



**NORTHEAST
WISCONSIN
CHAMBERS
COALITION**

Fond du Lac Area
Association of Commerce
207 N Main St
Fond du Lac, WI 54935-3460
(920)921.9500
www.fdlac.com

Fox Cities Chamber
of Commerce & Industry
PO Box 1855
Appleton, WI 54912-1855
(920)734.7101
www.foxcitieschamber.com

Green Bay Area
Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 1660
Green Bay, WI 54305-1660
(920)437.8704
www.titletown.org

Oshkosh Chamber
of Commerce
120 Jackson St
Oshkosh, WI 54901
(920)303.2266
www.oshkoshchamber.com

2011 Legislative Agenda

Collectively, the 54 Chambers of Commerce throughout Northeast Wisconsin represent over 18,000 businesses that employ over 450,000 Wisconsin taxpayers. While we extend our thanks to certain members of the legislative bodies representing Northeast Wisconsin for their efforts in controlling spending and avoiding new taxes, many of the items listed have been long standing priorities that have yet to be addressed by the legislature. Since the Chambers first joined together in 2003, good progress has been made on a number of our top concerns, but we are asking that all of these matters receive Legislative attention in the current session.

Employee Relations

- Bring public sector benefits in line with the private sector through a plan similar to NEWCC's "Benefit Equity" proposal which would provide new employees in the public sector with lower pension contributions, less expensive health coverage and more reasonable leave practices.
- Restore the right allowing local units of government the flexibility to bargain for lower cost benefits by expanding what the arbitrator may consider to include local economic factors and conditions.

Health Care: Creating a Long Term, Economically Responsible Plan

- Offer Wisconsin tax deductibility for health savings accounts (HSA), in line with federal tax treatment.
 - Extend liability and medical malpractice caps to long term care providers
 - Reform Badger Care to provide recipients with medical savings accounts and require participation in health evaluations and wellness programs
 - Support consumer driven health plans and the transparency of cost and quality data that is needed to support wise consumer choices.
 - Support incentives for employers that provide employee wellness programs.
- Work to ensure that the State Health Insurance exchanges described in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act do not compromise or destroy the health care alliances already in place around the country, or the ability of individuals and businesses to create those alliances outside the state exchange.

Economic Development

- Support Governor Walker's reorganization of the Department of Commerce and the establishment of the public/private Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to implement economic development activities on behalf of the State of Wisconsin.
- Encourage bipartisan compromise on a state economic development program which expands the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, consolidates existing tax credit programs, increases investment in R&D, expands technology grant and loan programs, and creates incentives for reinvestment of capital gains and for investors to provide venture capital to start-up companies.
- Ensure state regulations are in line with federal regulations and those in competitive states.
- Enact comprehensive product liability and other legal reforms.
- Establish strict limits on punitive damage awards.

Taxation and Spending: Truth and Fairness

- Repeal all increases on capital gains taxes passed in 2009.
- Repeal changes made in 2009 to the prevailing wage legislation as an unfair burden to public works projects throughout the state.
- Repeal the 1% increase in personal income tax for incomes over \$250,000 for individuals and \$300,000 per couple.
- Oppose any attempt to transfer funds from traditionally segregated accounts to artificially balance the budget.
- Oppose any further unfunded mandates, support elimination of inappropriate existing unfunded mandates and support a limited exemption from the property tax freeze to address certain unfunded mandates from the past.
- Balance the state budget under generally accepted accounting principles and discontinue the practice of delaying expenditures to subsequent fiscal years.
- Allow privatization of routine services and functions when cost-effective.
- Oppose business tax increases including: expansion or increase of sales, personal or corporate income tax.

Air, Water Quality and Energy

- Refrain from enacting new state standards on air quality while supporting efforts to keep NEW counties in compliance with air standards, without further interference from Washington.
- Refrain from any unilateral or premature action on global warming.
- Support the work by the League of Municipalities in developing changes to the implementation schedule for NR 151. This will allow for increased flexibility in meeting the forty percent standard and will not be as severe of a financial burden to the taxpayers.
- Prohibit the Department of Natural resources from regulating “indirect sources of air emissions (repeal NR 411).
- Prohibit the Department of Natural Resources from enacting or enforcing an air quality standard, performance standard or other emission limitation that is more stringent in substance or form than what is required under the Clean Air Act.
- Prohibit the Department of Natural Resources from implementing a water quality criteria for phosphorus or nitrogen until all states located in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 and EPA Region 7 have enacted similar water quality criteria for each nutrient, and have enacted a similar implementation mechanism to establish water quality based effluent limits for point source dischargers.

Transportation:

- Amend Wisconsin Constitution to prohibit any further transfers or lapses from the segregated transportation fund.
- Work to have Transportation Fund transfers over the last two biennia replaced in next budget.
- Work to achieve Interstate Status for U. S. Highway 41.
- Work to secure Northeast Wisconsin’s fair share of federal infrastructure funding.
- Investigate ways to adequately fund Wisconsin transportation infrastructure needs beyond gas tax and registration fees, i.e.; public-private partnerships, tolling, etc.

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