

The Midstate Chamber of Commerce 2018 Regional Legislative Action Agenda

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Developed by the Chamber's Government and Business Development Committee & approved by the Board of Directors on January 10, 2018

The 2018 Legislative Action Agenda lists priorities that are the keys to maintaining economic opportunity and creating sound business growth in the Midstate region, with a specific focus on activities in Berlin, Meriden & Wallingford. We ask that our legislators recognize the impact of their actions on business and do no harm to business when offering, considering or voting on legislation in 2018.

We further ask that our elected and appointed officials support a pro-business environment where:

- Implement regional solutions where cost savings and efficiencies can be demonstrated.
- The high costs of doing business in Connecticut would be recognized, analyzed and reduced
- Businesses would again make profits so tax revenues will again flow to the state and municipalities
- Businesses would be able to make investments in personnel, technology, machinery and equipment to open new business opportunities.
- State create public / private citizen partnerships to support long term goal of revenue growth Functions that must be performed by government are done more efficiently.

We offer the 2018 Legislative Agenda as a vehicle to build solid relationships and productive alliances with our elected and appointed officials of all levels of government and clearly articulate the needs of business. In this spirit, we encourage all legislators to embrace a proactive short and long-term approach for improving the business climate in Connecticut.

The Economic Development (ED) agenda

The "Hartford Line", is a catalyst to stimulate the Transit Oriented development (TOD) activities in the middle third of our state. In order to synchronize the local with the regional, CT needs to expedite and coordinate the planning and approval processes to prepare for the May 2018 start of service. A holistic, rather than a property by property, approach is required. Specific action steps are to:

- Seek public and private partnerships to procure expertise and alternative funding sources for comprehensive development along the corridor.
- Eliminate barriers to economic development by documenting and simplifying the local approval processes.
- Promote Berlin, Meriden and Wallingford as a business-friendly community.
- Coordinate housing policy as an ED tool and include major employers in planning and employment centers such as Westfield Mall, MidState Medical Center, etc.

- Aggressively market the potential of a unified TOD corridor along the Hartford rail line. – ED ZONE / corridor including JOBS and Educational opportunities.
- Create a managed district program for Meriden's TOD.
- Secure adequate State, Federal, local and private funding to further the development of the region's TOD activities including supporting site development and reuse of 1 King Place, and 116 Cook Ave. in Meriden.
- Continue to support Meriden, and increase activities in Berlin and Wallingford, ED Offices in their efforts to support business development in our region.
- Encourage private development of underutilized government sites such as the Undercliff Site.
- In anticipation of a CT Next support to encourage development of business Incubator / accelerator and other business support and entrepreneurial growth initiatives.
- Support Berlin and Wallingford TOD planning activities.
- Support development of a regional arts consortium.

The State Fiscal Policy Agenda is to:

Implement a realistic State Fiscal Policy that requires efficiencies and cost reductions. While we recognize that Connecticut is an expensive place to do business, we support the creation of a LONG TERM PLAN for managing sustainable reductions in state expenditures specifically looking at:

- Addressing The State Spending Cap
- Funding Education equitably
- Aligning salary and benefit packages for state employees with those of the private sector and
- Providing adequate and responsible oversight and regulation while outsourcing other functions where possible.
- Preserve Enterprise Zone municipal reimbursements and DECD incentives.
- Increase efficiency of all state operations.

The Transportation agenda is to:

- Support FRA Northeast Corridor Option 2 to direct rail traffic onto the improved "CTrail Hartford Line".
- Restrict use of Special Transportation Fund and revenue for exclusively transportation purposes.
- Implement recommendations in SCRCOG "First / Last Mile Study" and facilitate participation by the business community.
- Assist the City of Meriden in planning for two-way traffic in the CBD & advocate for funding sources.
- Support development of Pratt Street gateway into Meriden to spur economic development.

The Workforce / Manufacturing agenda is to:

- Model this state to be competitive in Advanced Manufacturing and align with education for adequate pipeline of talent.
- Support existing businesses to remain and grow in the mid-state region and the state.
- Keep the state workforce skilled and competitive by investing in training programs through existing Workforce Investment Boards, community colleges, technical high schools and other resources to make Connecticut's businesses more productive and competitive.

The Energy / Technology agenda is to:

- Support the development of cost effective energy sources including wind, solar and geo thermal as a long term strategy with a commitment to research and development.
- Support natural gas expansion to increase availability and incentives for commercial and residential customers.
- Encourage municipalities to aggregate energy and develop advanced and expandable infrastructure in the Central Business Districts.

The Education agenda is to:

- Provide sustainable system for funding education with an emphasis on early learning.
- Research and implement effective solutions to remedial education problems faced by our colleges.
- Encourage continuation of MxCC @ Platt Program.
- Support efforts to increase interest and educational opportunities in STEM, particularly for minority students.
- Continue support of state technical and trade high schools.
- Support expanded education opportunities in the TOD district to support economic development growth.

The Housing & Community Development Agenda is to:

- Support the Meriden Choice Neighborhood activities.
- Continue support the Meriden Family Zone (MFZ) / 2 Gen Project activities.
- Support mixed-use & mixed-income housing in the region close to transit.

The Health Care agenda is to:

- Support the continuation of Access Heath CT.
- Advocate for health plans with fewer mandates and impose a moratorium on new mandates.
- Sunset the hospital provider tax and provide for full funding of the state's Medicaid reimbursement obligations to ensure financial viability of our hospitals.
- Maintain support of universal healthcare including Medicare and Medicaid funding.