

Chamber Priorities for Government Action

The Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce is committed to inform and educate the business community regarding relevant legislative and regulatory issues. The Chamber's Government Action Committee (GAC) has a fundamental role which includes advocating the views of the business community to our elected officials on public policy and legislation on the local, state, and federal level.

The Chamber Priorities for Government Action provide a road map of the issues, a framework for vetting those issues that arise and focusing our priorities on the issues most important to the Greater Spokane Valley business community. Using The Big 5 as our foundation, issues will be considered and prioritized within that context.

The Big 5

- Greater Outdoors – Promoting and protecting the vitality of the outdoors
- Greater Goods – Promoting the Greater Spokane Valley as an emerging leader in high-tech manufacturing
- Greater Learning – Integrating business and education to create the workforce of the future
- Greater Cures – Growing medical research from concept to cure
- Greater Vision – Building an enterprising identify for the Greater Spokane Valley region

Policy Issues:

1. Transportation

The Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce believes that transportation is critical to our region's business climate and economic future. It allows us to stay connected and fosters commerce. It fuels our economic growth, increases competitiveness, and ultimately creates jobs. We support transportation objectives that increase accessibility, reliability, and safety.

2017 Priorities:

- a. Bridging the Valley: The development of vacant industrial-zoned land, transportation of goods, and the timely performance of emergency service providers are significantly enhanced by providing grade separations of automobile/rail intersections.
- b. Barker Road: Our community's highest priority Bridging the Valley project, funding the remaining \$26.3 million construction of a \$36 million grade separation of the BNSF line near Barker & Trent Road will provide the necessary access to over 500 acres of industrial land, contributing over \$2 billion in economic output to the region and state.
- c. I-90 Expansion:
 - i. We encourage the timeline for the I-90 expansion to be accelerated as it is more cost effective to do things sooner rather than later from a time value of money perspective as well as from a congestion standpoint. Dealing with the problem before it becomes a major problem saves time and money.
 - ii. Funding the North/South corridor was a huge transportation win for Eastern Washington. As the project moves forward savings may be realized. We believe that any savings from this project should be redeployed in our region. There are numerous Eastern Washington projects that could be funded if funds are not needed. We support crafting legislation that ensures Eastern WA dollars stay in Eastern WA.

- d. Pines Road: The grade separation at Pines Road/BNSF will be an underpass: Pines Road will go under the BNSF tracks and connect into a new intersection at Trent Avenue. The current estimate for this project is \$19,765,000.

Big 5 Tie: Greater Vision

2. Education

The Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce believes that investments in education should increase the opportunities of our students and meet the needs of our business community. Developing a skilled workforce of the future depends upon a robust education system that supports students; Kindergarten through Career. We support an education system with clear and challenging academic standards, expanded options that are innovative and affordable, and a system that provides accountability and transparency.

2017 Priorities:

- e. Full funding of Primary & Secondary Education
- f. Growth Management Act
- g. Funding of WSU Medical School & UW/GU partnership & Research Facilities

Big 5 Tie: Greater Learning, Greater Cures, and Greater Vision

3. Infrastructure

The Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce understands the importance of good roads, bridges, mass transit systems, and water infrastructure as critical infrastructure assets that drive the growth, jobs, safety, and competitiveness of our community. We need to invest strategically, wisely and carefully in our most critical needs.

2017 Priorities:

- h. Water Rights: The greater Spokane Valley region relies on groundwater from the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer. We support efforts to ensure the long-term availability of water and water rights for businesses and residents, such efforts may include adjudication, formation of a water authority, conversion of irrigation water rights to municipal water rights, or including irrigation water rights in evaluating water supply capacity.
- i. Protect the River: Support efforts that protect the social, business, and environmental bottom line of the Spokane River. The river provides an incredible asset for businesses, residents, and visitors, helping ensure the long-term viability of the river protects our present and future economy.
- j. Development of Parks: We support the development of parks and recreation spaces. Parks and recreation are the introduction to the community for visitors, and when supported bring visitors to the community, encourage them to stay longer, and act as a sales pitch for the region. Parks and recreation enhance our competitive advantage and are a critical component to our long-term economic success.

Big 5 Tie: Greater Outdoors, Greater Vision

4. Employment Issues

The Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce promotes workplace policies that enhance job creation and spur economic growth. The Chamber is concerned as the business community has been inundated with a patchwork of federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations that reduce flexibility, increase cost, and stifle growth for both employers and employees. We support free market solutions which address the needs of both employees and employers without undue burden.

2017 Priorities:

- k. L&I/Workers' Comp
- l. Minimum Wage/Paid Sick and Safe Leave/Predictive Scheduling/Pay Equity

- m. Ensure that Washington State's workers' benefit package can continue while maintaining state fund solvency and affordable premium rates for workers and employers by clarifying the scope of covered conditions. This includes restoring the original intent of the law that the system covers only work related exposures and conditions.
- n. Expand the use and reduce unnecessary administrative requirements of the claims resolution settlement option.
- o. Expand the claims management authority for retrospective ratings, groups, and self-insured employers.
- p. Prohibit the diversion of workers' compensation trust funds for non-workers' compensation programs and purposes.

Big 5 Tie: Greater Goods, Greater Outdoors, Greater Cures, and Greater Vision

5. Taxation

The Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce acknowledges the numerous challenges and fiscal issues that face lawmakers. Over the last decade, major changes to and interpretations of tax laws have been made that have resulted in lack of certainty, consistency and equitable treatment of taxpayers. Taxpayers deserve fair treatment, regardless of the pressures placed on our economy and our tax collection system. We support tax reforms that attracts investments, encourages innovation, fosters economic growth and job creation, and increases our competitiveness.

2017 Priorities:

- q. Limited Growth in Taxation
 - i. Balance state budget while promoting & protecting economic development opportunities and our state competitive ranking
 - ii. Ensure taxpayers are treated fairly and equitably by strengthening the taxpayer bill of rights. Reform the appeals system and process to:
 - 1. Allow for independent review of department revenue decisions without a requirement to pay the underlying taxes;
 - 2. Change the unreasonable high "burden of proof" placed on taxpayers that challenge property valuations to the more widely used standard of the "preponderance of evidence."
- r. Reduce regulatory red tape and paperwork burdens facing employers. This should include reducing the number of times that a sales tax rate is changed in a year, consolidating the annual survey and report and removing the 100% penalty.

Big 5 Tie: Greater Vision

6. Regulatory Reform

The Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce believes in a regulatory system that is fair for everyone, takes into account the views of communities and businesses, evaluates the impact rules will have on jobs and small businesses, and protects our economic and personal freedoms.** We support regulatory reform that provides accountability, transparency, and participation.

2017 Priorities:

- s. Agency Review of Bills by Elected Officials - (In the 2016 session SB6396 was introduced which provided for the review of any rule by a governmental agency to be performed by the Attorney General to assess constitutionality and legality. Further, new rules or amendments to rules would have a one year sunset provision requiring the legislature to pass legislation to postpone expiration. This bill passed the Senate but did not make it out of Committee in the House.)

Big 5 Tie: Greater Vision