

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.

SECONDARY PRIORITIES (not prioritized)

Affordable Workforce Housing

Workforce housing is living space that is affordable to the typical working family that earns between 60% and 120% area median annual income. The workers include teachers, firefighters, nurses and other people critical to a community's well-being.

Developers, lenders, Realtors, local government, and employers must work together to insure that accessible and affordable housing is available for the workforce. Doing so promotes employee recruitment and retention and helps sustain a viable local economy.

The primary reasons for workforce housing shortages are: local opposition to multi-family development and lower-cost homes; more stringent credit requirements; a lack of appropriately zoned land; burdensome government regulation and impact fees; unavailable public sector funding; and high land and construction costs that reduce private sector incentives to serve this market segment.

The Chamber continues to educate and encourage stakeholder partnerships and to play a leading role in crafting regulations mandating improved levels of workforce housing. The Chamber will continue to explore options for successfully addressing this challenge, including mandated housing densities, employer subsidy programs, public-private partnerships and heightened support for Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency initiatives.

The Chamber is committed to the development and execution of a county-wide effort focused on strategies and solutions to maintaining an adequate supply of workforce housing. The Chamber supports and remains active on the Workforce Housing Committee under the leadership of the Centre County Affordable Housing Coalition.

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.