

► **Workers' Compensation:** Reforms passed in 2005 are not being fully implemented, and Oklahoma's courts have overturned some key reform provisions. The Chamber supports judicial reforms to further enhance the 2005 changes.

► **Oklahoma Council For The Advancement Of Science & Technology:** The Chamber supports a significant increase in the funding of this agency. The current request is for an increase of \$17.5 million to a total of \$40 million.

► **Erosion of Incentives:** The Chamber will oppose any and all attempts, whether by legislation or litigation, to reduce or repeal necessary economic development incentives to fund proposed personal and corporate tax rate reductions.

► **Natural Resources:** The Chamber will support legislation that will enhance the State's oil and gas industry in the growth of Compressed Natural Gas as a clean energy source.

## Social Issues & Quality of Life

► **Health Care:** The Chamber supports incentives for the incorporation of Evidence Based Medicine and Pay for Performance programs into the health care delivery system. The Chamber also supports the need to find a long-term solution to the Medicaid reimbursement problem.

► **Tort Reform:** The Chamber supports a re-submission of tort reform legislation. Broad-based lawsuit reform is necessary for our companies to be globally competitive.

► **Immigration:** The Chamber supports the idea that Oklahoma's immigration laws must conform to federal laws.

## Taxation

► **Taxation:** The Chamber will monitor and be an advocate for proposed taxation legislation that is fair, responsive and economically stimulating to the business community. Of particular interest is legislation designed to encourage entrepreneurial activities, job growth and sound financing tools for larger economic development projects.

*The Chamber derived these positions through a combination of a survey to the membership and evaluating a variety of legislative agendas from chambers and development organizations across the state.*

► *Issues and survey results were presented to the Legislative Committee.*

► *The Legislative Committee took a position on each issue.*

► *The issues were presented to the Chamber Board for consideration and position on each issue.*

► *Issues approved by the Board were compiled into the official Broken Arrow Area Chamber of Commerce Legislative Agenda.*

► *The Legislative Agenda was then delivered to Broken Arrow legislators and Leadership to keep them informed on our positions on business, quality of life, education and related economic development issues.*



# 2009 Legislative Agenda

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**BROKEN ARROW**

*Where opportunity lives*  
Broken Arrow Area Chamber of Commerce

## Workforce Development

Nationally, Workforce Development is the number one issue affecting economic growth and prosperity, and Broken Arrow is no different. The Chamber will support legislative issues regarding workforce development that:

- ▶ Seek to provide permanent funding for **Oklahoma's Career Readiness Program**. This program centers on the WorkKeys Skills Assessment System and has become a model for the nation, but no permanent funding mechanism is in place. To maintain our leading position we must secure ongoing funding.
- ▶ **Support the Grow Oklahoma campaign** and its stated objectives. This campaign is a multi-tiered approach to improving the overall workforce and economy of Oklahoma and will have a significant impact on our future prosperity.
- ▶ Increase access to resources targeted at **Incumbent Worker training**. With a limited workforce and facing the largest need for replacement workers in our country's history with the retiring of the Baby Boomers it has become paramount that the workforce system be able to develop and advance those people already in the workforce. Resources must be available to provide career guidance, access to training, as well as sources of funding.
- ▶ Work to ensure **education and training systems** are developing programs based on **employer needs**. With limited resources and high demand it is essential that programs be developed to meet the emerging needs of the developing economy.

## Education

Education consumes the largest single portion of the state's budget and has the largest overall impact on the state's economy. The Chamber will support legislative issues regarding education that:

- ▶ Continue to **advocate for and support** the educational and operational development of **NSU-Broken Arrow**. This is key to providing

the educated workforce vital to the growth and prosperity of the Broken Arrow community. In doing this we need to also support efforts targeted toward increasing Research and Development funding for post-secondary institutions.

- ▶ Place greater emphasis on **career planning and exploration**. This process needs to begin at the elementary level and continue beyond high school graduation. Guidance Counselors educated in and focused on workforce development and Graduation Coaches should be used to increase student engagement and raise graduation rates. Additionally, increased awareness and utilization of [www.OKCollegeStart.org](http://www.OKCollegeStart.org) and [www.GrowOklahoma.com](http://www.GrowOklahoma.com) should be supported.
- ▶ **Emphasize expanding the school calendar from 175 days to 180 days** to increase the instructional opportunities for students. Additionally, focus and attention should be directed toward increasing teacher compensation to the national average, as well as a program to provide merit compensation.
- ▶ Support incorporating the **WorkKeys Skills Assessment System into the regular high school program**. This is a nationwide program that aids in community and economic development. Failure to embrace this program will place our students at a competitive disadvantage in workforce preparation. WorkKeys should also be allowed as an acceptable end of instruction assessment.

## Oklahoma Infrastructure

- ▶ **Local Roads & Bridges:** Support cities and towns to have parity with counties when it comes to road and bridge funding.
- ▶ **Water:** The Chamber supports Oklahoma's need to (1) determine how much water we have; (2) determine how much we need the next 50 years; (3)

determine where it's needed; and (4) devise a plan to pay for the infrastructure to get it where it's needed, when it's needed.

- ▶ **Disaster Relief Funding:** Support the State to fully fund their portion of the 2007 federal disasters. Approximately \$15-\$25 million still needs to be reimbursed to local entities.
- ▶ **Mid-sized cities** with a population of 15,000 or more and not part of the major metropolitan areas have been consistency left out from the funding equation at the State level and left to their single revenue source of sales tax to meet the needs of infrastructure and community public safety. Since it is the cities that generate the property tax and sales tax for the State Budget, they should be included in receiving funding from the state for the statutory requirements that the state mandates cities to perform.

## Oklahoma Development Law

- ▶ **Eminent Domain:** The Chamber recognizes that Oklahoma's current Eminent Domain laws are more than adequate to protect the rights of property owners and that Eminent Domain is a necessary system for the development of lands for public purpose. The Chamber will oppose any legislation proposed that would limit the rights of the City, County or State to use Eminent Domain for public purpose and the Chamber will work to assure that no changes are made to Oklahoma's eminent domain statutes that would negatively impact economic development.
- ▶ **Opportunity Fund:** The Chamber supports proposed legislation to reauthorize the Opportunity Fund Law being re-written to conform to the Supreme Court ruling and refund the system at a level that will make Oklahoma competitive with the region.

- ▶ **Five-Year Ad Valorem Exemption:** The Chamber views the ad valorem exemption as a critical incentive for us to remain competitive with other states in the region. The Chamber will support and defend the current Ad Valorem exemption law as it now stands. Any attempt to raise the minimum qualifications or change the benchmarks for qualifying projects will be opposed. At the same time, the Chamber desires legislation to solve the depletion of the Ad Valorem Reimbursement Fund.

- ▶ **Sales Tax Exemptions:** The Chamber view the sales tax exemption for manufacturers in Oklahoma as vital to remain competitive with other states in the region and to the health and profitability of the manufacturing sector, any attempts to remove those sales tax exemptions will be opposed.

- ▶ **Tax Increment Financing (TIF Districts):** The Chamber will oppose any proposed legislation that is not reasonable or responsible or would diminish or restrict the use of Tax Increment Financing districts in Oklahoma. The Chamber believes that TIFs should be controlled at the local level.

- ▶ **Quality Investment Act:** The Chamber will support legislation that will enhance The Quality Investment Act. The Act needs to be expanded to make Oklahoma more competitive in the region in support of existing business expansion and retention efforts. An example would be construction of a new facility by an investment firm which then leases the facility to the "at risk" industry, but also allows either the company or investment firms to realize all Oklahoma State statutory incentive programs.

*This publication states the Broken Arrow Area Chamber of Commerce's positions on state legislative issues.*

*It is intended to inform the Chamber membership, the Oklahoma Legislature and the business community of issues that are important to the Broken Arrow area business community.*