

## 2010 CBICC Legislative Priorities and Policies

The landscape of legislative issues important to Centre County business has not drastically changed over the last year. The Government Affairs Committee believes, however, that the order of primary priorities for advocacy deserves slight adjustment as follows. Moreover, the Committee believes that the membership should be kept informed on two additional critical issues.

### **PRIMARY PRIORITIES**

#### **1. Job Creation and Retention**

Unemployment in PA and across the nation continues to increase due to current economic instability. Laws, funding, and tax policies must be administered to incentivize new business start-ups and expansion of existing businesses. Barriers to job creation that exist in Pennsylvania must be minimized. Also, if our companies are to compete and win in a worldwide economy, they need well-educated and well-trained workers.

The growth of the technology industry points to valuable new opportunities for businesses, jobs and economic stimulus for Centre County. It is imperative that Pennsylvania's legislative and regulatory climate encourages access to these technologies, as well as encourages the expansion and location of such entities by enhancing the attractiveness of the Commonwealth. The Chamber promotes the elimination of impediments, such as extraneous taxes and regulations that hinder businesses' ability to compete in today's global marketplace.

The Chamber opposes passage of "card check" or similar legislation as endorsed by organized labor. "Card check" threatens jobs and employee freedoms. The proposal being promoted at the federal level by organized labor is both starkly anti-business and anti-worker. Deceptively given the name the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) by organized labor, "card check" merely seeks to increase unionization at the expense of workers and employers.

The initiative, the most significant rewrite of labor laws in more than 50 years, would abolish the current private ballot union certification process and replace it with a simple "card check," where employees could be pressured, coerced and intimidated to simply "check the box" to form a union.

Among specific points of opposition to the Card Check bill are that it:

- Would allow a union to be certified the moment it collected a majority of signed authorization cards, rather than through a federally-supervised private ballot election. Once a union collects 51 percent of a business's employees' signatures, that union would be recognized as the collective bargaining unit by the National Labor Relations Board without an election and possibly even before the employer is aware of the organizing effort.

- Would mandate binding arbitration if the newly-formed union and the employer are unable to reach agreement on all terms of the union contract within 120 days. This would result in wages, benefits, hours and other items being set by a government arbitrator.
- Would substantially increase penalties only for employers, but not for unions or others, who violate union organizing laws.

The Chamber believes that EFCA would inject a significant level of uncertainty into a business's ability to plan for the future and would even diminish the level of control it has over its own operations. For this and many other reasons, we view the "card check" bill as a bad idea for our business community, our economy and our country, especially so during the current severely challenging economic times.

## **Issues to Monitor in 2010**

Because they may eventually have a negative impact on the business community, the Government Affairs Committee believes the following issues should be closely monitored in 2010, The Committee may recommend taking an advocacy position in the future.

### **Funding Municipal and State Pensions**

Currently there are no clear answers on how businesses and individual tax payer will pay for underfunded municipal and state pension plans starting in 2012. Plans soon need to be adopted to address the inevitable and unfortunate future implications.

### **On-Time Passage of the State Budget**

The constitutionally mandated June 30 deadline for a budget passage has been ignored by the General Assembly for seven straight years. The practice of treating budget adoption as a political chessboard is not productive. The result has caused uncertainty, and in some cases a slowdown in the Pennsylvania economy. The General Assembly's time and efforts should be directed toward more positive and productive changes to Pennsylvania laws.