

Public Policy Positions Document

Public Policy Organizational Identity



Mission Statement - The Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce is the leading force for the improvement of the business environment, the economic health, the development and the prosperity of the Acadiana region.

Values Statement - We value Ethical Behavior, Innovation, Collaboration, Excellence, Effectiveness, Inspiration, Courage, Free Enterprise and Diversity.

Vision Statement - To influence and enhance the business environment.

Positioning Statement - The Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce is the organization of choice as the voice of business at the local, regional, state and national levels of government. Positions on major, current and ongoing legislative issues are vetted through member-driven dialogue. Position statements provide a unified, consistent voice of the membership in the public policy arena.

Issues in this document are classified as follows:

Current Issues: Those items on which the Chamber has a position which may be addressed during the year.

Historical Issues: Items on which the Chamber has an established position, but which are not anticipated to be addressed during the year.

Current Positions

Economic Development

Community Planning

Comprehensive Plan: The Chamber supports creating and implementing a comprehensive development plan for the parish to ensure orderly, deliberate growth. The Chamber advocates a realistic and commonly accepted vision of the community, taking into account its strengths and weaknesses, in identifying what the community can and should become.

Smart Growth Initiative: The Chamber supports sustainability concepts and principles.

Energy

The energy services sector is a major economic force in South Louisiana providing the products and manpower necessary to provide oil and gas to America. While the Chamber supports development of alternate energy sources, we recognize that America's petroleum dependence is long term.

The Lafayette economy has enjoyed phenomenal growth in the last decade; progress that is greatly fueled by the energy industry. The Lafayette Chamber plays an active role in assisting federal and state efforts to craft policy for the exploration and production of oil and gas. This initiative is overseen by the Energy Committee under our Public Policy Division.

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) - The Chamber supports CNG as an American energy answer which should play a significant role in our energy future. CNG provides advantages as a clean, affordable and American fuel that can help create U.S. jobs and lessen our country's dependence on foreign oil.

Current Positions (continued)

Education & Workforce Development

University of Louisiana at Lafayette - The Chamber supports adequate funding allocation to UL Lafayette to maintain its status as a Tier 1 research institution. The Chamber supports legislation that grants UL Lafayette more autonomy in its operations. The Chamber supported the Grad Act 2.0 in the 2011 session of the Louisiana Legislature.

Public Education - The Chamber supports the implementation of the performance-funding formula to reward improved performance. The Chamber supports raising the admission standards at four-year institutions. The state's two-year enrollment mix requires a greater participation in community colleges. The Chamber supports the granting of sole authority to adjust self-generated revenue to management boards. Additionally, the Chamber supports the establishment of "centers of excellence" and the elimination of unproductive and duplicative programs.

Public School System & Education Governance - The Chamber supports legislation and policy that encourages the public school system to set annual, measurable and achievable goals with a specific timetable to reach the aforementioned results and comply with the Louisiana Education Reform Plan while eliminating the achievement gap.

Worker Training - The Chamber supports initiatives that allow businesses, especially small businesses, better access to and greater flexibility in the use of government funded worker training. Further, the Chamber supports cooperative efforts among business, education institutions, and the Workforce Investment Board to ensure easy access to relevant worker training.

LaPESC - The Chamber is a founding member of The Lafayette Parish Public Education Stakeholders Council which has a mobilizing commitment to ensure a world-class education for every student in every public school so that by 2016 no fewer than 95% of students perform at grade level and graduate from high school on time, prepared to succeed in post-secondary education or in the work place.

Historical Positions

Economic Development

Lafayette Utilities System - The Chamber supports the 100-year-old Lafayette Utility System's vision and proven leadership to maintain a robust entity. That support includes the utility rate increase granted in 2010.

Fiber to the Premises Network: In 2005, the Chamber endorsed FTTP to ensure the future economic vitality of Lafayette.

The Chamber advocates that increased internet bandwidth is critical to the development of new applications and services; free access to broadband at all public places; and the federal government should develop a comprehensive, unified, national spectrum management strategy designed to reduce the artificial scarcity of spectrum.

Broadband - The Chamber advocates increased access to broadband connectivity available throughout the community. We encourage public-private partnerships to facilitate this end.

Comprehensive Plan: The Chamber supports creating and implementing a comprehensive development plan for the parish to ensure orderly, deliberate growth.

Smart Growth Initiative: The Chamber supports sustainability concepts and principles. In 2006, the Chamber adopted a position to promote Smart Growth concepts and principles such that the Chamber and general public can make informed decisions about how and where to grow in ways that support economic development.

Casino Gambling - The Chamber opposes the introduction of casino gambling in Lafayette Parish. In 1996, the Chamber successfully campaigned against the legalization of casino gambling in Lafayette Parish.

Occupational License Tax - The Chamber supported the elimination of the City of Lafayette occupational license tax in 1991.

Lafayette Economic Development Authority - In 1961, the Chamber successfully drafted and lobbied legislation that created the Lafayette Harbor Terminal and Industrial District, which eventually became the Lafayette Economic Development Authority (LEDA.)

Lafayette Convention and Visitors Center - The Chamber created the Lafayette Convention and Visitors Center (LCVC) to focus on facilitating tourism and other hospitality related services.

Historical Positions (continued)

Public Policy

Labor Relations/Right To Work - Employee Free Choice Act: Chamber opposes Employee Free Choice Act bill

Right To Work - The Chamber is committed to maintaining Louisiana as a Right-To-Work state, including opposing “agency shop” legislation, which would force non-union employees to pay union dues as a condition for employment.

Unemployment Compensation - Chamber supported SB 217 to prevent a nearly \$700 million assessment against state business owners through the social change tax that is part of their quarterly UC tax assessment.

Homestead Exemption- The Chamber opposes any effort to increase the Louisiana homestead exemption, which would further shift the property tax burden to business. Businesses currently pay 80% of all property tax in the state.

Estate Tax - The Chamber endorsed the compromise version Permanent Estate Tax Relief Act (PETRA) rather than full repeal of the Estate Tax.

Stelly Plan - The Chamber supported the “Stelly Plan” which swapped an increase in personal income taxes for a decrease in sales tax.

State Legislative Term Limits- The Chamber supported the constitutional amendment to limit terms of Legislative House and Senate seats.

Tobacco Tax - The Chamber supported the tax increase on tobacco products to fund a state public school teachers’ pay increase in 2005.

Lafayette Parish Courthouse - The Chamber supported the proposed bond issue to renovate the Parish Courthouse, 2006.

Historical Positions (continued)

Education & Workforce Development

University of Louisiana at Lafayette - The Chamber supports adequate funding allocation to UL Lafayette to maintain its status as a Tier 1 research institution, with an annual \$750 million economic impact on the region. The Chamber maintains that the University is vital to innovation and economic development.

Education - The Chamber supports the implementation of the performance-funding formula to reward improved performance. The Chamber supports raising the admission standards at four-year institutions. The state's two-year enrollment mix requires a greater participation in community colleges. The Chamber supports the granting of sole authority to adjust self-generated revenue to management boards. Additionally, the Chamber supports the establishment of "centers of excellence" and the elimination of unproductive and duplicative programs.

Public Education Governance Position- In 2009, the Chamber again urged the Lafayette Parish School Board to set annual measurable, achievable goals with a specific timetable to improve School Performance Scores and Graduation Rates in the district.

Local School Board Reform - The Chamber supports legislation and policy that encourages local school boards to focus on improving failing schools and raising student academic achievement and that holds school boards accountable.

Worker Training - The Chamber supports initiatives that allow businesses, especially small businesses, better access to and greater flexibility in the use of government funded worker training. Further, the Chamber supports cooperative efforts among business, education institutions, and the Workforce Investment Board to ensure easy access to relevant worker training. The Chamber is interested in maintaining a position of the Workforce Investment Board.

Lafayette Parish School System - The Chamber created the implementation of the Peer Review Teams at the request of the superintendent of parish public schools. The Chamber further encouraged the implementation of recommendations that resulted from the reviews.

Joint Cooperative Agreement- The Chamber and the Lafayette Parish Public School System agreed to implement specific strategies aimed at reducing the achievement gap. Central to that strategy was the maintenance of the Performance Measure Document.

Public School Teacher Pay - The Chamber supported the one-half cent sales tax increase for the purpose of increasing Lafayette Parish public school teachers' compensation in 2002.

Unitary Status for Public School System - Recognizing the excellence of the public school system to be essential to economic vitality, the Chamber urged the Lafayette Parish School Board to explore all possible opportunities to resolve the desegregation litigation in a fair and comprehensive fashion without resorting to divisive, expensive and lengthy litigation in 2000.

Historical Positions (continued)

Transportation

Interstate 49 - As a major priority, the Chamber supports upgrading U.S. Highway 90 to I-49 standards from Lafayette to New Orleans.

Interstate 49 Connector: The Chamber supports funding the construction of the I-49 Connector through Lafayette, along the Evangeline Thruway Corridor. The Chamber maintained its advocacy for Interstate 49 by reviving the Connector project through Lafayette, along the Evangeline Thruway Corridor. In 1992-1994, the Chamber promoted the “Cut and Cover” concept to achieve state support for returning the project to the transportation construction program. That effort contributed to the project being listed by Congress as a “Future Interstate” and a “High Priority Corridor”. That designation ultimately resulted in the Federal Highway Administration providing a Record of Decision and environmental clearance for the massive project.

Routing User Fees for Transportation - In 2007, the Chamber endorsed the concept of routing all highway user fees for the purpose of maintaining and building Louisiana’s highway infrastructure.

Transportation Mobility Fund- The Chamber supports adequate funding of the Transportation Mobility Fund.

The Chamber endorsed the State Legislature’s bill to create the structure of the Transportation Mobility Fund in 2006. The purpose of the Mobility Fund is to help provide the necessary state level investments (gap funds) that can be leveraged to finance mega transportation projects such as the Lafayette Regional Expressway or I-49 Connector.

Access Roads Priority - The Chamber supports the Lafayette Consolidated Government placing a high priority on interstate highway access roads and agreed to endorse road tax proposals if LCG maintained this priority.

Road Construction Bond Issues - The Chamber publicly endorsed and campaigned successfully in 1992 for the passage of the largest bond authorization by City of Lafayette voters, \$229 million. The Chamber endorsed the millage renewals and issuance of \$215 million in bonds in July 2006.

Transportation Philosophy - In 2004, the Chamber restated its position as an advocate for the process of further developing Lafayette’s public transportation system.

“The Big Three” Projects- The Chamber publically called for the prioritization and construction of the Camellia Bridge over the Vermilion River, the extension of Louisiana Avenue and its intersection with I-10, and the extension of South College to cross the Vermilion River. Those projects were identified as the “Big Three”.

Historical Positions (continued)

Transportation (continued)

Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water Project - The Chamber endorsed the original concept and the subsequent proposals to renew the 1.5 property tax millage for the operation and maintenance of the Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water Project.

Aviation - The Chamber was instrumental in the successful recruitment of the first, scheduled, commercial jet service for Lafayette, Eastern Airlines, and was also instrumental in the creation of the Lafayette Airport Commission, and the first weather service station at the airport.

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U.S. Climate Change Policy - Climate Change Initiatives: The Chamber opposes current federal climate change legislation because climate change science is inconclusive and the economic impact of legislation hasn't been properly considered. We further believe that enactment of proposed climate change legislation would damage state and national economies and lead to a reduced standard of living for all Americans.

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) - The Chamber supports CNG as an American energy answer which should play a significant role in our energy future. CNG provides advantages as a clean, affordable and American fuel that can help create U.S. jobs and lessen our country's dependence on foreign oil.