



## **GREATER SIOUX FALLS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2022 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM**

In order to develop its legislative platform, the Greater Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), through its Issues Management Council, conducts research, hears presentations and surveys its members about issues affecting business. These efforts, combined with actively following and monitoring legislative activity, guide our efforts toward developing the legislative platform. The Issues Management Council makes platform recommendations to the Board of Directors who is the final policy decision making body for the Chamber.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Chamber supports economic development and Governor's Office of Economic Development programs including the Revolving Economic Development and Initiative (REDI) Fund, the Future Fund and the Building South Dakota Fund. The Chamber supports workforce focused programs, addressing infrastructure and revolving fund loans, workforce education and housing, and grants to offset certain taxes for qualifying projects. We will continue to monitor the use and impact of these programs and we will closely analyze any legislation that impacts these programs and other economic development efforts in our state.

### **TAX INCREMENT FINANCING**

South Dakota has limited programs, when compared to other states, to help compete for and leverage business growth and development. One such program that is locally controlled and administered is tax increment financing (TIF) which can be vital to a project happening, re-locating or moving forward in South Dakota. The Chamber supports the appropriate use of TIFs for projects when it is needed to address blight, build infrastructure, encourage workforce housing expansion, promote economic development and/or make public improvements. Further, we support local decision-making in the administration of TIFs.

### **TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Chamber recognizes that a safe, efficient and responsive infrastructure is critical to economic development and commerce in Sioux Falls and throughout South Dakota. The Chamber supports the evaluation of our road, highway, bridge systems, air, rail, water, sewer, telecommunications, public transit and public facilities on an ongoing basis.

Funding, including local flexibilities, should be carefully reviewed before new funding is considered.

## **BUSINESS CLIMATE**

The Chamber believes our economy is best served by allowing free and open competition in the marketplace in an environment that encourages business development and expansion. Laws that preclude or give advantage to one business structure or arrangement over another ultimately lessen competition and reduce our area's attractiveness as a business location. Barriers to business investment and capital formation impede growth and economic diversification. Appropriate rules and regulations may be required for a viable free market, but government intrusion should not inhibit or restrict business unnecessarily.

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The Chamber supports expanding workforce housing and support services for workforce development, retention and recruitment that is accessible for low and moderate income individuals.

## **DRIVERS LICENSE EXAMS**

The Chamber believes a component of workforce development is ensuring employees are able to get to work. With an increasingly diverse population, the Chamber supports legislation to examine or implement drivers' license testing in languages other than English and Spanish. South Dakota should consider implementing additional multi-language tests to strengthen our workforce development efforts.

## **THE STATE BUDGET**

The Chamber supports a balanced budget even if it means difficult decisions. Balancing the budget can be done in many ways and the Chamber supports creative solutions in addressing this issue. We continue to see no need for an income tax or major tax increases.

## **EDUCATION**

The future of Sioux Falls and South Dakota depends on educating our citizens and developing our workforce to remain competitive on a regional, national and international scale. It is vital to foster an educational system that works in tandem with the business community and government to address and support workforce development initiatives. Quality education is essential for the business community to attract new employers and employees and to educate a growingly diverse workforce.

To support our state's citizens and to meet our workforce development needs, the Chamber supports the allocation of public monies to ensure funds for an equitable, effective and efficient system of pre-K-12, technical schools and higher education.

Pre-K: The Chamber encourages and supports funding for Pre-K education for all children in South Dakota, including a state-wide study related to Pre-K.

K-12 Funding: The Chamber supports efforts to maintain and increase teacher pay and would oppose efforts to rollback past funding levels. Further, we encourage the School Finance Accountability Board and the Legislature to ensure that in the future school districts are held accountable for meeting teacher pay and cash balance targets. We will follow all proposals affecting K-12 funding closely and consider the impact on our members and area schools. We support the findings of the 2021 Teacher Compensation Review Board and encourage legislators and school officials to continue to emphasize school funding and teacher pay.

K-12 Efficiency: The Chamber fully understands the challenges of operating a K-12 system in a largely rural state that is sparsely populated. For their well-being and the well-being of our state, children throughout South Dakota must be assured a quality education as our Constitution outlines. Still, we encourage organizational changes to improve efficiency and permit reinvestment into core priorities like teacher salaries and educational programming. We recognize that some districts that are sparsely populated need additional resources per student to ensure a quality education. However, some districts choose to remain small and additional financial subsidies in those instances should be critically reviewed. We encourage the use of technology-based instruction to enhance access to master teachers and course topics that are not available in our smaller districts. We discourage school districts from utilizing recruitment and busing to lure and transport students from one district to another. If at all possible, school districts should not be financially incented to recruit students. In short, efficiency and organizational decisions need to be made to reflect changing demographics and to meet the needs of our K-12 learners.

Technical Colleges: As demand for a technically skilled workforce continues to grow, South Dakota's technical colleges require the ability to respond programmatically to that demand and the funding for workforce-related programs. Costs continue to rise particularly in regard to serving students in high-cost program areas. The Chamber urges tuition costs for students be lowered to be competitive with surrounding states. The Chamber supports increased investment in the workforce of tomorrow, which is critical for continued economic development. The Chamber also supports continuing progress to enhance local control of our state's technical institutes to ensure they best serve South Dakota.

Higher Education: The Chamber acknowledges that a highly educated populace is critically important to many individual businesses and to competitively position our community for future economic development. In order to retain our students, the Chamber encourages the expansion of scholarship funding. This includes, but is not limited to, the needs-based Freedom Scholarship, Build Dakota Scholarship and South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship. We support adequate funding for the Regental system and encourage consideration for funding options for the USD Community College for Sioux Falls to address tuition and service inequalities and new mission opportunities. Further, we encourage more local governance and input into the Community College to better align its programs with the needs of residents and the business community.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

County Funding: The Chamber is concerned about resources available to counties to address behavioral and mental health, criminal justice costs, and infrastructure needs. We believe alignment with collaborative partnerships and improved funding will benefit the counties.

City Sales Tax for Infrastructure: The Chamber has consistently supported a proposal to permit municipalities to impose a sales tax for infrastructure purposes, provided there is an affirmative vote of the municipality's residents and the tax is tied to specific projects for a set period of time. We believe this type of local control proposal is the best way to determine the need for such a tax and measure the willingness of local citizens to impose a tax in their community.

## **HEALTHCARE**

The Chamber recognizes the role the non-profit community plays in providing essential services to our most vulnerable citizens and supports appropriate funding for them. We strongly encourage the state's reimbursement rates to align with providers true costs associated with those essential services.

The Chamber acknowledges the important role of its medical institutions, especially in the current pandemic, and will give additional weight to their recommendations for public health safety.

## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY**

The Chamber recognizes the growing diversity of our state's population and we embrace the opportunities that this diversity provides for a culturally and talent-rich community. We will work with residents, our partners, community and state agencies and elected officials to develop efforts to engage and include all individuals in our state who seek to work side-by-side with us to grow our economy. As we work to meet the workforce expectations evident today and predicted well into the future, legal immigration and refugee resettlement are proven and important strategies. We will also resist initiatives which inappropriately sanction or discriminate against individuals or groups.

## **PROPERTY AND BUSINESS OWNER RIGHTS**

The Chamber opposes unnecessary intrusions into employer/employee relationships.

The Chamber supports voluntary agreements between management and the workforce establishing compensation, benefits, hours and working conditions.

The Chamber supports the employer's ability to ensure a safe environment for employees and patrons.

Each session legislation is introduced that put business and property owners at odds with gun advocates. The Chamber supports the right to gun ownership and the traditions of

hunting and outdoor life so prominent in South Dakota. However, we have also maintained that property and business owners have the right to restrict gun possession on their property if they choose. The Chamber will continue to support the rights of property and business owners to restrict gun possession on their property.

## **TOURISM/VISITOR INDUSTRY**

The Chamber supports funding mechanisms for the visitor/tourism industry as it continues to be an important and vital part of greater Sioux Falls and the South Dakota economy. Funding mechanisms include, but are not limited to, the Business Improvement District (BID) tax and the tourism tax.

## **INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM**

The Chamber believes that South Dakota's longstanding tradition of allowing direct citizen access to the ballot through the initiative and referendum processes should remain. We encourage an ongoing review of the rules and requirements surrounding constitutional and statutory ballot measures.

## **AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY**

Agriculture has been the primary economic driver in our state since 1889. The Chamber supports legislation that enhances agribusiness in South Dakota, including the expansion of agricultural products, services, and technologies.

## **SPORTS WAGERING**

The Chamber supports efforts by the legislature to permit the origin of sports gaming to occur within physical establishments located throughout the state which establishments shall be licensed to perform such activities through a process similar to that of video lottery.

## **CANNABIS**

South Dakota voted to legalize medical and recreational use of cannabis in 2020. The Chamber supports efforts by the legislature and regulatory bodies to craft regulations and procedures that take into consideration employer liability and workplace safety. The Chamber supports local ownership and control related to cannabis.

Employer liability is a chief concern as there is not a legal standard for determining when an employee is under the influence and when the employee is cognitively impaired. Additional employer concerns include workplace safety, employer business insurance loss of coverage, and that cannabis remains an illegal substance at the federal level.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The Greater Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce places a high priority on safeguarding and conserving both the quality and quantity of our area's natural amenities. Government, in partnership with business, should share responsibility in conserving, enhancing and

protecting our water quality, air quality and land. Landowners and sportsmen should work together to ease conflicts in land access and game management issues, to preserve the economic and quality of life benefits from outdoor recreation. Given the substantial public and private investments to develop the river greenway, and the potential to develop a first-class amenity in our community, strategies seeking to improve the water quality in the Big Sioux and its tributaries should be identified and implemented.