



Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce  
**2018 Federal Public Policy Agenda**  
*Comprehensive Version, Approved February 26, 2018*

*The greater Kansas City region plays a vital role in the general health and economic vibrancy of the Missouri and Kansas economies. In order to grow opportunity and prosperity in the two-state region, the KC Chamber calls on Congress to enact public policy that maintains a competitive climate for economic development and long-term prosperity by supporting these regional priorities:*

- **Sound Pro-Growth Economic Development and Fiscal Responsibility**
- **Human Capital and a 21st Century Ready Workforce**
- **World-Class Infrastructure**
- **Accessible, Affordable Quality Health Care**

The Chamber Board of Directors proposes this agenda of federal policy measures to improve workforce, job creation, health and prosperity for the greater Kansas City region.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

***International Trade***—The KC Chamber supports measures to foster robust international trade so that greater Kansas City companies of all sizes can expand exportation of goods and services and create jobs in our region. The Chamber supports pro-trade policy initiatives, trade agreements and investment policies including:

- Funding and support for U.S. government agencies and programs critical to U.S. competitiveness abroad, including—but not limited to—the US Export-Import Bank, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, the USTDA, International Trade Administration and the STEP grant program.
- Responsible preservation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) including reasonable modernization of its provisions by the member nations.
- Pursuit and enforcement of U.S. Trade agreements to ensure free and fair trade.
- Ratification of treaties ensuring the avoidance of double taxation on income.
- Protection of intellectual property via the enforcement of IP provisions in U.S. trade agreements while also adopting a constructive agenda to promote IP and innovation in multilateral forums.
- Continued funding for KC SmartPort and the Trade Data Exchange.

***Regulatory Relief*** — The KC Chamber supports initiatives to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens on the nation’s industries, promote economic growth and job creation and minimize the impacts of government actions on small businesses. The Chamber supports:

- Reforming the regulatory process to increase transparency, accountability and effectiveness by adding an independent periodic review of current regulations and sun-setting those deemed ineffective or unnecessary.
- Requiring all federal agencies to ensure existing and future federal regulations are carefully designed, promulgated and enforced to achieve their intended benefits while minimizing the regulatory burdens on small business.

***Support for Small, Diverse and Startup Businesses***— Small, diverse, and emerging businesses are vital to job creation and the competitiveness of the bi-state region. The KC Chamber calls on Congress to support these priorities:

- Measures to create jobs by stimulating entrepreneurship and innovation strategies such as the Startup Act.
- Strengthening the efforts of the Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Advocacy to

ensure that the interests of small businesses are fully considered when agencies begin crafting new regulations.

- Policies to incent commercialization of university research.
- Measures to reduce frivolous lawsuits and predatory patent infringement and non-compliance activities.
- Implementation of the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program and continued funding for Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.

**Research & Development**— Research and development at universities and federally funded laboratories provides significant economic impact in the greater Kansas City region and supports cures, innovation and job creation. Nearly 60 percent of funding for basic scientific research in the United States is provided by the federal government. Innovations that flow from university-based research are at the root of the success of countless companies, products, technologies, and jobs in Kansas City. Research and commercialization of research are key forces behind life science and technology advancements which lead to increased high-value jobs in the region. The KC Chamber urges Congress to support this regional opportunity and engage its resources to advance research and development in the two-state region with support for the following measures.

- **Federal Research Funding:** Preserve a peer-review grant process and funding for federal research agencies critical to high value job growth in our region, including the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Departments of Agriculture and Defense, and Bureaus of Labor Statistics and Economic Analysis, and agencies that provide funding for bioscience research, development, commercialization, and encourage research consortia.
- **NBAF Biodefense Funding:** Adequate support to operate and sustain the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) and the broader bio/agrodefense mission to protect the agricultural economy, food supply, and people from natural and man-made threats.
- **KU Cancer Center & NCI Designation:** The promotion and funding of the University of Kansas Medical Center's Comprehensive Cancer Initiative and efforts to obtain its National Cancer Institute Comprehensive designation and help the region build a world-class cancer center at the forefront of discovery, development, and implementation of knowledge, technology, and novel therapeutic agents for treatment and prevention of cancer.
- **KC Animal Health Corridor:** Legislation and appropriate funding to advance and promote the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor from Columbia, MO, to Manhattan, KS.
- **One Health Funding:** Legislation to fund One Health research which recognizes the inextricable linkage between human and animal health and seeks to promote and improve the health of all species by enhancing collaboration between physicians, veterinarians and related scientific and health professionals.

**Immigration Reform**— The KC Chamber believes responsible immigration reform that improves access to much needed human capital is vital to job creation and expansion of the US economy and must be addressed at the national level. This includes:

- Effective guest worker programs based on critical workforce needs and talent-oriented immigration policies, such as the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act, that expand temporary and permanent visa programs, including H1B visas, for highly skilled workers and foreign entrepreneurs.
- Legislation to allow Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients to remain in the US and continue to contribute to our economy as much-needed members of our workforce.
- Efforts to provide clear guidelines on issuance of L-1 visas for workers employed by international companies headquartered in the United States.
- Policies to allow green cards to foreign nationals who earn a science, technology, engineering, math, or computer science PhD or master's degree from a U.S. university.

**Fiscal Responsibility**— The KC Chamber believes a balanced federal budget and a reduced national debt are vital the health of our national economy today and in the future. The Chamber supports enactment of a responsible long-term deficit reduction plan consisting of economic growth policies, spending restraint and reform measures.

**Tax Reform**— The KC Chamber supports continuous efforts to improve the climate for businesses of all sizes including measures to incent business startups, and sustained efforts to increase investment in U.S. companies. The Chamber advocates for the following positions:

- A uniform and fair national standard to reduce the compliance burden and inconsistent personal state income tax treatment of employees who travel outside their resident state as part of the mobile workforce.
- Passage of the Marketplace Fairness Act to provide fairness and parity to small businesses by allowing states to collect sales taxes from remote sales to state residents.
- Measures to protect taxpayers and reduce tax fraud including enacting national minimum competency standards for paid tax preparers.
- Preservation of current designations and structures for employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs).
- Preservation of tax incentives for appropriate charitable giving (including permanent exclusion of distributions from individual retirement accounts to charities) and reduction of the private foundation excise tax.
- Maintaining tax-exempt status for municipal bonds and private activity bonds, a critical tool for financing infrastructure and capital improvement projects.
- Elimination of the capitalization of startup costs.

**Social Security**— The KC Chamber supports measures to improve long-term solvency of the Social Security System including modifying the method of indexing benefits to more closely mirror real changes in the cost of living.

**Financial Services**— A banking system which is strong, responsive and innovative is critical to the success of the region's businesses, consumers, and institutions and paramount to sustaining a vibrant regional economy. This is especially important to the vitality and growth of our smaller businesses and assuring access to capital. The Chamber supports responsible innovative approaches to assure a 21st century banking system including policy and regulatory measures that recognize the value of the diversity of financial services providers in the KC region and promotes the following measures:

- Regulatory policies that recognize the value of the diversity of financial services providers in the region.
- Prudential regulation that is based not solely on size, but on the complexity and type of activities of the respective institutions.
- Reconsideration of elements of federal legislation such as Dodd-Frank, which has imposed costly burdens on financial services providers, limited financial options for businesses and consumers, and stifled innovation.
- Maintaining the current independent Federal Reserve system with its district banks and opposing any legislative action that transfers bank and Federal Reserve Bank resources to pay for unrelated federal programs.
- Reform of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), including conversion to a governing commission structure and making the CFPB subject to the congressional appropriation.
- Modernization of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to better reflect impact of technology and consumer preferences for the needs of 21st century communities.

## **HUMAN CAPITAL & A 21st CENTURY READY WORKFORCE**

KC area businesses report one of the greatest challenges they face is the global race for talent. Skilled workers are the backbone of a productive and efficient economy, and a critical decision point in today's business location decisions. In the knowledge-based global marketplace of the 21st century, a well-educated population with technical skills and problem-solving abilities is key to Kansas City's ability to innovate, grow, and compete. The Chamber calls on Congress to support policies and funding to encourage a robust PK-20 public education system, keep higher education accessible, and encourage workforce development.

***Pre K-20 Education***— The KC Chamber supports policies and funding to encourage a robust PK-20 public education system emphasizing pursuit of exemplary education including appropriate technical training and a rigorous science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum based on globally competitive standards and fostering a well-trained, productive, competitive workforce. The Chamber calls for:

- Local control of education systems. (The Chamber opposes efforts to reduce federal education investment based on state funding and tuition levels and policies that support or incentivize K-12 scholarship tax credits, tax tuition credits, vouchers and similar measures).
- Policies to encourage collaboration between superintendents and government officials as education policy is developed.
- Maintaining formula funding for Title I as opposed to a competitive grant model.
- Investment in early learning programs including Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Child Care Development Block Grant to allow assistance to an increased number of eligible children/families.
- Full funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).
- Programs to keep higher education accessible and affordable by maintaining funding for need-based student aid programs, including maximum level funding for year-long Pell Grants and other federal student aid programs, and increased federal investments to serve students seeking in-demand, non-credit credentials.
- Preservation and improvement of higher education tax incentives.
- Efforts to encourage workforce development including increased funding for Graduate Medical Education (GME) to address the impending physician shortage and continued financial support of the Public Health Services Act (PHSA) which supports education and training for health care workers.

***Globally Competitive Workforce Development***— Creating a competitive workforce involves “cradle thru career” strategies to strengthen the workforce pipeline, retool the incumbent workforce, and access an international talent pool. The Chamber supports:

- Policies that promote labor productivity, provide job training skills, and encourage more citizens to enter or re-enter the workforce, including full funding for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Increased investment in secondary level technical education, adult education, and English as a second language.
- Efforts to improve integration of secondary and post-secondary programs including promotion of increased dual credit opportunities.

## WORLD-CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE

**Transportation**— Safe and efficient transportation is vital to the personal welfare, economic health, and security of our nation and the Greater Kansas City region. The KC Chamber urges continued innovative and sustainable funding measures while supporting responsible infrastructure policies and regulation that give appropriate and strategic consideration to regional economic and mobility needs and priorities. Accordingly, the KC Chamber supports:

- **Funding:** Sustainable and innovative investment solutions to fully fund the Highway Trust Fund through multiple appropriate revenue sources (including public-private partnerships, gas and alternate fuel tax increases, expanded tolling, user fees, price-managed lanes and networks, TIFIA program expansion or new local/regional tax or fee initiatives or powers) that protect and preserve our transportation system.
- **Delivery Tools:** Expanded use of innovative delivery tools, such as public-private partnerships (P3s), design-build, dynamic-design-bid-build delivery, construction manager/general contractor, to support new transportation capacity and reconstruct existing facilities in ways that more quickly and broadly boost the economies of the area and the nation.
- **TIGER Grants:** Continuation of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grant program.
- **Transit & Active Transportation:** Identification of and support for adequate funding for transit (including USDOT Small Starts and bus-rapid transit), sidewalks and trails as a means for communities to improve local and regional mobility, increase long-term economic development and attract and retain residents and businesses for which these modes are a critical need or amenity.
- **Airport Facilities & Aviation:** Reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and measures to fund, maintain, improve, and modernize airport infrastructure at Kansas City International Airport.
- **Marine Highway Corridor:** Efforts that would increase funding for commercial navigation projects such as channel, ports and harbor infrastructure throughout the Marine Highway Corridor system, with emphasis on the M-70 route between Kansas City and Pittsburgh, PA, and on the M-29 connector to Sioux City, IA. (PORT KC)
- **Multi-Modal:** Create and implement a long-term, strategic plan of federal policies and investments that strengthens regional and national multi-modal surface and maritime freight investments and corridors, resulting in broader, more cost-effective access to national and global markets.
- **Rail Service:** Continued efforts to reduce freight and passenger train bottlenecks throughout the nation including support for the national rail passenger network and operation of the Southwest Chief Amtrak route, the Missouri River Runner and the proposed Heartland Flyer.
- **Connected and Autonomous Vehicles:** Expanded funding and access to expertise for planning, designing and building policy and infrastructure frameworks to cope with likely changes induced by the expanding use of connected and autonomous vehicles.

**Water, Wastewater & the Missouri & Kansas Rivers**— Maintenance and repair of flood control systems on the Missouri and Kansas Rivers is essential to the economic vitality and public safety of our region. The Chamber calls for adequate investment and measures to assist local governments in making sustainable improvements to their flood risk management, water, and wastewater systems to meet long term demands of regional development and growth including:

- Biennial reauthorization of the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) with increased funding for regional needs.
- Permanent authorization of the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) to leverage funding for drinking water, wastewater and storm water infrastructure.

- Clean water affordability legislation with extension of combined sewer overflow remediation timeframes, better computation of affordability, and more flexible permit requirements.
- Responsible approach to Missouri River management emphasizing flood control, navigation, and water supply.
- Prompt passage of the 2018 Farm Bill that provides for increased funding for conservation programs which reduce pollutants improving water quality in water bodies.

**2020 Census, Homeland Security and Regional Stability**— Secure, well-planned and responsive communities are an essential component of a prosperous business climate. The Chamber advocates for the following measures to strengthen regional stability:

- An accurate, appropriately-funded census as a sound investment in the critical social infrastructure the region values including a representative democracy, government and elected officials that are accountable to the people, and business and community investment to drive economic growth, good jobs, and innovation. The Chamber advocates for policies which bolster the region's security and job growth including:
  - Adequate funding for the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) to preserve critical capabilities to protect against terrorism and other hazards to the greater Kansas City region.
  - Viable measures and adequate funding to support growth and maintenance of military installations in the KC region including Fort Leavenworth.
  - Implementation of the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015 (CISA) including legal and regulatory protection for companies that conduct risk assessments and share information on vulnerabilities within the private sector and with appropriate government entities.

**Energy and Environment**— The Kansas City region continues to be a leader in sustainable solutions to energy and environment challenges that promote a stable and diverse energy portfolio reflective of our region. The KC Chamber supports the development and voluntary use of alternative, domestic, and renewable energy resources that are environmentally friendly, balance public health protection and business needs, and do not impede the region's economic competitiveness or cause unreasonable burdens to business. The KC Chamber advocates for federal energy and environmental policies that maintain states' rights and flexibility, and maximize energy security and efficiencies, including:

- Measures to upgrade and expand the production, national transmission and distribution infrastructure of all energy/fuel sources.
- Regulatory strategies to reduce greenhouse gases in a way that creates opportunities for economic growth while balancing costs to customers.
- Measures to incentivize energy efficiency in commercial buildings and residential dwellings.
- Reasonable air quality measures and ozone standards that protect public health and create an environment for economic growth.
- Continued funding and operation of the voluntary ENERGY STAR program within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to support energy efficiency initiatives nationwide.
- Federal programs that promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, clean air and water measures, and redevelopment of brownfields (environmentally-blighted property).

**Broadband**— Support efforts to reduce outdated and unnecessary regulations to broadband investment which is critical to 5G technology and the continued development of the Internet of Things (IoT).

## ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HEALTH CARE

There is an undeniable link between the financial health of our businesses and the overall health and wellness of our workforce and a healthy workforce is paramount a vibrant regional economy. The KC Chamber has long recognized these links and has introduced a workplace wellness program, Healthy KC, to address health issues that most greatly impact our community and workforce. Furthermore, the Chamber supports efforts to help businesses reduce costs and regulatory burdens of providing health care coverage, wellness support, and education of medical professionals and encourages ongoing efforts to improve access to quality health care.

- Pair any reforms of the ACA with provisions designed to stabilize the health insurance marketplace.
- Ensure a fair and competitive market for health insurance providers and marketplace alternatives that allow individuals and businesses to obtain affordable health insurance coverage.
- Postpone the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) cuts permanently. (Any freestanding repeal of the ACA must also fully repeal the Act's steep cuts to hospital payments - particularly Medicaid and Medicare DSH.)
- Enact no reforms that disadvantage states that did not expand Medicaid under the ACA.

**Medicaid and Other Health Care Measures**— The Chamber supports the following:

- Preservation of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- A Medicaid structure that increases efficiencies and avoids cost shifting to state budgets and maintains provider taxes at levels that allow Missouri and Kansas to sustain vital safety net coverage for children and families.
- Adoption of a definition for full-time employment that aligns with that of the business community.
- Appropriate medical malpractice liability reform to protect access to affordable, quality health care.
- Policies to acknowledge the value of "Trauma-Informed Care" and treatment and prevention measures to improve the health and resiliency of those who suffer the effects of childhood trauma.

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