

Employers have choices about where to locate, invest and grow. A business climate that provides reasonable taxes and regulations, a legal system that is fair and a reliable workforce is important to many employers. Assuring a competitive West Virginia is essential for job creation in the 21st Century.

Excellence in K-12 Education

West Virginia must provide the means to allow and encourage student success. Our state must move toward promoting student-centered education that puts students' needs first. To help students achieve their greatest potential, we must:

- Increase transparency in measuring accomplishments and student progress, specifically to include benchmarks for measuring success
- Provide resources and a pathway for better teacher compensation
- Streamline the process of charter school authorization
- Improve student access to transportation
- Increase pathways to alternative certification to attract teachers in regions of need
- Conduct an audit of West Virginia's K-12 public education system to identify areas for continued development with an eye toward improving efficiency and reducing administrative costs in the West Virginia Department of Education
- Allow for calendar flexibility and virtual learning
- Undertake a thorough examination and revision of Chapters 18 & 18A of the West Virginia Code
- Work with teachers, psychologists and concerned parties to ensure safe schools and improve student behavior
- Better align higher education institutions to assist the school systems in improving leadership skills, enhance teacher opportunities and tackle health and conduct issues
- Advocate for an improved foster care system to equip West Virginia's children for a successful academic outcome



Build A Strong Workforce & Talent Pipeline

West Virginia's low workforce participation rate must be addressed. This has created a workforce crisis. Employers have many employment opportunities but struggle to fill openings. West Virginia must:

- Revamp the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Board
- Improve regional WorkForce West Virginia efforts
- Strengthen communication between community and technical education and employers
- Create incentives for keeping students in state post-graduation
- Appoint a cabinet level leader of workforce development
- Support job training assistance initiatives and offer resources to those seeking specified training
- Substantially increase apprenticeship opportunities
- Expand childcare availability
- Emphasize the importance of being attractive to all potential workers with diverse backgrounds



Competitive Business Climate

Competition among states to keep and attract employers is fierce. West Virginia's business climate would be more attractive if we:

- Lower the Corporate Net Income Tax rate to make West Virginia a Top 10 state for corporate net income tax competitiveness
- Reduce insurance tax rates to the national average
- Reduce costs and improve outcomes in the area of unemployment compensation

Support Manufacturers' Needs

Manufacturing builds economies. Increasing manufacturing employment will provide a significant boost to our state's workforce. West Virginia must enable and encourage manufacturers to grow in all parts of our state. To do this we must:

- Incentivize stable & competitive energy costs
- Provide a stable regulatory climate
- Eliminate personal property taxes on machinery, equipment and inventory
- Have a concerted effort to attract more talent



Enhance Health and Wellness

West Virginia continuously ranks at or near the bottom of health and well-being statistics nationwide. The health, well-being and safety of West Virginia's citizens and visitors must be of the utmost importance. To accomplish positive change, we must:



- Measure and support better health outcomes
- Continue to monitor changes involved in the restructuring of West Virginia's Department of Health, Department of Human Resources and Department of Health Facilities
- Provide more resources and ensure quality of care in our foster care system
- Increase access to medical, dental, prenatal and mental health services
- Create school-based health centers to meet the physical, mental and emotional needs of students
- Develop additional means to provide nutrition for students in need during off-school times

Fair Legal Landscape and Judiciary System

West Virginia must continue to strive to have a fair, independent and timely judiciary system. To do this we must:

- Evaluate current laws surrounding familial and custodial issues
- Utilize transparency measures to ensure judicial oversight and accountability within the court system
- Reform laws related to contributions to judicial races
- Pass fair mediation legislation that stipulates mediation should be conducted by someone other than the presiding trial judge
- Repeal the collateral source rule to address "double-dipping" by allowing juries to have information on damages that have already been paid by other sources
- Enact phantom damages reform to prevent plaintiffs receiving a "wind fall" by being awarded damages for the full "sticker price" of medical services incurred, rather than the discounted rate that was actually paid by the health insurer



Promote Quality of Life and Public Safety

The Chamber believes in the importance of healthy lifestyle initiatives and strives toward the goal of being the “safest state.” To improve the quality of life and increase the safety and well-being of our citizens we must:



- Conduct a top-to-bottom review of our corrections system
- Address the challenges and requirements involved in recruiting qualified personnel for prisons and jails
- Support efforts which demonstrate that West Virginia is a welcoming location for all employers and all potential employees
- Provide means of increasing support for neighborhood recreation
- Enhance historic preservation opportunities
- Continue improving road conditions
- Properly advertise grants through tourism and visitor’s bureau to attract visitors and monies spent in state
- Provide additional support for police and first responders
- Increase the staffing level of the West Virginia State Police
- Ensure a driver’s license or photo identification is readily accessible for those released from incarceration

Support Economic Development

To expand support for economic development in West Virginia we must:

- Expand the site readiness program
- Move to create public-private development efforts
- Create additional capacity within community and regional development departments
- Coordinate economic development programs across the state to enhance and focus efforts
- Expand access to capital



“All-of-the-above” Energy Approach

West Virginia is the 5th largest energy-producing state in the nation. We must pursue policies that encourage energy production, to include the following:

- Send a clear message that West Virginia has an “all-of-the-above” energy approach
- Support coal and natural gas derivative products
- Promote natural gas as a powerhouse for West Virginia in the energy sector; favorable laws and regulations for all energy sectors are a must
- Incorporate renewables as an important addition to our diversified economy

Advance Small Business Opportunities

Small businesses are the backbone of West Virginia's economy driving innovation, creating jobs and fostering community growth. To further support their vital role, West Virginia must:



- Simplify regulatory processes to reduce bureaucratic barriers and encourage entrepreneurial initiatives
- Facilitate easier access to financing options and promote programs that provide financial assistance to small businesses
- Enhance workforce training programs tailored to the needs of small businesses, ensuring a skilled and adaptable workforce
- Provide tax incentives to allow small businesses to hire for internships
- Invest in infrastructure projects that enhance connectivity and accessibility for small businesses across the state
- Advocate for tax policies that provide relief and incentives for small businesses, fostering growth and sustainability

Foster Technological Advancement

The technology sector is pivotal for West Virginia's economic diversification. To continue to grow West Virginia's emerging technology sector, we must:

- Continue to invest in broadband infrastructure to ensure reliable and high-speed internet access statewide
- Support STEM education initiatives from K-12 through higher education
- Establish and expand programs that provide resources, mentorship and funding support for technology startups
- Implement incentives to encourage research and development activities within the technology sector
- Review and modernize regulations to accommodate emerging technologies



Leverage Travel and Tourism Assets

West Virginia is a beautiful state with gorgeous views in every region and every direction. Skiing, white water rafting and some of the world's finest golf courses are found in our state. Every city is just minutes away from mountain scenery, state parks and recreational rivers and lakes. To better capitalize on travel and tourism, we must:

- Continue marketing existing areas of attraction, while identifying new tourist destinations
- Increase support for neighborhood recreation
- Advertise grants through tourism and visitor's bureaus
- Attract visitors who will invest in our state
- Identify and fund historic preservation sites