



Richardson Chamber of Commerce 2019 Legislative Agenda

The Richardson Chamber represents more than 900 member organizations and is credited with bringing some of the world's largest corporations to North Texas, and for helping brand Richardson as the Telecom Corridor. The Richardson Chamber has been awarded a 5-star accreditation by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; only the top 1 percent of chambers in the U.S. receives this accreditation.

Economic Development

Texas has used the Texas Enterprise Fund, the Research and Development Tax Credit, and other tools to attract and retain technology companies, and to grow high-paying tech jobs and tech investment in Texas. Such incentives are required to remain competitive with other states and countries who are seeking these same outcomes.

Recommendations:

- Support diversity in the workforce and oppose discriminatory legislation that would negatively impact our state's economic growth, workforce, capital investment, ability to attract major events, or would otherwise damage our reputation as a business-friendly state.
- Support incentives that maintain competitiveness in Texas for corporate expansions, relocations, capital-intensive projects and job growth, such as the Texas Enterprise Fund, Texas Enterprise Zone Fund and tax incentives available under the Texas Economic Development Act under Chapters 312 and 313 of the Tax Code.
- Support the Texas 2050 plan to enable long-term economic growth that accommodates our state's rapid population growth.
- Encourage public and private investment in research and development through public funding for research at state laboratories and universities, tax incentives for business R&D, and innovative policies to accelerate technology transfers from lab to market.

Higher Education

Texas universities and community colleges are educating students and building their skills in the industries that are critical to sustaining Texas economic prosperity. The continued success of Texas high tech industries depends on an educated workforce that is prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow, as well as the cultivation and prevalence of Tier One research universities that work with industry.

Recommendations:

- Fully fund the Texas Research Incentive Program (TRIP) to leverage private donations for innovative research at state universities and colleges, including the unpaid backlog of \$40 million to UT Dallas.
- Support policies and concepts that will facilitate the development of new Tier One universities in Texas, including the Governor's University Research Initiative, to attract renowned or emerging researchers.
- Support policies that promote and leverage partnerships between private industry and academia to bridge the gap between innovation occurring at Texas universities and the marketplace, including pilot "proof of concept" funding to accelerate university tech transfer and commercialization.
- Issue tuition revenue bonds to fund building construction and renovations at our growing universities.

Workforce Development

The skills gap is a very real thing in Texas. Only 42 percent of Texans aged 25-34 years old have a college degree or work-related certificate, when studies show 60 percent of new jobs will require a workforce with such education and training by 2020.

Recommendations:

- Support the Texas 60x30 Plan to achieve the goal of 60 percent of Texans aged 25-34 years old who will hold a postsecondary degree or certification by the year 2030.
- Increase funding for Skills Development Fund grants to improve workforce training.
- Support innovative and flexible career and technology education pathways in conjunction with public schools and community colleges to meet the needs of Texas employers.
- Support tax incentives for companies offering an internship or apprenticeship for high school students in a recognized Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway program, as well as similar programs for college students.

Transportation

Recommendations:

- Support new project delivery tools to allow for innovative infrastructure financing that would not obligate state funds further.
- Support the continued use of public-private partnerships and enhance mechanisms that allow project sponsors to access private capital to supplement state or local funds to build infrastructure.

Local Government

Recommendations:

- Oppose reductions in the property tax rollback rate.
- Support legislation that preserves the ability for locally elected officials to govern and respond effectively and efficiently to the individual and market driven needs of its residents, businesses, and stakeholders.
- Oppose legislation that would impose revenue caps of any type including implementing a reduced rollback rate, mandatory tax rate ratification elections, reduced rollback petition requirements, or limitations on overall expenditures.

Privacy Laws

Recommendations:

- Oppose legislation that expands the definition of an entity that is funded by public monies and their duty to respond to public information requests.
- Oppose legislation that would make private entities, such as businesses and chambers of commerce, subject to open records laws or force the release of proprietary information in governmental entities' contracts with businesses.

Public Education

Our Texas economy is highly dependent upon the production of well-educated students who have a rigorous high school curriculum, for the benefit of all industries. Public education programs focused on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are critical to increasing the pipeline of talented students who will pursue careers in technology, and teachers who will teach them.

Recommendations:

- Reform school finance and increase funding for public schools by increasing the basic allotment and adjusting formulas to increase state contribution to at least 50 percent over a period of years.
- Expand access to rigorous science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses and qualified STEM educators in K-12 classes to improve the quality of education and prepare our future workforce.
- Support measures that give school districts the flexibility to meet the needs of their students.
- Ensure that any school safety measures imposed by the state are fully-funded (both capital and operating expenses) and that school districts have flexibility to select appropriate safety measures for their facilities.

Water

Recommendations:

- Support legislation to accelerate the state permitting process for the development of new water resources.

Budget

Recommendations:

- Access the Rainy Day Fund to create a new revenue stream to address budget needs such as increasing K-12 funding and growing our highway infrastructure.

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