

Antelope Valley Chambers of Commerce Legislative Policies**INTRODUCTION:**

This Policy Platform is adopted by the Legislative Committee and the Board of Directors of the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) to provide a basis for the Chamber to act on local, state and federal government issues and to support a vibrant business environment. The Chamber's Board of Directors has authorized Legislative Committee to approve, on behalf of the Chamber, any positions of "support," "oppose," or "no position" that align with this Policy Platform, subject to the Board of Directors' approval or modification.

PUBLIC POLICY PLATFORM

The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce is the largest and most broadly based business organization in the Antelope Valley. The Chamber develops its policies and practices based on the underlying principle that creating and promoting a collaborative pro-business environment at the national, state, regional, and local level will directly enhance private enterprise and quality of life. This foundation is essential to maintaining a vibrant market-based economy. In determining a position on proposed legislation and other public policy issues, the Chamber is guided by its mission to build a stronger local economy with emphasis on the following areas:

Promote a Pro-Business Environment:

- Facilitate a market-based economy by supporting rational regulatory and tax policies, promoting incentives for business expansion and supporting the efficient operation of regulatory agencies.
- Support infrastructure improvements related to energy, water, air, transportation and communications.
- Promote workforce development by supporting training and education.
- Promote better access to civil courts.
- Oppose state mandates that impose obligations on local agencies or businesses without providing the necessary resources to comply those obligations.
- Reform legislation that would promote regulatory approaches or mandates that are not unduly punitive or costly as well as promote the region's competitiveness for economic development and job creation.

Promote Government Reform:

- Support the elimination or consolidation of duplication and overlapping agencies.
- Promote improved communication and coordination between governing bodies.
- Monitor planning, spending and the implementation and progress of government programs and infrastructure projects.
- Support greater engagement and input from the business community in the allocation of public funds and resources.

Maintain an Active and Visible Chamber Presence:

- Actively recruit and support qualified applicants for state and regional appointments and elected office who will proactively support the vision and mission of the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce.
- Publicly endorse ballot measures and bonds that align with the Chambers objectives and vision or oppose measures, tax increases, or bonds that do not.
- Keep governing bodies and decision makers on local, state and federal levels informed on important regional issues.
- Build coalitions and coordinate community, business, and government support for important regional issues.
- Regularly update members and create opportunities for their involvement and participation in the Chamber's legislative activities.

Business Environment

California, particularly Southern California, relies heavily on its vast natural and human resources and technological infrastructure to attract new investment. However, excessive regulation, special assessments, taxes and fees represent a considerable added cost for businesses of all sizes and may deter investments. In order to sustain a climate in which a successful enterprise may be run, the Chamber believes we must reform our tax, regulatory, and tort system to enable and encourage, rather than stifle, growth and productivity among California workers and companies. We must remain competitive where it counts, on the bottom line.

The Chamber Supports:

- Efforts to secure tax incentives for research and development, high-tech innovation, and targeted work-training programs.
- Simplification of federal and state income, banking and corporate tax systems, and efforts to stabilize annual revenues and expenses.
- A cost/benefit analysis to be included in all rules, regulations, taxes and fees before passage, and oppose those rules, regulations, taxes and fees that are deemed unjustifiable.
- Efforts to minimize business litigation costs through legislation that limits punitive damages, protects Proposition 64, known as Unfair Business Competition Lawsuits (2004), and encourages the use of mediation and/or arbitration to resolve labor disputes.
- Legislation that protects businesses from frivolous or inequitable litigation and provides educational resources for businesses to understand how to comply with regulations.
- Legislation designed to limit predatory litigation regarding alleged violations of Proposition 65, known as the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access claims, and tailor such actions to address real world compliance rather than attorney fees.
- The simplification and clarity of the process of complying with both federal and state tax obligations as it applies to local business.
- Adoption of federal changes to bring greater uniformity and predictability to any taxation of e-commerce.
- Efforts to clarify, simplify and safeguard rules for businesses regarding independent contractor status.
- Efforts to simplify and expedite regulatory review and permitting processes for new and existing businesses and construction projects.

- Open bidding processes on all public and private contracts and construction projects to provide equal opportunity and optimum return.
- The use of Infrastructure Financing Districts (IFDs) and tax increment financing to stimulate the development of infrastructure, child care facilities, libraries, parks, military base reuse, urban infill, affordable housing, and consumer services.
- Encourage an open and unrestricted contracting process for businesses and agencies.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Increases in taxes and fees that negatively impact the Lancaster business community.
- Taxation to a specific industry or group, unless necessary to mitigate the negative impacts caused by the industry or group.
- Any tax law changes that could stifle California's national and global competitiveness and leadership role in high-tech innovation.
- Any attempt to erode protections for commercial properties put forth by Proposition 13, the People's Initiative to Limit Property Taxation (1978).
- Project Labor Agreements, defined as any comprehensive pre-hire collective bargaining agreement that is negotiated between a project's owner and an appropriate labor organization, which sets out the basic terms, and work conditions for that particular project.
- Increases in mandated costs without a reasonable nexus or sufficient justification that the cost increases will provide significant benefits for businesses.

EDUCATION AND WORK PLACE PREPAREDNESS

Operating a successful enterprise depends on an educated and highly skilled workforce. Access to sufficient quantities of well-qualified workers, workforce development and the ability for ongoing training and advancement for existing employees is an ever-increasing challenge for employers. These factors are essential to maintaining a competitive position in a market with rapidly changing technology and increased demands for productivity. It is imperative to have a coordinated effort to leverage the resources available to Lancaster and within our region. Our members play an integral role in advancing educational opportunities with our community by actively working to build awareness and supporting the educational goals of our community, region, state and nation. Our educational leaders are tasked and focused on meeting the graduation and achievement goals set by our state and federal government.

The Chamber Supports:

- Greater access to higher education and a variety of programs, including industry-based training and apprenticeships, career technical education, continuing education, Antelope Valley College, California University of Bakersfield – Antelope Valley campus, California University of Long Beach – Antelope Valley Campus, University of Antelope Valley, Brandman University, Charter College, their respective programs, and the necessary funding for facilities to support that access.
- Greater dialogue to improve the process and system of adequately funding facility construction and improved learning environments for K-12 schools and higher education.
- Increased local control and funding flexibility.
- Initiatives and efforts that support greater access to quality preschool, private, and charter schools.

- The reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to provide the necessary support for the operations of workforce development centers in the region.
- Increasing the college and career ready graduates through programs, and assessments and accountability of education standards, including, but not limited to, Completion Counts, implementation of common core state standards, implementation of A-G courses as the minimum requirement for graduation from the K-12 education, integration of Career Technical Education curriculum into the core subjects, and increased accessibility to technology, and distance and online learning.
- Improving the quality of education through investment in professional training for teachers, especially in the areas of mathematics and science, and performance evaluation and compensation systems to encourage outstanding teachers and administrators, and as a tool for evaluating, remediating, or terminating school professionals who do not perform adequately.
- Expanding individual funding levels of CAL and Pell Grants, with appropriate levels of accountability.
- The retraining and professional development of the adult workforce to meet the changing needs of the community, and expansion of programs such as Career Technical Education (CTE).
- Collaborative efforts to promote mentorship and internship programs.
- The expansion of highly skilled programs, such as nursing and ancillary programs at the community college and university levels to ensure adequate health care staffing, and funding models, such as differential funding, to support these programs.
- Initiatives and efforts supporting STEM/STEAM education.
- Expand access to higher education by fully funding system enrollment growth requests and admitted enrollment.
- Robust federal and state funding for scientific research in order to grow the Antelope Valley's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem and to support scientific breakthroughs that will improve the quality of life across our region.
- Efforts and initiatives to address the growing shortage of teachers in areas such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), special education, and other specialized fields.
- Additional funding for mental health and counseling services to promote behavioral well-being and encourage academic achievement for students.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The costs associated with hiring workers, maintaining a safe workplace and complying with governmental regulation represents the largest ongoing cost for many companies. This is particularly true in California, where workers' health care costs, expansion of employer liability and wage hikes continue to increase costs, limit flexibility and are unclear to both employers and employees. The Chamber encourages the business community to pro-actively address and seek reforms for policies that leave California at a competitive disadvantage in business attraction and retention year after year.

The Chamber Supports:

- Greater employer flexibility to maintain a safe and drug-free workplace.
- Greater flexibility in work schedules for individual employees.

- The clarification and simplification of meal and rest period rules.
- Workers' compensation laws that balance employer liabilities and provides fair benefits to injured workers.
- Continued monitoring of and support for reform that provides a balance between family care/medical leave and stable business operations.
- Improving the educational and vocational skills of employees to help them move up the economic ladder.
- Laws and government regulations written in plain, simple language for workplace rules to ensure that employers know how to comply with the law and that workers are clearly informed of their rights.
- The preparation of cost/benefit analyses to ensure economic impacts are weighed before the imposition of regulatory statutes.
- A fair and rational healthcare system for providing health insurance to all individuals while also containing healthcare costs for individuals and employers.
- Permitting the use of arbitration in Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA), class action, and Equal Pay Act lawsuits that allows businesses to avoid litigation and seek more cost-effective resolutions to lawsuits.

The Chamber Opposes:

- State and federal minimum wage increases and other mandates without sufficient justification.
- Laws and regulations that unfairly penalize employers.
- Efforts to establish the card check method of unionization that takes away employees' access to a private ballot.
- Employee classification laws and regulations that are overly burdensome and lead to new costs for employers.

ENVIRONMENT

The Chamber embraces the idea that being a responsible business owner requires recognizing our shared responsibility to be good stewards of our natural resources. In an effort to encourage all businesses to achieve their maximum potential while balancing this shared responsibility, the Chamber subscribes to the premise that environmental challenges and opportunities must be addressed directly with resolution and veracity.

To this end, we must consider the role businesses will share in ensuring that efforts at regulatory reform are guided by an ever-present interest in preserving jobs and encouraging new job development and working to ensure that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are judiciously and reasonably applied in a manner consistent with the principles of good environmental stewardship and the promotion of a vibrant and competitive job environment. The Chamber recognizes the need to strike a balance between environmental improvement goals and sustaining economic development in the greater Antelope Valley region. The Chamber will continue to monitor and advocate for sound policies relating to natural resources, waste, contamination and air and water pollution control.

The Chamber Supports:

- Advancing reasonable measures that provide for the equitable and cost-effective implementation of cap and trade, while allowing for continued economic growth and the allocation of an equitable share of the funds towards projects in the High Desert that will provide the greatest benefits.

- With the landmark passage of AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, California has established mandatory reporting requirements and capped greenhouse gas emissions produced by industries categorized as significant sources, further distinguishing itself as the only state that caps carbon emissions. Developing and implementing the regulatory policies of AB 32 and SB 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, in a manner fostering economic competitiveness and development opportunities for businesses of all sizes and directs revenues to the appropriate programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Advocating for environmental strategies that allocate responsibility equitably between the region and across all business sectors.
- Advocating for reasonable solutions and funding for critical species and habitat issues.
- Advancing the reasonable implementation and expediting of state and federal environmental (CEQA and NEPA) regulations through measures such as, but not exclusive of others: - Developing regulatory reforms that incentivize the adoption of environmentally sensitive practices. - Streamlining all aspects of the CEQA and NEPA process. - **Analyzing the environmental mitigation cost to ensure the proper balance between the environment and business.**
- Promoting voluntary participation in environmentally friendly programs or measures such as: - Programs and efforts that encourage industries to participate in reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions. - Policies that are dedicated to both energy conservation and the use of renewable energy. - Policies and guidelines using sustainable building design for new projects.
- Programs and initiatives that encourage voluntary phasing-in new “green” technology and provide local governments and business with adequate incentive to support such technology changes.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Environmental regulatory approaches or mandates that the business community knows to be unduly punitive or costly and which, if implemented, will damage the region’s competitiveness or result in a net-loss of jobs to our communities.

HEALTHCARE

There is a recognized and well-documented crisis in healthcare throughout the United States. In the Antelope Valley the crisis is compounded by a unique situation of a rapidly increasing and diverse population that is underserved by a limited number of physicians, nurses and related healthcare professionals. The Chamber promotes a quality healthcare system that is affordable, accessible and designed to support the overall health of Californians. It is critical to support efforts to contain costs while avoiding unnecessary and costly regulatory controls, including mandates that result in employers not providing healthcare coverage for their employees. The Chamber encourages the business community to actively participate in programs that encourage healthy lifestyles.

The Chamber Supports:

- Monitoring and communicating with legislative bodies the impacts of federal healthcare legislation, specifically the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, on local businesses.
- Health education and available programs that promote healthy lifestyle choices that reduce healthcare costs.

- Policies to reduce health care costs and assure that all Americans have access to affordable, quality and efficient healthcare.
- Policies that reduce fraud and abuse within the healthcare system.
- Increasing and maximizing available state funding of Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements to providers of healthcare, rather than attempts to further cut current reimbursement rates.
- The allocation of Health and Mental Health Realignment funds based on current population and updated regularly to reflect population changes and ensure equitable distribution across the state.
- Efforts to update the state reimbursement formula for health care services to equalize the distribution of funds to local healthcare providers.
- Policies that encourage continued medical discoveries and innovations that improve quality of care.
- Competitive marketplaces to control pharmaceutical and healthcare plan costs.
- Legislation to allow employers to offer more affordable benefits plans that allow choices in coverage.
- Federal and state reforms that allow small businesses to obtain affordable group coverage and increased advantages from tax deductible medical care saving accounts and association plans.
- Continued growth and expansion of clinical based education programs to train and retain the number of healthcare professionals in the region.
- Development of the Cities Medical Main Street Development.
- Development of a new hospital to replace the current Antelope Valley Hospital Medical Center.
- Legislation designed to simplify and clarify the process for designating an area as “medically underserved.”
- Actions to improve access of resources related to shortage designation or medically underserved populations, including additional funding sources for Graduate Medical Education (GME) and residency training programs.
- Legislation that provides greater funding for and access to mental health services.
- Re-defining or broadening language in the Affordable Care Act as it relates to coverage for patients with pre-existing conditions and those in need of mental health services.
- Greater access to healthcare services through enhanced use of technological and virtual innovations.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Proposals to establish a government-mandated health care delivery system that negatively affect local employers.
- Any new taxation to fund healthcare delivery plans.
- Proposals that would increase medical malpractice insurance for physicians.
- Mandates of specific health benefits that would increase costs.
- Cuts to funding that would impede local efforts to train and retain physicians and health professionals.

HOUSING

The Chamber recognizes the significant need for affordable housing units in order to improve the quality of life for the region's residents. To address the ever-widening gap between what Californians earn and what they spend on housing, the Chamber supports land regulation reforms that accurately account for a project's timeline and expectations. Additionally, development fee reductions and the restoration of lost redevelopment funds that went towards housing will assist in addressing the root cause of rising housing costs. The Chamber's efforts to improve access to affordable housing will ultimately serve as a key tool in encouraging businesses to stay and grow in the greater Antelope Valley region, whose population is projected to dramatically increase in the years to come.

The Chamber Supports:

- Expediting the distribution of outstanding bond funds to improve affordable housing supplies for low-income individuals, veterans, those with mental illnesses and others.
- Modernizing land use designations to address regional needs such as affordable housing and community development.
- Legislation that expedites infill development while ensuring compliance with land use and energy regulations.
- Proposals that restore redevelopment funds and reduce development fees for housing projects.
- Legislation that seeks to increase affordability of housing and to provide a broader spectrum of housing opportunities for residents.

The Chamber Opposes:

- Legislation or initiatives aimed at imposing rent-control policies, which have historically limited supplies of affordable housing.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration issues have a significant impact on California's economy that affect all facets of our commerce and our economy. Immigrants have always been and continue to be an essential part of our state and national workforce. The lack of an effective and comprehensive national policy regarding immigration has resulted in a multitude of challenges for businesses. To ensure California's future prosperity, the Chamber encourages reform to the national immigration policy that includes an earned pathway to legal status by establishing a guest worker program, improvements to the visa program, steps to secure our national borders, and stricter enforcement of existing laws.

The Chamber Supports:

- Establishing a guest worker program that takes into consideration the needs of specific industries and determining time limits for certain workers.
- Providing greater border security through shared responsibility with neighboring countries.
- Establishing an earned pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants.
- Penalties on employers and individuals who knowingly hire undocumented immigrants.

- Improving the efficiency of the visa program based on professional service requirements and market demand while ensuring the protection of opportunities for U.S. workers.
- E-Verify, a voluntary electronic system to assist employers in verifying the employment eligibility of all newly hired employees.

INFRASTRUCTURE

As Lancaster seeks to redefine its economic efforts to compete effectively for the future, we must continue to improve our infrastructure, particularly in the areas of energy, water, transportation, and technology. These systems provide the foundation for accelerated business growth, increased capital, job creation, investment, and an improved quality of life. Worthy improvements require smart investment, sound management, and a creative partnership between the public and private sectors. As government budgets continue to shrink, spending priorities will become more difficult to identify. The business community must emphasize the importance of continued infrastructure investment. This emphasis should be accomplished through active participation and input from the business community to ensure rational policy-making decisions. The business community must also remain vigilant to ensure that new legislation and regulations do not hinder infrastructure development and the economic development and job creation that it brings.

TRANSPORTATION

The Chamber Supports:

- Revisions to cap-and-trade project application criteria to remove the strong bias toward higher-density areas.
- Expanded regional transportation facilities, projects and funding.
- Promoting fairness and competition for transportation infrastructure funding opportunities based on largest demonstrated need and impact. While this type of criteria is needed for all kinds of projects, it is especially important in evaluating goods movement projects due to the extraordinary impact and stress that international trade places on local transportation systems.
- Engaging the Chamber membership and leadership in policy discussions with local, state and federal representatives as it pertains to options for public/private partnerships and alternate funding for infrastructure improvements.
- The development of alternative transportation solutions as well as innovative means of delivering projects including design-build contracting and expediting of required environmental review processes.
- Facilitating regional support for increased funding for grade separations and additional projects that mitigate the impact of goods movement, such as securing state and federal funds and ensuring that goods movement investment is included in a new transportation reauthorization bill.
- Legislation, tax credits and incentives that promote more efficient goods movement on highways and rail lines in and out of the Antelope Valley.
- Create business-friendly port policies that restore port trade volumes to previous levels and incentivize economic growth and job creation.
- Utilizing local sources of aggregate and construction materials in order to make projects more cost-effective and sustainable.
- Identification and development of alternate sources of funding for transportation projects.
- Advocating for the implementation and funding of a national freight policy.

- Measures to revitalize the Palmdale Airport and the success of Fox Field regional airport.
- Stronger representation from our region with entities that allocate funds for key transportation projects.
- Thoughtful efforts to anticipate the benefits and impacts of driverless vehicles.

WATER

The Chamber Supports:

- Measures that improve and mitigate adverse impacts to water quality and supply from water sources, which provide water for hundreds of thousands of Inland Southern California residents.
- Develop a strong working relationship with the Water Master of the Antelope Valley – (Charged with administering adjudicated water rights and managing groundwater resources within the adjudicated portion of the Antelope Valley.) Ensure long term availability of a stable water supply to withstand continued growth within the region. Support the position of increasing water storage underground through recharging systems.
- Measures that increase water supply and storage facilities within the region and allow for economically feasible water resource management.
- Modernizing the Endangered Species Act to allow the development of water infrastructure, water supply conveyance and storage, and water quality projects while protecting the ecosystem.
- Measures to educate and encourage businesses on reducing usage and increasing efficiency and/or effectiveness of water conservation efforts, including the use of recycled water.
- Inclusion of metrics to equitably account for regional diversity within statewide policies, such as conservation mandates. Examples of such metrics include, but are not limited to: climate, growth, weather normalization, population density and the development of local drought-proof supplies.
- Policy-making in a transparent, inclusive manner that clearly distinguishes between emergency response measures/processes and long-term sustainable policy development.

ENERGY

The Chamber Supports:

- State and federal regulations that will preserve the ratemaking authority of publicly owned utilities to include local input into the process.
- The promotion of solar and wind development in areas that do not impact the endangered species or the visual beauty of the local wildflower landscape. Encourage the use of rooftop solar both in industrial and residential areas.
- Support local control by allowing municipalities flexibility to proactively implement programs and policies that best suit the community.
- Development and implementation of new technologies and infrastructure that allow public utilities to advance energy efficiency, sustainable energy projects and alternative fuels programs.
- A balanced and reliable energy supply to include electricity, natural gas, diesel, gasoline, propane, hydrogen, derived from both traditional sources and through new technologies, to provide employers with the choice of energy which is best for their needs and budget.

UTILITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Chamber Supports:

- Legislation and regulations that will encourage innovative utility and telecommunications infrastructure.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

International trade represents a major economic engine for both local and regional economies. Recognizing the importance of the continued development of international trade, the Chamber supports policies that promote the expansion of free and fair trade whenever possible. Strengthening ties and increasing economic opportunities in the world's largest marketplaces is vital to maintaining the state's competitiveness in the global business community.

The Chamber Supports:

- Fair and equitable market access for California and all domestic products abroad.
- Communicating public policy positions to the state and federal government on international issues of importance to the Antelope Valley business community.
- Legislation that broadens and strengthens relationships and opportunities, while reducing barriers to trade and investment.
- Foreign trade zone programs as a vehicle to maintain global competitiveness.
- Maximizing Lancaster's resources to promote and enhance trade and commerce between Lancaster and the global marketplace as well as to attract international business to Lancaster.
- Informing the Lancaster community, including legislators and businesses, about the benefit of trade to the state's local economy.
- Funding for the Export-Import Bank in their mission of providing financing opportunities for businesses in international trade.
- Incentives that improve the international competitiveness of California and all domestic businesses.
- Legislation that increases business opportunities, choices for consumers, and job gains in the Southern California region.
- State and local legislation that removes sanctions on business engaged in international trade and/or efforts to minimize conflicts in state and federal policies and legislation regarding international trade.
- Legislation that protects intellectual property rights without restricting the free flow of ideas.

CURRENT FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, AND CITY ISSUES

The Chamber Supports:

LOCAL

- Technology expansion within the City of Lancaster boundaries, including greater internet access.
- The preservation of local governance and the protection of government revenue.
- Urging preference on bids to utilize local businesses for work within the City and County.
- Endorsement of public policies that generates improved safety to the community while maintaining the privacy of the individual.
- Air Quality Management- the Chamber supports the localization of having its own Air Quality Management District, which will be encouraged to keep in line the needs of businesses and the community when developing new regulations that will affect the local economy and lifestyle.

COUNTY

- Designating the region as underserved in terms of funding, resources, and appointments for health care, judgeships, transportation, and water.
- Promote Fire and Sheriff's departments to be properly staffed and have the needed equipment to meet the needs and the modernization of facilities and infrastructure to sustain their effectiveness.
- Decrease the number of homeless people in the region through sound practices and policies. Ensure the Antelope Valley receives its fair share of revenues collected in taxes allocated to homelessness.

STATE

- Legislation or ballot measures to return to a supermajority to pass state budgets.
- Funding for additional judicial positions, staff, and necessary resources to meet the region's growing needs.
- Legislation or ballot measures that provide for a more equitable distribution of resources across the state (i.e. judgeships, medical reimbursements, etc.)
- Maintaining local offices of the Highway Patrol.

FEDERAL

- Edwards Air Force Base is the top employer and economic driver in the Antelope Valley. As such, the Chamber will maintain a strong relationship with the base and advocate for the continuance and expansion of EAFB. The support will also include NASA and the Rocket Lab operating at EAFB.
- Additional resources, funding, and personnel that aids in the expansion and continuation of Air Force Plant 42, in areas such as: Modernization of facilities and infrastructure to sustain their effectiveness for mission delivery. Support of new aircraft to be developed and manufactured plus the continuance of maintenance and upgrades to existing aircraft.
- The continued support and expansion of federal judgeships in ratio to the workload and service to population and jurisdiction.