

2009 PUBLIC AFFAIRS & LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mission and Purpose

The Government Affairs Division's mission is to represent and protect the interests of Roseburg Area Chamber of Commerce (RACC) members and the business community at large with governing officials and entities. To this end the division monitors issues and activities being considered by local, state and federal governments and, when appropriate, will take positions of support or opposition. In further pursuit of the most business-friendly environment possible, the Government Affairs Division will, when necessary, solicit pro-business, pro-chamber candidates to serve on commissions and run for public office. And, on occasion, we will recommend to the RACC Board of Directors that endorsements be given candidates vying for public office when the platform and record of one candidate provide clear and compelling evidence that the mission of the chamber will be best served by his or her election to office.

Following are the public affairs and legislative initiatives of most interest to the Roseburg Area Chamber of Commerce in 2009:

Local Governmental & Public Affairs Issues

General

- Foster a business-friendly, collaborative environment and open communications among and between the RACC, its members and the business community and local (city and county) government entities.
- Monitor, advocate and communicate about tax, license and fiscal policy issues that affect RACC membership and the general business community.

County/City Specifics

- *Transportation Infrastructure*
Transportation infrastructure funding is critical to economic development in our community, and as such is a major priority of the RACC. We will research local transportation infrastructure proposals and projects and actively support those deemed beneficial to local business and commerce.
- *Economic Development*
The RACC will support local initiatives that facilitate The Partnership's strategic plan for economic growth and development for Douglas County. The RACC will work cooperatively with The Partnership, local governments and other institutions and organizations to improve Roseburg and Douglas County's competitiveness in attracting new jobs and growing community investment. We will support local initiatives that reduce the costs of job creation. It is also our commitment to ensure home-grown businesses have no reason to look elsewhere when considering expansion and that prospective businesses will find Douglas County an unquestionable first choice. We must streamline our development process and ensure our standards for development are reasonable.
- *Local Transient Lodging Tax Funds*
The RACC will continue to monitor the city's use of those transient lodging tax dollars not distributed to the RACC under contract for visitor services to ensure they are used according to Oregon law and to effectively promote tourism growth.
- *Government Efficiency*
The RACC believes each local government entity should maintain a general objective that expenditures should not increase at rates greater than populations and inflation, with the rare exception of capital improvements needed for infrastructure. Taxes should be used equitably to provide services and programs that benefit economic growth and the health and welfare of citizens. All levels of local government must be prepared to prioritize their needs to prepare for a future that holds the potential for less state/federal financial support.

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City Specifics

- *Transportation System Development Charges (SDCs)*
The RACC will continue to work with business and the city to develop a more effective and equitable solution to the existing SDCs.
- *Urban Growth Boundary Expansion (UGB)*
The RACC will continue to support UGB expansion as it relates to business, commercial and industrial growth and development or residential development when necessary to accommodate our area's current or future workforce.

State Legislative & Public Affairs Issues

By and through its professional staff, with the support of an active Government Affairs Team, the RACC will promote and enhance mutually beneficial relations among its members, the business community and the Douglas County legislative delegation in order to address the following:

- *Western Oregon Plan Revision*
As federal payments diminish and ultimately cease, the need for proper forest management that allows for harvest and reforestation is imperative to the economic growth and sustainability of our community. RACC will work with local, state and federal officials and entities, business and timber-industry leaders toward the implementation of the BLM's desired alternative of the Western Oregon Plan Revision.
- *Minimum Wage*
On January 1, 2009, Oregon's minimum wage increased 5.37% to \$8.40. The annual automatic increase in Oregon's minimum wage is based on the Portland CPI. Considering the current state of the economy, many of our members have expressed concern that this mandated increase tied to inflation, will result in fewer workers/higher unemployment. The RACC will support several options for reform and relief including tying the annual increase to a regional formula, a training wage for 16-18 year olds, or a "tip credit" to name a few.
- *Unemployment Insurance Benefits*
Since 2005 the RACC has been advocating for reform of the state's Unemployment Insurance Benefits program. We believe an individual who cannot pass a drug screen is not job ready and, therefore, should not be eligible for unemployment benefits. The 2006 revisions to the Oregon Administrative Rules regarding U.I. benefits were a positive step, but significantly more needs to be effected.
- *Transportation Infrastructure Funding*
The RACC will consider and support proposals that increase state funding allocations for road infrastructure needs. There is currently a significant funding gap for road infrastructure needs across the state. With the support of its Government Affairs Team and Economic Development Committee, the RACC will support, endorse and aggressively advocate for funding for current and future transportation and transportation infrastructure projects deemed important to business and commerce, including:
 - Interstate 5 and Hwy 138 connection project
 - Portland Avenue project
 - Winchester switchyard project
- *Workforce Development*
The RACC will pursue many different activities that positively influence the quality of our workforce. These included continued support of RWIB's funding of the chamber's workforce development manager position; support of initiatives to retrain dislocated and existing workers to improve their job skills; funding for local business and industry seeking to expand workforce through training; programs focused on preparing youth for the workforce with marketable skills that employers find acceptable and desirable (including "soft skills"); identifying current and future needs of our members and the local business community and supporting a state and local workforce development system (including K-12 and higher ed) that meets those needs.



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- *Medical Marijuana*
Under the laws of the State of Oregon, use of marijuana is allowed for medicinal purposes under strict regulation. However, the RACC will ardently oppose any attempts by the state to require any employer to accommodate the use of marijuana in any workplace or to accommodate any employee working while under the influence of marijuana. Under federal law, marijuana is still an illegal drug and, thus, employers still have the right to enforce a drug-free policy in their workforce. The RACC will support all attempts to exempt employers from having to accommodate medical marijuana users, no matter when or where they use the drug.
- *Education Funding*
The RACC will continue to support educational programs and proposals (both K-12 and higher education) that will train the workforce to meet the current and future needs of our area's business and industry. See, Workforce Development, above.
- *State Budget Priorities/Government Efficiency*
The RACC believes government should maintain a general objective that expenditures should not increase at rates greater than populations and inflation, with the rare exception of capital improvements needed for infrastructure. The use of taxes should be fair and equitable in providing services and programs that benefit economic growth and the health and welfare of citizens. The RACC will support incentives to encourage government mergers and consolidations at all levels; eliminating duplication of services and performance audits to determine the effectiveness of programs. Spending decisions must be prioritized in order for sustainable tax relief. Key assets for economic growth, such as funding for roads and workforce education and training should be maintained and even enhanced where private sector economic activity will be bolstered.

Federal Legislative & Public Affairs Issues

By and through its professional staff with the support of an organized and active Government Affairs Team, the RACC will promote and enhance mutually beneficial relations among its members, the business community and the Oregon Congressional Delegation in order to successfully advocate on behalf of the following:

- *Effective Forest Management Including Harvest on Federal Lands/WOPR*
RACC will work with local, state and federal officials and entities, business and timber-industry leaders toward the implementation of the BLM's desired alternative of the Western Oregon Plan Revision. As federal payments will diminish and ultimately cease, the need for proper forest management that allows for harvest is imperative to the economic growth and sustainability of our community.
- *Transportation Infrastructure Funding*
To more effectively facilitate the development and funding of critical transportation infrastructure priorities, the RACC will promote partnerships among its members and the business community, local governments, state legislators and ODOT. The RACC will call upon our federal delegates to continue to seek effective solutions to all aspects of transportation funding and, specifically, the reauthorization of the 2009 federal highway bill.
- *Forest Management After Fire or Catastrophic Event*
The RACC will continue to support local efforts (such as that led by Communities for Healthy Forests) to effect changes in federal administrative rules to require prompt assessment, fuels reduction and restoration of forests on federal lands after a fire or other catastrophic event.
- *Card Check (proposed as "The Employee Free Choice Act")*
The RACC opposes the Employee Free Choice Act as it would eliminate the secret ballot currently used to determine if unions will represent employees in the workplace and could expose employees to coercion and intimidation. The bill would require federally appointed arbitrators to write labor contracts that are binding for two years, potentially forcing employers to radically change their business models or eliminate important competitive advantages. Lastly, the proposed act has an unbalanced increase in penalties whereby employers would be increased significantly without any corresponding increase in penalties on unions. Such one-sided increases conflict with any sense of fairness or balance. The RACC takes no position on whether unions are of benefit to employees or not; that decision is up to employees.

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