

2021 - 2022 Pro-Business Policy Agenda

Business Community Advocacy Council Approved
GRCA Board Approved

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance will lead, educate, engage, inform and advocate to advance a policy agenda that serves as the voice for business at the local, state, and federal level. Our members want to operate in a business environment that allows them recover, grow, and thrive. GRCA's policy priorities reach beyond the legislative and regulatory agenda to encompass administrative policies that have implications on businesses, our community and economy. We urge Pennsylvania's legislature and the Governor to pursue a public policy agenda that will reinforce confidence among employers, provide resources necessary to develop a talented workforce and enable economic vibrancy for our Greater Reading Region – Berks County. Our member driven policy agenda is outlined below.

MODERN, SAFE, EFFICIENT AND RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Ensure our infrastructure is adequately funded to enable construction and maintenance of our aging transportation and utility systems along with other infrastructure. Modern, safe, reliable, and efficient Transportation Infrastructure Systems are a core function of government. Transportation systems and utility infrastructure is vital to attract and retain quality businesses to grow the economy, increase regional and PA competitiveness, and retain/create jobs. This includes Transportation, Transit/Mobility, Energy, Broadband and Water/Wastewater. Our members support continued regulatory reform due to current impediments on improvements and skyrocketing costs. Our members support expanded opportunities for commuter systems through public and private investment in bus and rideshare capacity and the return of a passenger rail system between Reading and Philadelphia.

SUPPORTING A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS TAX STRUCTURE/ RESPONSIBLE BUDGET + GOVERNMENT SPENDING

We encourage all levels of governments to work collaboratively towards a performance-based, on-time budgets, before new or higher taxes are considered to address deficit spending, entitlement programs, or new initiatives without reducing the effectiveness of essential government programs. Pennsylvania's corporate taxes and tax rate continue to put the Commonwealth at a competitive disadvantage. Comprehensive reforms of and reductions in business taxes continue to be necessary to help stimulate economic development and assist with recovery. At the federal level, Congress and the Administration must work collaboratively towards passing annual budgets and away from continuing resolutions. Government entities need to explore all opportunities for cost-savings and efficient spending before new or higher taxes are considered to cover increasing program costs or recovering budget deficits due to COVID-19. Our members support preserving the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) because it reduced the effective tax rate across all income brackets and continues to facilitate business investment in capital and employees. Comprehensive reforms of and reductions in specific business taxes are still necessary to help stimulate economic development in recovery.

DRIVING RECOVERY + INVESTING IN ECONOMIC GROWTH

Support the funding of economic development programs that have positive social and economic impact in Berks County as we work through the COVID-19 virus and recovery. Limited liability protection from unnecessary COVID-19 litigation to protect businesses that operate in good faith needs to be established at both the federal and state levels.

PROVIDING A SKILLED WORKFORCE

Economic viability and long-term prosperity for Greater Reading – Berks County depends upon a well-educated and skilled workforce, paired with a healthy talent pipeline that addresses the growing skills gap identified by our companies. Programs at all levels should prioritize existing jobs, skills shortages, and talent retraining for jobs of the future.

REGULATORY REFORM + GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

The business community needs continued regulatory reform from processes that impede infrastructure and business improvements and exacerbate costs. Permitting reform through increased transparency, consistent decision making, and continued reduction in the time needed to make permit decisions, coupled with limiting costs to businesses through regulatory and permit requirements is key to increasing economic development. Our members support collaborative approaches to regulatory and permit development and decision making at all levels to increase economic development while being environmental stewards. Our members oppose the practice of regulatory changes through executive action that seeks to circumvent a collaborative process with the PA legislature and Congress.

BALANCING LAND USE & RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

Identifying the best strategy for responsible land use and development that maximizes economic development opportunity while retaining Berks County's rich agricultural tradition benefits everyone. It is imperative that all government entities, businesses, and community organizations within work together for a shared vision of our future to ensure opportunities are shared equally across the county. Our members also support adding opportunities to increase and expand access for affordable housing options across the county that will help attract and maintain a local workforce base.

BALANCED LABOR + EMPLOYMENT LAWS

Changes to labor relations and employment policies are necessary to facilitate a fair work environment and address abuse. Our members support reforms, including modernization, to the unemployment compensation, workers' compensation and welfare systems that focuses on returning injured employees to full health and function. Employers oppose excessive mandates that unnecessarily increase the cost of doing business including the unnecessary and costly overtime rule changes and drastic and unsustainable increases in unemployment taxes due to COVID.

AFFORDABLE + ACCESSIBLE BENEFITS

Berks County employers want to be able to offer workers quality, affordable health care options. We will continue to advocate for reforms to the health care, insurance and medical liability that will improve the system, providing flexibility to encourage (rather than mandate) and promote competition.