts to position East Tennessee as a regional innovation district to prepare for federal funding opportunities.

