



2012 Priority Issues

The Maryland Chamber's mission is to advance Maryland as a national and global competitive leader in private sector economic growth and job creation. To that end, these top priorities are:

Create a competitive business climate that encourages job growth and investment, limits workplace regulation and ensures a competitive and fair tax structure.

- Growing private sector jobs and investment in Maryland must be a top priority, particularly in light of pending federal government budget cuts. Applying more business taxes and workplace regulation exacerbates employers' abilities to expand their workforces in Maryland.
- One size does not fit all in workplace regulation. We must preserve the employer's right to manage their workforces and create wage and benefit programs that balance economic stresses with employee needs.

Ensure the implementation of the federal health care law in Maryland promotes competition and transparency.

- Promote the private health insurance market as fair competition to the Health Benefit Exchange.
- Limit state health insurance benefit mandates to the federally required health benefits package.
- Maintain the 50 employee size limit for the small group plan and keep it separate from the individual risk pool.

Restore trust in the Transportation Trust Fund and, once achieved, increase funding of desperately needed transportation projects throughout the state.

- Improve MDOT's control of operating costs.
- Increase the state gasoline tax as a short term revenue source, if the Trust Fund is protected.
- Identify appropriate funding streams for mass transit systems.

Create a Competitive Business Climate and Encourage Job Growth

The Maryland Chamber supports incentives to encourage more economic development, tourism, and research and development in Maryland in order to create and retain more high paying jobs for our citizens. The Maryland Chamber urges the General Assembly to avoid over-regulating the marketplace or the workplace, and to balance the needs and obligations of employers and employees in enacting workplace-related laws.

The Maryland Chamber will:

- Support and facilitate sound economic policies that create private sector jobs and investments and encourage economic growth;
- Support fair and just employment practices for all and appropriate mechanisms to achieve those goals;
- Preserve employers' abilities to manage their workforce and to create wage and benefit policies that balance their own needs and those of their employees; and,
- Help ensure the fiscal soundness, benefit integrity, competitive position, and administrative effectiveness of Maryland's Unemployment Insurance programs.

Seek a Competitive Tax Structure

Maryland can promote job growth and business investment with a tax system that is stable, fair, and competitive with other states. As employers work to retain and create jobs

during the current economic difficulties, we urge that state and local governments promote economic recovery by avoiding additional tax or fee burdens on Maryland businesses.

The Maryland Chamber will:

- Oppose high-earner individual income tax rate increases and sales taxes on business services;
- Oppose laws that would authorize local governments to impose discriminatory levels of taxation on businesses;
- Oppose changes to the state's corporate income tax such as rate increases, alternative minimum taxes, and adoption of a system of mandatory unitary combined reporting; and,
- Support further reforms of state pension and employee health insurance benefits to relieve pressure for higher taxes.

Promote Affordable Health Insurance

Access to affordable health insurance in a competitive marketplace is necessary for a healthy workforce. Key decisions remain for the state in implementing federal health care law that will have a major impact on the competition for and pricing of health insurance. If we are to sustain an employer-based health insurance system, Maryland employers must be able to design and control their health insurance benefits.

Continued

The Maryland Chamber will:

- Support the implementation of federal health care law in a manner that promotes competition and transparency, and allows employers to control health insurance costs;
- Promote the private health insurance market operating in fair competition with the Health Benefit Exchange;
- Advocate for maintenance of separate risk pools for the individual and small group markets;
- Urge retention of the 50 employee size limit for the small group market through 2016; and,
- Recommend limiting state health insurance benefit mandates to the federally-required essential health benefits package.

Protect and Fund the State's Transportation System

Maryland needs innovative transportation policies that enhance transportation funding to benefit the employment, business, quality of life, environment and safety needs of the state.

The Maryland Chamber will:

- Advocate for the protection of the integrity of the Transportation Trust Fund by ensuring transportation funds are not diverted for other uses, and the restoration of funds previously transferred, including local Highway User Revenues;
- Call for the Department to improve efforts to control operating costs;
- Support an immediate increase in the state fuel tax, provided transportation dollars are protected, and determine other long term broad based funding sources exclusively dedicated for transportation infrastructure investment and maintenance;
- Identify appropriate funding streams designated for mass transit system infrastructure and mechanisms to control operating costs that do not penalize competing modes of transportation; and,
- Work with Congressional leaders to create a federal funding model that will identify viable, comprehensive, long term funding options for transportation needs.

Protect Fair Civil Liability Laws

The ability of a company to receive fair treatment from a state's legal system influences business decisions regarding job creation and business location. Actions that expand business liability by creating new causes of action to sue businesses or increase business liability costs will damage Maryland's business climate.

The Maryland Chamber will:

- Oppose legislation that would provide for tort liability based on comparative fault, market share liability, or weakened standards for the award of punitive damages;
- Oppose efforts to weaken or eliminate existing tort law

protections, including Maryland's cap on non-economic damages;

- Oppose legislation that promotes lawsuits, such as authorizing litigation financing and limits on class action waivers; and,
- Support meaningful reforms to civil liability law that will help reduce defensive medicine, moderate medical liability insurance rates and make Maryland more competitive in recruiting and retaining health professionals.

Sustain the Economy While Protecting the Environment

The Maryland Chamber will support policies and legislation that enhance job growth and business investment opportunities, and that rationally recognize environmental protection as an essential element of our economy.

The Maryland Chamber will advocate for responsible policies that:

- Enrich the Chesapeake Bay;
- Promote sustainable business development and forest management; and,
- Foster energy sustainability and reliability.

Support Education Funding

A well-educated workforce is an essential component of Maryland's economy. Access to high quality education at all levels is a vital concern for Maryland employers due to its impact on job retention and creation. Higher education institutions should receive predictable and sustainable funding in order to maintain the affordability and quality of higher education in Maryland. The state should honor its statutory funding commitments to all higher education institutions.

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