



Waterbury Regional Chamber
driving business to business

Waterbury Regional Chamber 2023 Legislative Agenda



Focus On Economic & Business Development Must Continue

In January 2023, the Connecticut legislature will reconvene, and Governor Ned Lamont will start his second term. The Waterbury Regional Chamber, its affiliates, the Naugatuck Chamber, the Watertown-Oakville Chamber, the Southbury Chamber, and our members expect that our elected officials will continue to focus on economic growth, business attraction and retention, and workforce challenges.

We urge members of the State House and Senate to thoughtfully fulfill their roles in determining policy and regulatory changes. We implore the legislature and Governor Lamont to understand the tremendous impact the pandemic and the ensuing inflationary period has had on businesses in the state. It is vital to the state's economy to enact policies that not only help businesses survive but thrive in this turbulent economy.

Below are the Chamber's 2023 State Policy priorities and objectives; on the back are specific changes, concepts, and programs we support, including those at the regional and local levels.



Chairman of Public Policy
Jack E. Traver Jr.
President
Traver IDC

2023 STATE POLICY OBJECTIVES

<p>TAXES & SPENDING</p> <p>Reduce the cost of government by controlling state employee wage and pension costs; support tax policies that encourage business investment and job creation; create incentives to attract and retain college students upon graduation.</p>	<p>LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Develop policies that promote creating and retaining jobs and reduce administrative costs; adequately fund, but without bonding, demonstrably successful workforce development/training programs.</p>	<p>EDUCATION</p> <p>Support equitable funding for public institutions of higher education, while working to reduce costs and improve efficiencies; create a balanced approach for public, private, for-profit and nonprofit post-secondary schools.</p>
<p>MANUFACTURING</p> <p>Prioritize funding for STEM/trade education and training; adequately fund programs that support manufacturing jobs & incumbent-worker training.</p>	<p>HEALTH CARE & PUBLIC SAFETY</p> <p>Support policies that improve quality and access to care while reducing the cost of care; strengthen the healthcare workforce pipeline; address juvenile crime accountability.</p>	<p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM</p> <p>Support transportation-oriented development initiatives; continue to support Brownfields remediation efforts; support jobs and enhance efforts to market Connecticut as a tourism destination.</p>
<p>ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Adequately fund programs that help reduce energy usage and cost; modernize regulations for the remediation and redevelopment of Brownfields.</p>	<p>REGULATORY REFORM</p> <p>Reduce or eliminate unnecessary or outdated regulations to promote business development and job creation; eliminate piecemeal approach to requirements that drag out permitting & approval of projects.</p>	<p>TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Prioritize and fund infrastructure maintenance and repair projects; complete improvements to the Waterbury rail line; support policies that promote transit-oriented development.</p>

For more information contact the Waterbury Regional Chamber 203.757.0701

TAXES & SPENDING

- Support the permanent sunset of the corporate tax surcharge;
- Continue to pay down the debt of the unemployment compensation fund;
- Responsible management of the record budget surplus;
- Oppose new business taxes and tax increases;
- Prudent and responsible allocation of one-time federal COVID relief funds;
- Expand the use of nonprofit organizations to deliver state services;
- Eliminate overtime and mileage in pension calculations;
- Support tax policies that encourage investment in job creation and apprenticeships;
- Create tax incentives for STEM students at Connecticut colleges and universities to accept employment in Connecticut upon graduation;
- Repeal the 6.35% state sales tax on employment training and safety apparel, including personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Support legislation to increase the pass-through entity tax credit to 100%;
- Support replacing collective bargaining for state employee contracts with administrative branch negotiation & retain required approval votes by both legislative chambers.

LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Support an update to the apprenticeship hiring ratios to encourage entry into the trades;
- Oppose expansion of workers' compensation benefits;
- Tailor workforce development programs to prioritize high-value, in-demand industries and focus on defined pathways for educational and career development;
- Oppose predictive scheduling policies;
- Support requiring state contractors to hire Connecticut residents first;
- Support the portability of worker's sexual harassment certification training;
- Support reducing the minimum age to operate specific small machinery to 16 or 17 years old.

EDUCATION

- Maintain funding for vocational-technical schools and for advanced manufacturing programs at Naugatuck Valley Community College and other community colleges;
- Align school curricula with industry-sector workforce needs;
- Fully fund Educational Cost-Sharing grants to school districts and correct the inequities of the Educational Cost Sharing formula;
- Support policies and initiatives that promote STEM and trade training opportunities for a post-high school career;
- Support duplication of Children's Community School model.

MANUFACTURING

- Maintain funding for the Manufacturing Innovation Fund;
- Execute recommendations from the i4.0 Working Group;
- Support working with the CT Manufacturing Collaborative to develop ways to support manufacturers in Connecticut;
- Support the Chief Manufacturing Officer's efforts to expand promotion of and training for manufacturing careers in the state;
- Support the Northwest Regional Sector Partnerships in manufacturing.

HEALTHCARE & PUBLIC SAFETY

- Convene a group of stakeholders to work with the state to produce a comprehensive plan to mitigate the exponential growth in the Medicaid program;
- Support healthcare workforce initiatives that strengthen the healthcare workforce pipeline and reduce administrative burdens on licensure.
- Support measures that strengthen Connecticut hospitals and health systems and recognize their vital importance to the economy and health of local communities;
- Support fully funding Medicaid reimbursement and increase provider reimbursement rates;
- Support legislation that ensures non-profits and businesses are treated equally under POS contracts;
- Maintain current funding levels for behavioral health care and oppose further reductions;
- Use Waterbury's model for healthcare spending reform to reduce state retiree healthcare costs;
- Support a two-year moratorium on new insurance mandates.
- Support the Northwest Regional Sector Partnerships in healthcare;
- Address the lack of accountability for juveniles who commit crimes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

- Support downtown Waterbury revitalization efforts, including efforts to revitalize the central business district;
- Support grants, tax credits and deferrals to help at-risk business sectors that are still struggling due to the pandemic;
- Support Naugatuck's efforts to revitalize its downtown;
- Support economic development efforts to revitalize Watertown/Oakville downtown;
- Support economic development initiatives in the town of Southbury;
- Support Main Street Waterbury and its mission to support the city's downtown;
- Support efforts to promote tourism throughout the region;
- Support legislation to enhance the business environment across the Greater Waterbury region and each municipality's development efforts;
- Maintain the state's investment in the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to ensure quality counseling & technical support remains available to small businesses;
- Support the Arts & Culture Collaborative of the Waterbury Region.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

- Support full funding and current structure of the CT Energy Efficiency fund;
- Support the exemption of the prevailing wage requirement for Brownfield funding and projects;
- Review and modernize Brownfield remediation statutes and regulations, streamline permitting process, and conforming state rules to federal standards;
- Support expediting environmental permits required for business starts and expansion;
- Support the Waterbury Naugatuck River Greenway Project and protection of the region's waterways;

REGULATORY REFORM

- Monitor new data privacy provisions aimed at small and medium sized businesses;
- Recognize equivalent out-of-state licenses for those moving here;
- Streamline the professional licensing process;
- Support a two-year suspension of costly unfunded state mandates;
- Support eliminating unnecessary/outdated regulations and streamlining permitting & approval processes.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support the widening of the I-84 corridor from Waterbury to Danbury;
- Support developing a Multi-Modal Transportation Center and continued improvements to the Waterbury Rail Branch Line by leveraging federal relief funds;
- Support on-time maintenance and repairs for the I-84/Route 8 Mixmaster;
- Maintain funding for evening bus service in Waterbury and approve matching funds needed to support bus service on Lakewood Road and in the city's South End;
- Support Naugatuck's transportation-oriented development plans and proposed freight rail improvements for the Port of Naugatuck.