

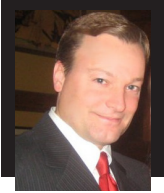


Waterbury Regional Chamber  
*driving business to business*

# 2012 LEGISLATIVE AND REGIONAL AGENDA

**SUPPORTING 6,971 BUSINESSES; 101,533 EMPLOYEES  
IN THE GREATER WATERBURY 13-TOWN REGION**

**Message from the  
Vice-Chair, Public Policy**



*Dear Chamber Members:*

*We usher in the 2012 legislative session committed to helping shape public policy that will*

*address the needs of our local community and create a positive climate for the business sector. Last year's regular legislative session enacted a number of major changes to state government regarding tax policy and agency restructuring. The October special session that followed approved a package that marks a positive start toward changing Connecticut's economic policy. With the nation's economy still in downturn, it is more important than ever that local state and federal policy include significant measures to create jobs and demonstrate fiscal responsibility. Your involvement, along with the work of the Public Policy Committee, our lobbyist Armando Paolino of Halloran & Sage and our regional delegation, contributes to a unified and powerful alliance lobbying for the business interests of our members.*

*We will also launch a website that allows all of our members to keep track of vital legislation and offers members the ability to post comments, to publish blogs, to directly interact with legislators via discussion forums and to enjoy pod and video casts of legislative interviews, discussions, debates and hearings. This interactivity is an important part of keeping the Chamber community engaged with our elected officials and policy makers. The website ([www.ctpublicpolicy.com](http://www.ctpublicpolicy.com)) will be live early in the legislative session. We welcome you to review the Chamber's 2012 Legislative Agenda that follows.*

*Best Regards,*

**Donald C. McPartland**  
Chair, Public Policy Committee  
Waterbury Regional Chamber

**Our 2012 Legislative and Regional Agenda** represents the Waterbury Regional Chamber's priorities in matters of public policy and economic development. The agenda is the work of numerous volunteers on our Public Policy and Economic Development Committees, our Health Care Council, Small Business Council as well as the Chamber's staff and our lobbyist, Armando Paolino, Halloran & Sage Government Affairs, LLC. Collaborators include Waterbury Mayor Neil O'Leary and his staff, our region's manufacturers and service industries, hospitals and health services.

We are hopeful our elected representatives in both Hartford and Washington, D.C. will incorporate components of our Agenda as they shape the public policy of Connecticut and the nation. The concepts and recommendations in this legislative and regional agenda are designed to improve the greater Waterbury region's economic opportunities. It recognizes the needs not only of the region's businesses, but also its residents. We understand that sound public policy produces a superior quality of life. Our priorities center around our major business sectors: manufacturing, health services and retail, as well as our major infrastructure needs.

## TOP PRIORITIES:

- Support the proposed merger of Waterbury Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital. The proposed merger of Waterbury's two hospitals brings the potential for tremendous energy and economic development to the city and the region. Support from the state can help ensure that as the merger process moves forward, the new, combined hospital facility will be established in the city's central business district.
- Support Post University's expansion efforts. Like the proposed hospital merger, the University's expansion could serve as a major economic development engine for the City of Waterbury and surrounding region and support from the state can be a determining factor to help ensure it moves forward.
- The Waterbury region and business community are well-aware of the impact a major unfunded pension liability can have on taxpayers. Connecticut's \$20 billion unfunded pension liability severely constrains state finances and contributes to a significant per-capita debt for current and future generations throughout the state. Waterbury has taken proactive steps to address its responsibilities and the state should enact similar measures toward its own pension liability.

## SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

### MANUFACTURING

One of the top issues facing our manufacturers is an insufficient number new workers joining their trades. State public policy should recognize the leading role manufacturing can play in Connecticut's economic revitalization. Additional legislative and gubernatorial incentives can follow the measures that were implemented in the October 2011 special session to address workforce training and development issues. These include:

- Increase Funding for the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund, which is effectively used to help control the state's high cost of energy for our manufacturing companies (who pay proportionately much higher energy costs than other sectors of the economy) as well as commercial and residential customers.
- Modify the STEP grant program to allow eligibility for workers from additional municipalities. Limiting the program to workers who reside in municipalities with a minimum of approximately 9 percent unemployment or a minimum population of 80,000 limits the program's effectiveness.
- Modify the Step Up program to allow companies with up to 150 employees to participate. Limiting the program to companies with 50 employees or less also severely limits the program's effectiveness.

### HEALTHCARE

- Protect current state funding levels for patient care and pursue increases in reimbursement to equal the cost of providing such care and oppose measures that increase the cost of providing care.
- Support legislative initiatives that will engage communities and providers to improve coverage of the healthcare system rather than increase the cost of providing healthcare.

### GENERAL LABOR ISSUES

- Oppose Workers Compensation reforms, including efforts to restrict employer practices, increase legal fees in compensation cases and shorten timelines for employers to respond to or defend against claims. It is important to recognize such mandates would place a new burden on businesses at a time when most can least afford to implement them.
- Oppose captive audience legislation. Attorney General Jepsen concluded a 2011 version of this legislation would violate federal law. Connecticut should not become one of a small number of states that battle federal labor regulations.
- Oppose proposals to increase Connecticut's minimum wage, as well as any legislation to enhance penalties for minor wage and hourly pay miscalculations. Connecticut remains one of the highest cost states for doing business and the continued economic downturn is the worst possible time to further increase costs.
- Repeal or Modify the 2011 Paid Sick Leave mandate. If not completely repealed, this first-in-the nation legislation should be revised to establish fairer implementation that allows companies to grow without being financially penalized.
- Overhaul an unemployment benefits system that provides among the highest benefits in the nation, effectively discouraging qualified people from returning to the workforce. Reduce the unemployment compensation program to 26 weeks and reduce all related costs to business. Raise the standard for those relying on this program to actively pursue work, and to document this pursuit.

## JOB CREATION

While the Waterbury Regional Chamber embraces the many needs in our community, we believe the following job creation policy goals for 2011 Legislative session will create the best opportunities for our region and state:

- Having enacted record-setting increases in 2011 as part of efforts to address the state deficit, continue consolidation of state agencies for savings and utilize any projected surplus for state debt and tax reduction.
- Since Connecticut residents are already saddled with the highest deficit per capita in the nation and highest bonded indebtedness, it is imperative the state budget remain below the Constitutional spending cap. The state tax increases enacted in 2011 mean there will likely be proposals to adjust the cap to allow for new spending increases, which should be opposed.
- Support tax policies that encourage businesses and entrepreneurs to invest in their employees and business to make them more innovative and competitive.
- Support the streamlining of permitting and enforcement programs at DEEP, DECD, DAS and DOT and incorporating lean techniques. The recommendations due to the Legislature at the start of the legislative session should be reviewed and all measures that will aid economic development passed into law prior to the session's conclusion.
- Focus efforts on helping small businesses since additional measures were established to benefit large corporations during the October 2011 Special Session.
- Modify the legislation approved during the October 2011 special session to allow the provisions to have a more significant and immediate impact on the state's economy with the following measures:
  - Expand the amortization terms for loans delivered through the Small Business Express Program to 10 years. The current limit of five years is impractical.
  - Modify the new two-year business entity tax schedule, which is not currently scheduled to take effect until 2014. To have a far more timely impact, this two-year schedule should be implemented immediately.
- Enact incentives for small to medium sized companies considering relocation from other states. Currently, the First Five and its successor program are designed to attract large corporations. Likewise, the incentives approved by the Legislature in October 2011 are designed to allow businesses already in Connecticut to expand. Incentives designed for smaller companies looking to relocate in Connecticut could play a key role in rebuilding the state economy.
- Support increased funding for incumbent worker training via Workforce Investment Boards.
- Support funding for subsidized transportation to work programs that are paramount to employment for low wage workers.

## REGIONAL NEEDS

- Keep the I-84 Widening Project on schedule. The link between economic development and infrastructure needs, particularly roads, sewers, water supply and energy is clear. The top infrastructure priority for our region is completing the widening of I-84 through Waterbury due to the enormous impact the traffic bottleneck has both on existing

local businesses and the perception of doing business in our region. Project construction is currently slated to begin in 2014.

- Support the designation of an airport development zone for Oxford Airport with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the Connecticut Airport Authority.
- Advocate for permit streamlining and continued funding support for Brownfield remediation and redevelopment. The recapturing of assets from our industrial legacy is cost prohibitive because of the price of environmental clean-up. Providing support to cover this cost for private developers and businesses will help create new economic opportunities and construction, manufacturing and administrative jobs.
- Telecommunications, Wireless, and Broadband Needs: As a result of private sector investment, Connecticut businesses and consumers have access to cutting-edge services at highly competitive prices. These services are at the heart of our economy and will fuel new economic growth. The General Assembly and state agencies can stimulate new investment by eliminating unnecessary and outdated regulation over legacy services and using a light-touch approach towards regulation of new services.
- Support the development of a regional economic alliance to foster cooperation between public and private sectors to further the economic growth of our region and encourage regional cooperation to build a sustainable economy for Waterbury and the Central Naugatuck Valley. Identify seed monies to get the initiative off the ground.

## LOCAL INITIATIVES

- Support the creation of an Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center at Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC). Oppose any funding cuts to both NVCC and the University of Connecticut's Waterbury Campus, which play a key role in the education and training of the local workforce. Support measures to ensure these institutions meet the current academic, technological, research, career, and social outreach and engagement needs of their students.
- Continue to support Main Street Waterbury and its efforts to revitalize Waterbury's downtown central business district that includes promoting mixed use development, transit-oriented development and market rate housing.
- Support the efforts of the Connecticut Main Street Center and its mission to be the state's leading resource for cities and towns seeking to comprehensively revitalize their downtown districts
- Support the efforts of the Loyola Project to revitalize the south end of Waterbury which is a gateway to the downtown.
- Support the efforts on the Waterbury Naugatuck River Greenway project.
- Continue to support the development of the Multi-Modal Transportation Center and the Waterbury Rail Branch Line.
- Support the Arts & Culture Collaborative of the Waterbury Region in its mission to strengthen and support the arts as a central component of furthering economic development and enhancing the quality of life for the residents of our 13-town region. Encourage initiatives with the arts community for creative placemaking to bolster economic development.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF RECENT ADVOCACY:

The 2011 Legislative Session included the passage of initiatives contained in the Chamber's Legislative Agenda, including:

**Public Act 11-96**, which allows municipalities to provide property tax deferrals to the owners of brownfields who clean the property and build residential or mixed use commercial structures there.

**Public Act 11-78**, which streamlines the process for business investors to access both state Urban and Industrial Sites Reinvestment tax credits and federal New Markets tax credits.

**Public Act 11-141**, which expands brownfield remediation programs, including new liability protections from the state and third parties and more Transfer Act exemptions.

**Public Act 11-140**, which establishes a new economic development program that lets small manufacturers defer taxes on the money they save for new buying new machines and training their workers.

The October 2011 Special Session saw a number of key initiatives that the Chamber's Public Policy Committee directly recommended to our regional legislative delegation and Governor Malloy's administration incorporated into the job creation bill that was approved. These include:

- Creation of the Small Business Express Program and a Subsidized Training and Employment Program (STEP) and authorizing up to \$120 million in bonds for implementation. It specifically targets in each of the next two years FY12 and FY13: \$20 million for a revolving loan fund, \$10 million for the Small Business Express and \$20 million for job creation.
- Increased bonding for the Manufacturing Assistance Act (MAA), from the previously allocated \$40 million during the next two fiscal years to \$140 million 2012 year and \$240 million in 2013.
- An education and workforce training component that creates the opportunity to establish an advanced manufacturing technology center at Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC). The Chamber's Manufacturer's Council, in collaboration with the Higher Education Collaborative, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board and other stakeholders are working to pursue this opportunity for NVCC.

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