



# 2024 LEGISLATIVE GUIDELINES



Grand Junction Area  
**CHAMBER**  
OF COMMERCE



## A LETTER FROM THE CEO

As we embark on another legislative session shaping the business landscape in our beautiful state of Colorado, the Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce remains steadfast in our commitment to champion the interests of our local business community. In the fast-paced 120 days of decision-making, it is imperative that we, as a collective voice for Western Colorado, diligently examine the ballot measures proposed and identify their direct impact on our economic vitality.

The bills considered during this legislative session are integral components that contribute to the overarching economic health of our region. We must carefully weigh the intentions of each measure against its potential impacts, both intended and unintended, to ensure a thriving business environment.

As a strong advocate for businesses in Mesa County and beyond, we consider it our duty to act as a resource, advocate, partner, and protector for the factors that keep our businesses flourishing and our economic prosperity robust. To this end, our Governmental Affairs committee, consisting of over 100 members representing diverse industries, business sizes, and experiences, has crafted comprehensive guidelines to evaluate and take action on the evolving legislative landscape.

These guidelines, approved by our Board of Directors, will guide our nimble and expeditious decision-making during the 2024 Legislative Session, anticipating a continuation of the brisk pace witnessed in recent years.

We extend our gratitude to the dedicated committee members who contributed their time and expertise to shape our roadmap for the coming legislative session. Now, we call upon our entire business community to join us in this advocacy effort. While our Governmental Affairs Committee convenes regularly, we encourage you to stay informed, engage with testimonies, and connect with your representation. Your active participation is crucial in ensuring that our collective voice resonates strongly in the halls of the State Capitol.

Together, with efforts from all fronts, we can fortify our position as a robust and influential voice advocating for the prosperity of our business community.

At the service of our business community,

Candace Carnahan, President & CEO  
Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce

# LEGISLATIVE GUIDELINES

**OUR LEGISLATIVE GUIDELINES ARE CREATED BY OUR GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS EACH YEAR. FOCUSING ON A “BUSINESS FIRST” MINDSET, THE GUIDELINES BELOW CREATE A FOCUSED EFFORT BY OUR ORGANIZATION WHEN ADVOCATING WITH THE GOAL TO REPRESENT LOCAL BUSINESS AND PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH.**

THE COMMITTEE USES THESE GUIDELINES WHEN EVALUATING LEGISLATION AND DECIDING WHAT ACTIONS TO RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR FINAL APPROVAL.

THE GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE IS COMPRISED OF GJACC MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING.

## GOOD GOVERNMENT

### Chamber Supports:

- Preservation of the constitutional powers between the three branches of state and federal government.
- Accountability and transparency in promulgating rules and regulations at all levels of government.
- Processes that encourage broad public participation and the utilization of information presented by those participating in that process in order to craft well thought out regulations that minimize unintended consequences.
- Consistent application of policy and regulation across private, public, and governmental entities.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/EDUCATION

The business community recognizes K-12 education's importance as an essential foundation in a strong and vibrant economy. Partnerships between education and business have a significant impact on the economy, quality of life, and quality of the workforce in Mesa County and the region.

### Chamber Supports:

- Appropriate funding for K-12 and post-secondary education
- Work based learning opportunities and career specific training efforts that promote traditional and alternative career pathways.
- Local control of our school districts and limitations of state and federal regulations and controls.
- K-12 education that protects individual choice and innovation in public and private schools.
- An evaluation system for educators that will advance and reward quality teachers and administrators, thus leading to increased student learning.
- Efforts to incentivize local students to pursue post-secondary education options locally
- The continued expansion of academic programs at every level at Colorado Mesa University and CMU Tech designed to meet market demands and enhance the quality of the local workforce.
- Measures that ensure that higher education is affordable and accessible to Colorado residents, particularly residents of Western Colorado.
- Ensuring that students enrolled throughout Western Colorado have comparable state financial support as they pursue postsecondary degrees.
- Measures designed to provide maximum flexibility and reduced bureaucratic regulations and unnecessary oversight for institutions like Colorado Mesa University.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber's Economic Development policy is also reflected in other specific Chamber policies: We support quality education, workforce development efforts; a predictable and rational tax structure; eliminating tax policy that discourages business investment; infrastructure improvements; and other laws, ordinances, and regulations that encourage private initiative, individual incentive, competitive enterprise, and which make our community competitive.

### Chamber Supports:

- A well-funded, cohesive, and aggressive economic development effort.
- A regulatory climate that is balanced, consistent, and predictable, thus incentivizing business growth.
- Meaningful programs, initiatives, and tax incentives that are inclusive of all regions within Colorado.
- Meaningful initiatives and efforts that assist in creating a skilled labor force, including allocation of adequate training dollars to enable local post-secondary educational institutions to meet the needs of business.
- Efforts to promote Colorado as a tourism destination, and funding for tourism promotion.
- Streamlining of all business permitting and reporting processes.
- Enhanced state incentives for distressed counties including Enterprise Zones and other tools.
- A balanced economic development approach that acknowledges the value of all commercial segments of our economy. This includes but is not limited to: technology development, energy, tourism, outdoor recreation, foreign trade, and small business.
- Identify community attributes important to making Mesa County more attractive to the in-migration of new members of the future labor force and create a long-term plan to enhance attractiveness through programs, projects and coordinated community investments.
- Programs and agencies committed to ensuring access to a diversity of safe, stable, and affordable housing that supports the workforce through partnerships with regional partners.
- Legislation that provides support for organizations that champion startups, entrepreneurship, innovation, business retention expansion, and business attraction.

# LEGISLATIVE GUIDELINES

## HOUSING

The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce believes that workforce housing is critical to retaining and attracting skilled talent in our community.

### Chamber Supports:

- Local control of zoning and density in recognition of residents' visions for their communities through development of their individual Comprehensive Plans.
- Working in partnership with housing partners to increase housing supply.
- Removing regulatory and legislative barriers to private sector investments in affordable and diverse housing stock.
- Offering incentives to employers who offer subsidies, down payment assistance, and other funding to assist employees in securing housing.
- Streamlining affordable housing programs.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Chamber Supports:

- Efforts to reduce the unnecessary administrative and regulatory burden placed on companies, including mandated requirements for leave, hiring, and reporting.
- Any legislation to remove ambiguity or add clarity to unemployment insurance statutes
- Creating a clear definition and requirements for independent contractor classification.
- Having a workers' compensation insurance entity that is an insurer of last resort and ensures policy holder's premiums are protected.
- Unemployment benefits as a short-term/temporary financial bridge for those who are unemployed through no fault of their own and are actively seeking alternative employment.
- Efforts to assist businesses in retaining workers, attracting potential workers, and reducing the barriers to linking local employment candidates with local employers.
- Promotion of legislation that values balanced employee-employer workplace relations.
- Creating consistency between federal and state wage and discrimination laws so as not to create excessive confusion for companies.

## IMMIGRATION

### Chamber Supports:

- Federal legislation to address immigration.
- Measures that will ensure the Nation's borders are secure.
- Expansion and streamlining of the guest worker program.
- A user-friendly model for easy verification of employee status with provisions proposed by legislation in place to hold the employer harmless in case of errors and omissions.

## HEALTHCARE

### Chamber Supports:

- Health care reform legislation and regulation that promotes greater affordability, community collaboration, and a high level of access to care.
- Efforts and initiatives that emphasize healthy lifestyles including personal responsibility for lifestyle choices and encourage preventive medical care, health education awareness, early screening and detection, and disease management.
- Transparency in all areas of health care regarding costs.
- Addressing the cost shift to the private sector, with government providing adequate funding for governmental health insurance programs.
- Addressing the cost shift within the private sector due to uncompensated care by requiring all individuals who can afford it to have some form of health coverage.
- Expanding and implementing measures aimed at maximizing effectiveness of the State's Medicaid program.
- The employer's ability to provide health benefits which best meet the needs of the business and its employees.
- Initiatives and programs aimed at giving consumers more control and responsibility over the dollars spent on their care
- Tax credits or incentives for individuals and small businesses to help offset the cost of health insurance.
- Greater flexibility for businesses to band together to address employee health needs and portability of coverage for employees and their families.
- Innovation and options for business and consumers without discrimination or penalization.
- Initiatives that encourage competition and free market principles without imposing artificial caps or limits.

## TAXATION

The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce believes that a balanced tax policy is vital to the economic health of Colorado and Mesa County.

### Chamber Supports:

- The provision of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights that requires local governments to ask voters for tax increases, fees, and premiums and seek to limit the growth of government
- Individual tax policies that have a beneficial outcome on Colorado's economic stability and development and make Colorado more competitive.
- A competitive corporate income tax structure.
- Efforts to Simplify the State Sales and Use Tax Process
- Ensuring an equitable environment for brick-and-mortar stores and e-commerce by taxing online purchases to support the services of local and state government in a way that doesn't place an undue burden on small businesses.

# LEGISLATIVE GUIDELINES

## ENERGY

### Chamber Supports:

- An all of the above approach to developing affordable energy resources needed for the future by the citizens of the United States and its allies.
- Integrating Western Colorado's natural gas resources into the global market place while insuring an adequate domestic supply.
- The responsible development of all of Colorado's energy resources using the best available extraction, production, and transmission technology.
- A policy of distributing severance taxes and mineral lease payments that gives priority to communities impacted by energy development.
- Recognizing the rights of both surface and subsurface owners in the regulatory and legislative environments.
- Market-based incentives and educational efforts that motivate businesses to utilize conventional conservation practices.
- A market-based approach that allows local energy producers access to new markets including emerging overseas opportunities.
- The development of a Colorado emissions plan that recognizes the unique and diverse nature of the state.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The GJ Chamber recognizes the ongoing climate challenges in our region including long-term drought and rising average temperatures.

### Chamber Supports:

- Efforts to utilize our natural resources to enhance current clean energy production and develop new ways to generate the energy we all need in an environmentally safe and sustainable way.
- Continued conservation and wise utilization of water in the area, including ensuring water resources are protected for municipal, recreational, and agricultural use.
- Development of new transportation options that minimize impact on the environment while still supporting the options of commuters and others to conduct business face to face.
- Measures to increase utilization of cost-effective energy efficiency technology and practices
- Continued education of community about sustainability of food production in Western CO, using new and evolving technology.
- Infrastructure planning that encourages sustainability and resiliency in dealing with environmental events
- Protection and promotion of healthy watersheds by water providers, regulating agencies, and the environmental and recreational communities.

## WATER

### Chamber Supports:

- Local water conservation efforts including but not limited to the encouragement of water-conscious landscape codes and practices
- Local and State planning processes that incorporate the concerns, comments and needs of irrigation and domestic water providers on the Western Slope.
- The development, maintenance, and increase of storage facilities to preserve a sustainable supply of water.
- Preservation of Colorado's water entitlements under interstate compacts and the protection of the state's prior appropriation doctrine.
- The concept that no local entity should be forced to relinquish water sources for endangered species without adequate mitigation and compensation.
- That any reallocation must satisfactorily address concerns brought forward by the basin of origin.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Chamber Supports:

- A statewide approach to highway funding and recognizing the importance of all Colorado roads to all citizens.
- CDOT bonding against future revenues to maximize highway improvements but only to the extent that a dedicated funding source is identified to service the debt created that does not negatively impact dollars for maintenance.
- Making transportation funding a priority at all levels of government.
- Efforts to expand and retain general and commercial air service into Grand Junction.
- Efforts and initiatives to address mobility issues along the I-70 transportation corridor through the state with particular focus on access for western slope citizens. This includes encouraging the state to identify, fund and complete a secondary East/West transportation corridor in addition to making improvements to Glenwood Canyon and I-70.
- The use of local contractors and subcontractors in line with local government guidelines for all projects.
- Efforts to increase access to rail for local businesses including adding capabilities to load and unload freight.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

### Chamber Supports:

- Policies that advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in business.
- Removing barriers that stand between people and opportunity.
- Policies that enable diverse entrepreneurs to equally participate in the free-enterprise system.
- Promoting diversity across all levels of business.
- Legislation or policies that discourage or prohibit discriminatory practices.



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