

## 2025 Federal Public Policy Statements

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE –

The Longview Chamber of Commerce (LCC) supports addressing the complexities of our criminal justice system, it is imperative that we implement policies that foster accuracy, equity, and opportunity. Our focus must be on ensuring that criminal records are reliable and that we dismantle systems, like the Double Revenue Penalty (DRP), that inadvertently exacerbate public safety concerns and economic hardships. By prioritizing educational and vocational programs, mental health treatment, and legislative reforms that support second chances, we can significantly reduce recidivism rates and enhance workforce participation.

- Support efforts to ensure that criminal records made available to potential employers are accurate.
- Support efforts to abolish DRP, which is a double penalty, in tandem with identifying a new funding mechanism for trauma centers, which are currently receiving funding from the DRP. While the DRP was a well-meaning idea created in 2003 to fund trauma centers, it has many unintended consequences. The reality is the DRP is making Texas more dangerous by creating severe economic hardship, putting more unlicensed drivers on the road, and limiting employment opportunities.
- Support efforts that prioritize educational and vocational programs for individuals that are proven to reduce re-offending and increase workforce participation. The harder it is for someone to find a job after release from prison, the greater the chance he or she will end up going back to prison.
- Support efforts to treat offenders with mental health issues and ensure that services are readily available when released. Adults with untreated mental health and substance issues are 20-25% more likely to be rearrested.
- Support legislation to downgrade first-time minor drug possession offenses and allow courts to divert individuals to a treatment program when the offender is deemed by the court not to be a threat to public safety. Use the savings derived from diversion to strengthen existing treatment programs in the community or create tailored treatment programs, as necessary, to address possession offenses.
- Support legislation that allows 17-year-olds to be treated in the juvenile system when appropriate, while giving judges authority to transfer those younger than 18 into the adult system on a case-by-case basis.
- Support legislation funding and development of mental health, drug, and family courts to improve the functioning of the criminal justice system by addressing the unique and special needs associated with co-occurring social, legal, health and mental health related factors impacting the legal system and community public safety needs.
- Support second chance hire by supporting improving prison education, support the US DOL Reentry Employment Opportunities program, support process for individuals to petition federal courts to seal records of nonviolent federal offenses.
- Support for successful re-entry for formerly incarcerated including repealing the ban on eligibility for ex-felons, removing barriers to second chance licensing, ensuring exiting inmates have photo IDs, and increasing access to expungement.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT –**

LCC drives regional economic development by partnering with a network of business leaders, elected officials, and economic agency allies to provide an array of services to companies with business retention, expansion and relocation needs.

- Supports the development of local energy resources such as natural gas, oil and lignite.
- Opposes increased taxes and fees on energy sources.
- Supports the elimination of tax inequities and subsidies for energy production.
- Supports balancing environmental concerns with economic and other impacts to local energy production and usage.
- Supports the cost-effective development and implementation of new technologies which will encourage electric energy efficiency and meet the area's growing electricity needs.
- Opposes policies that work to increase electricity costs without a corresponding benefit to customers and the safe and reliable operation of the electric grid.
- Support removing unfair barriers to allow manufacturers to expand their domestic and global reach.
- Support existing U.S. Trade agreements and trade rules, including full implementation of the United State-Mexico-Canada Agreement, in ways that benefit manufacturing in the United States.
- Support and continue to improve U.S. export promotion and export financing tools.
- Support exporting controls and investment restrictions are tailored to address legitimate national security concerns and coordinated with allies when possible.
- Support the modernization of U.S. and foreign customs operations to better facilitate legitimate trade and improve enforcement tools to target illicit trade in the United States and across foreign borders.
- Support making the U.S. tariff code more competitive by enacting a new Miscellaneous Tariff Bill and the Generalized System of Preferences.

## EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

LCC recognizes investing in education to provide a well-educated job-ready workforce will drive economic growth of our state for a high societal return. The LCC believes that close collaboration and connection between public education, higher education, and the business community is critical to the improvement of student success.

- Support increased funding for equipment, faculty, tuition and books for dual credit students.
- Support increased flexibility regarding credentials for public school teachers in CTE courses, and increased funding for off-campus learning opportunities and for start-up technical programs.
- Support appropriate funding for Adult Basic Education.
- Support recognizing the important role of support services, advisement, and counseling to better prepare students for multiple pathways and find ways to financially support these services.
- Support shifting the funding emphasis to provide support on the “front end” to attract the best teachers into the profession and to maximize student success at the beginning of the process.
- Support funding to staff to support the increasing needs of students living in poverty (parent advocates and liaisons)
- Support the development of an accountability system that allows for a variety of measures to determine student growth and student proficiency.
- Supports funding and development of a regional university-healthcare as well as Mental and Behavioral Health-business learning collaborative hub that will provide quality medical education and training to fulfill the local medical industry needs. The hub will drive innovation by deepening and broadening university-industry research links.
- Support increasing competition and diversity among education providers and increase school choice.
- Support the passing of ACCESS Act as part of Higher Ed Act reauthorization.
- Support PARTNERS Act – this bill will make it easier for businesses to offer work-based learning opportunities.
- Expand the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) model to additional industries via newly created 21<sup>st</sup> Century Expansion Partnerships.
- Support passing of the JOBS Act through Higher Education Act reauthorization.
- Support making program-level data on postsecondary education programs transparent for informed decision making by passing the College Transparency Act as part of the Higher Ed Act reauthorization.
- Support passing the Skills for 21s Century Act as part of WIOA reauthorization. “Ensure workers who lose their job have access to training for jobs for which businesses are hiring.”

- Increase appropriated funding in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), career and technical education (CTE), and adult education state grants – returning to at least Fish Year 2001 levels.
- Support language adding language under WIOA that empowers businesses to upskill and reskill existing workers by creating a new title establishing a federal incumbent worker training fund.
- Support broadening the pipeline of workers who can succeed in training for infrastructure jobs by passing the BUILDS Act as part of an infrastructure package.
- Support policy reforms and investment to help increase access to affordable quality childcare options for working families including removing childcare as a barrier to employment by investing in the Childcare Assistance Program, supporting the development of the childcare workforce, and cultivating as mixed-delivery model of high-quality care.

## EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

LCC supports continued initiatives that enhance the strong economy and workforce of Texas. Toward that end, legislation and initiatives strengthening employers' position for control and limited regulation are supported and pursued.

- Oppose legislation that would erode employment-at-will as a right for all Texas employers and employees.
- Support transferring control over federally mandated programs like unemployment insurance to states.
- Oppose legislation and regulations on both federal and state levels that would increase the already-considerable burden on employers regarding occupational safety and health administration (OSHA) requirements.
- Support the proposed five (5) year "Break in service rule."
- Employer notice to Employees" in the Ragsdale v. Wolverine Worldwide, Inc. decision supports the ability of employers to retroactively designate leave as FMLA-qualifying provided doing so does not cause harm or injury to the employee
- Support the Employee notice to Employers revision that employees must provide specific information to employers before the FMLA employer notification to employee process begins.
- Oppose attempts to restrict the rights of employers to conduct random and/or universal drug testing of employees.
- Support legislation that provides that a claimant who fails or refuses to submit to an employer-required drug test that is a condition of the job offer or refuses the offer of work without good cause would disqualify the claimant from receiving unemployment benefits.
- Oppose efforts dictating how private employers interview and hire candidates for employment.
- Support all employers private and public to comply with EEOC requirements for hiring.
- Support efforts to reform the wage and hour laws by allowing more flexibility for employers and employees in hours worked during a pay period before mandating overtime pay. Provide more freedom and flexibility to classify workers as exempt from overtime requirements.
- Oppose efforts to modify the FMLA and oppose any initiatives to require employers to pay for FMLA leave with unemployment insurance taxes.
- Support allowing an employer to seek an injunction on behalf of an employee to end workplace harassment without creating a new liability for employers.
- Oppose piecemeal mandates that vary from city to city requiring employers to pay a wage level higher than the federally required minimum wage.
- Oppose arbitrary increases in minimum wage that cannot be supported by improvements in productivity and that deprive many entry-level workers of job opportunities.
- Strongly support the current law on pay equity.

- Support reform of the Payday Law to achieve greater consistency with provisions of federal law and follows DOL guidelines or federal court decisions under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Support legislation to eliminate the Payday Law's applicability to non-wage benefits, including vacation pay, sick pay, etc., and issues relating to employee classification under wage and hour law. Support capping the amount of wages that may be claimed under the statute.
- Oppose any expansion of collective bargaining rights in the public sector since the current system adequately provides for employee participation without the potential for disruption of services.
- Oppose the expansion of legislation previously passed that allows legally owned firearms to be stored on company-maintained parking lots.
- Support legislation to allow employers to apply part of their unemployment insurance taxes toward the cost of training workers for their businesses.
- Support fundamental changes in the unemployment insurance system that would abolish traditional federally controlled unemployment insurance programs in favor of establishing individual Unemployment Savings Accounts (USAs) for employees. These would be available if needed for unemployment, training or as a supplement to retirement income.
- Oppose efforts to allow public employees, or to require private employers, to subsidize or promote labor unions or similar organizations through payroll collection of dues and contributions.
- Support the eradication of human trafficking by creating strategies to find and stop bad actors.
- Oppose the new warehouse worker protection act (WWPA) which issues a new ergonomic standard along with giving unions a streamlined approach to organizing warehouses and denying employers their process rights for certain OSHA citations.
- Oppose the Department of Labor's (DOLs) new salary threshold for employees classified as executive, administrative, or professional (below which an employee is non-exempt or eligible to earn overtime).
- Oppose the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) allowing employees to designate a non-employee as their representative to accompany OSHA inspectors during walkaround inspections.

## ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

LCC advocates for the safe and environmentally responsible promotion and expansion of the oil and natural gas industry to protect national security and foster ongoing economic and job growth in Texas. Additionally, LCC supports the development of sustainable and innovative energy technologies and efficiencies to address the evolving needs of Texas's industries and consumers.

- Support legislation to require that research data and analysis are relied upon as the basis for proposed regulations by federal environmental agencies be made available for review by the regulated community before a regulation can be adopted or prohibit the adoption of regulations for which supporting data are not publicly available.
- Oppose legislation that places additional requirements on business and industry without a firm technical basis or appreciable benefit to the environment.
- Support limiting intrusion by federal agencies in the state's implementation of delegated environmental programs.
- Support repairing the broken permitting process for energy and resources projects to minimize delays and reduce litigation.
- Oppose any federal government actions regarding climate change that could adversely affect the international competitiveness of Texas or the U.S. economy in the global economic arena.
- Oppose new legislative efforts that would require the use of specific energy generation technology for industrial sources.
- Support removal of economic and supply barriers that distort fuel competition and free-market influences.
- Support legislative efforts to increase the low cost, reliable supply of energy using a diverse mixture of fuels including oil, natural gas, coal, nuclear, wind, solar and hydro applied in an environmentally safe manner and coupled with encouragement of conservation and the practical use of battery storage resources.
- Support improving outdated permitting processes by:
  - Encouraging concurrent review and approval of permits, where feasible. For critical infrastructure or environmental permits, have a lead agency designated to ensure that good communication is established between the applicant and affected agencies.
  - Allowing interested applicants to reimburse the department for overtime costs incurred by employees that work overtime to expedite a permit, modification, license, registration or variance.
  - Allowing departments within State Government the ability to hire contractors to expedite issuance of a permit modification, license, registration or variance.
  - Having each Agency provide on-line specific information regarding how best to achieve timely permitting decisions; provide clear expectations for applicants to improve the quality of applications; establish performance measures for review staff and develop, improve and encourage electronic permitting tools.
  - Ensuring that the permitting process will be balanced and will take into consideration economic impact of the project, public need and the requirements of existing environmental laws and regulations.
- Support the diversification of mineral development by expanding natural resource supply chains away from China and Russia.

## GENERAL BUSINESS

LCC supports policies that uphold the continued sustainment of commerce and a business environment that positions the region's business community as a regional and state leader, with aspirations toward future efforts for national and global competitiveness.

- Support the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) reauthorization.
- Support continued development of electronic business to business transactions.
- Support business efforts to develop and disclose comprehensive, market-driven privacy policies.
- Support enhancements to the state model legislation patterned after the Federal Regulatory Flexibility Act. to improve the climate for small businesses.
- Support creating tax incentives for businesses of all sizes.
- Support incentives to assist businesses during catastrophic events.



## HEALTH INSURANCE AND HEALTH CARE

LCC is proud of the community's healthcare system and the advanced technology it brings to the region. It is a key driver of both economic and social responsibility in the area. LCC supports initiatives that enhance advanced care, improve access to healthcare, control rising costs, and reduce the number of uninsured and underinsured individuals. Additionally, LCC advocates for value-based healthcare solutions that cut costs and reward high-quality outcomes.

- Support employer wellness initiatives encouraging personal responsibility and enhancing community health awareness.
- Support advancing health care to a value-based and quality-focused delivery of care.
- Support incentives that increase access, transparency, informatics and embraces new technology (telemedicine and community paramedicine) that improve health care outcomes and overall care.
- Oppose any measure that disproportionately increases healthcare costs for local employers, employees, and their families.
- Oppose the adoption of a single-payer, government-run health care system.
- Support initiatives reducing the number of uninsured across the region.
- Support development of community-based alternatives to hospitalization for individuals with mental illness to include respite, supportive living, and crisis residential care.
- Support tort reform measures protecting health care providers from frivolous lawsuits and oppose any measure that would diminish this protection.
- Support the access and funding of resources to doctors and scientists who are working on ground-breaking research for severe medical conditions without cures, of which there are many.
- Oppose price controls and other market-restrictive policies.
- Support the protection of Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA).
- Support to protect employer-sponsored coverage by maintaining tax-exempt status of employee health benefits to avoid higher premiums for workers and families.
- Support policies that allow employers to increasingly use innovative approaches to providing coverage for their employees, such as wellness programs, association health plans and direct primary care.
- Support reforms that move from a fee-for-service or volume-based system to a value-based system.
- Support reducing the patient's out-of-pocket costs by improving health savings accounts.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

- Support employer-sponsored insurance (ESI) as a crucial resource for families relying on it to maintain their physical and mental well-being.
- Support expanded access to telehealth services as a way to relieve costs associated with in-person care.
- Support strengthening the provider workplace.
- Support better integrated mental and physical health care.

## **Immigration**

LCC supports addressing the needs of a growing economy while balancing state and national security concerns and human rights. It advocates for a comprehensive legal immigration policy and reform package.

- Support improving the speed and accuracy of worker verification systems so employers are not unfairly burdened.
- Support expanding the number 30-year-old visa caps of H-1B, L-1 and EB visas for professional and highly valued workers, and J-1 Visas for non-immigrant Work and Study Exchange Programs.
- Support considering a carefully monitored guest or essential worker program to fill the gaps in America's workforce.
- Support a faster approval AND RENEWAL process for work visas.
- Support efforts to address and resolve the issues causing the significant backlogs in the employment-based immigrant processing system.
- Provide a permanent and compassionate solution for populations facing uncertainty, including Dreamers, who were brought here as children and know no other home, and individuals with Temporary Protected Status.

## **Border Control**

- Support finding meaningful solutions to stop the economic disruptions caused by the border crisis.
- Support a bipartisan effort to fix border crisis issues by improving border security measures and updating asylum laws.
- Support addressing and stopping the illegal dumping of drugs in the U.S.
- Support improving the cooperative relationship between the Federal Government and Border States to improve border security.
- Support a phased approach to immigration reform that centers on border security, interior enforcement, and legal immigration processes.

## TAXES AND SPENDING

LCC supports a pro-growth tax policy that simplifies the tax system, enabling taxpayers to make more informed decisions about working, saving, and investing. This approach aims to unleash the potential of American businesses, both large and small, to create jobs.

- Support preserving the existing competitive business tax rates with a pro-growth tax policy.
- Protect a competitive business tax base.
- Protect the competitiveness of the U.S. International tax system-for both U.S. companies operating abroad and foreign companies investing in the United States.
- Support the reauthorization of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA).
- Oppose damaging tax hikes on manufacturing families and pass-through manufacturers that pay tax at individual rates.
- Support restoring immediate R & D expensing and preserving America's leadership in R & D and Innovation.
- Protect the ability for manufacturers to immediately expense 100% of the cost of capital equipment purchases.
- Support returning the U.S. to an EBITDA standard for interest deductibility to get job-creating projects off the ground.
- Protect businesses from international taxes on globally engaged companies.

## TECHNOLOGY

LCC supports policies that safeguard current and future economic growth, ensure a competitive workforce, and create a roadmap to maximize the benefits of AI. These policies aim to ensure AI's responsible and ethical use while protecting the country from existing and emerging security threats.

- Support programs to increase awareness of how all sectors of business can protect themselves from cybersecurity threats. Also, support efforts to increase the supply of a skilled workforce for the cybersecurity sector, including programs that effectively transition veterans into this sector.
- Support legislation that controls technological misrepresentation and imitation toward businesses' existing or potential customer base. (e.g., telemarketing efforts, Caller ID Spoofing and unsolicited text messages.
- Support efficient and effective infrastructure assets, including ICT (Information & Communications Technology), in order to help build capacity needed to accommodate our growing population, enable our citizens to be digital creators and help us to remain competitive with other states.
- Encourage and support all sectors of business to develop and disclose comprehensive, consumer protecting privacy policies and where able abide by federal and other world country privacy laws. Additionally, to encourage the State of Texas to develop its own privacy policy if federal policy does not provide complete protection.
- Support a strong privacy law that resembles the comprehensive privacy approach implemented in states like Texas.
- Support Publishers/Site owners providing an easy way for users to access and be deleted in their targeting methods. Point of Contact or Platform deletion capabilities.
- Support Opt-outs if PII's (Personally Identifiable Information) are collected and sold (if applicable), supports user ability to opt out of everything should the user ask for the option.
- Support establishing a Data Broker, where applicable, for someone at the organization with knowledge of data privacy and knowledge and ability to follow the guidelines.
- Support non-discrimination / non-retaliation against consumer(s) for exercising their rights. If a consumer exercises their right, the publisher/brand shouldn't deny goods of services or provide lesser quality or change prices of services or goods.
- Support Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) and the FCC's efforts to control telemarketing efforts, Caller ID Spoofing and unsolicited text messages. (Explanation: Advocates for protection of our businesses being imitated in illegal means. Technological. Attack on customer base, imitating company. Preventing technological attacks on customer base, imitating company, and interrupting commerce. For pp preventing tech attacks on our business's customer base.)

## **BROADBAND**

- Support improving connectivity for wireless and wired broadband.
- Support accelerating permitting projects on Bureau of Land Management or National Forest Service land to expedite deployment of infrastructure projects
- Support efficient and expedited small wireless cell deployments required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).
- Support fixing the broken permitting process that is holding up projects cleared by the Federal Broadband Investments and Jobs act.
- Support clarifying that National Historic Preservation Act review is not required for temporary uses, or where new licensing would not substantially alter existing facilities.
- Support closing the loopholes in existing federal pole attachment law to cover poles owned by municipalities and cooperatives.
- Support to protect the Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act funding.
- Support the expanded access of fast, affordable, and reliable internet-driven by private sector innovation- to connect all Americans.
- Oppose the FCC's new rule that hinders efforts to bridge the digital divide.
- Oppose the FCC imposing powers outside of their authority.

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLEGENCE**

- Support the review of existing laws before enacting new ones.
- Support that AI applications are context-specific; AI regulation should be too.
- Support right-sizing compliance.
- Support to maintain U.S. global leadership.
- Support Investment in R&D and workforce pathways.

## **TORT REFORM**

LCC supports creating a fair, balanced civil justice system that eliminates the burden and congestion of frivolous lawsuits that inhibit business growth, advancement, and profitability.

- Support protecting legislative reforms enacted to address rising medical malpractice insurance costs.
- Support legislation that creates mechanisms and incentives for the use of alternative disputes resolution.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Having a dependable transportation network is critical to East Texas's economic vitality. Thriving communities must be able to move workers, provide services and transport products to market quickly and safely.

Longview/Gregg County supports a regional transportation approach, and investments in the infrastructure required to improve interconnectivity in the region and along the state's vital corridors. Maintaining adequate funding for transportation infrastructure remains an issue of concern at both the state and federal levels of government.

- Support the development and funding of international trade corridors to accommodate cross-border traffic between Texas and Mexico and those transportation demands resulting from the United States Mexico Canada Agreement.

### **WATER**

- Oppose any new taxes to pay for additional water resources or water quality regulatory programs.
- Oppose the imposition of any new fees to recover the cost of water resources or water quality regulatory programs unless the program can be shown to clearly address a critical environmental or public health need. Fees should only be assessed to recover the actual costs imposed on government by the activities of the regulated entities, must reasonably allocate costs between members of a regulated universe and must be adjusted periodically to actually match agency budgets and legislative appropriations.
- Support efforts to ensure that water providers can establish rates for retail water use that appropriately balance both the need to recover the costs of water supply and delivery infrastructure and encourage necessary water conservation.
- Oppose any efforts to establish or enforce water conservation measures that unfairly burden one class of water user or impose a disproportionate demand for water use restrictions on commercial or industrial users.
- Encourage public water supply entities to implement policies that encourage the use of water conserving landscaping practices and the use of reclaimed water for irrigation.
- Continue to support the state permitting programs and on environmental issues.
- Support efforts to build new lakes and reservoirs in East Texas and protect access to existing resources.
- Support the creation of desalination technology in Texas.

### **AIRPORTS**

- Support federal funding to ensure on-going and stable development of the East Texas Regional Airport.
- Supports passage of an FAA Reauthorization Bill. FAA Reauthorization, as well as the associated FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding bills are desperately needed to continue development of the aviation infrastructure needed to support the growth of the region.



**Railroad:**

- Supports efforts to incentivize railroads to rehabilitate tracks, improve safety, industrial access, expand capacity, and efficiently serve customers.
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- Support the enhancement of freight rail service, short-line railroad assistance, industrial access, and safety improvements to preserve rail service to local communities and expand rail connectivity to sites along existing rail corridors.
- Support higher speed rail along I-20.