

GREATER KILLEEN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**State Legislative Priorities
And
Position Statements**

2008 – 2009

Adopted

By the

Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce

Board of Directors

On

November 18, 2008

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

81ST LEGISLATIVE SESSION

UPPER LEVEL EDUCATION

Priority 1

Administrators at Tarleton-Central Texas must have adequate funding to provide the infrastructure (facility and facilities) to serve enrolling students. Present levels of funding are inadequate to meet demand.

In addition, administrators at Tarleton-Central Texas and the TAMU System must have adequate funding to plan the transition from a pathway center to a free-standing, upper-level university.

Support the Legislative Appropriation Request submitted by the Texas A&M University System to increase funding for Tarleton-Central Texas as follows:

- **\$16 million in Exceptional and Special Item funding, and**
- **\$4 million in transition planning funding.**

Priority 2

During a previous session, legislation was passed authorizing the TAMU System to issue Tuition Revenue Bonds, in the amount of \$25 million, to begin construction at TAMU – Central Texas. That authorization expires if the Full Time Student Equivalent enrollment does not reach 1500 by 2010.

Pathway centers are the only upper-level educational institutions who have been burdened with this time requirement.

Compounding the dilemma, students cannot be enrolled, to meet the FTSE requirement, without adequate funding to serve those students. The state has not provided adequate funding to meet existing student demand and, thus, meet the time requirement.

Support legislation to remove the expiration date on the authorization of Tuition Revenue Bonds for TAMU – Central Texas.

TRANSPORTATION

An efficient transportation system is essential to the continued development of the region. The state agency charged with construction and maintenance of the state's roadway system has undergone sunset review and will come under much scrutiny during this legislative session. The funding of projects will be part of the debate.

It is important that the community position itself during the session to accomplish the following.

Priority 1

Work with allies to insure that these four project, committed to by the Governor and funded by the Commissioner's discretionary fund, are completed:

- **SH 195 Extension from Rancier Avenue to Central Drive on Fort Hood;**
- **Proposed Copperas Cove Northeast Loop and Tank Destroyer Boulevard Improvements;**
- **Grade Separation (overpass) over US190 at West Fort Hood; and,**
- **Improvements at SH 201 and Mohawk Drive.**

Priority 2

Work with allies to insure that these projects are completed:

- **SH 195 Completion from Bell County to I35 at Georgetown;**
- **US 190 ramp improvements and lane expansions from Copperas Cove to SH 2410; and**
- **Proposed Southeast Copperas Cove relief route.**

WORKFORCE

Priority 1

Support efforts to identify a permanent funding source to provide workforce services for Fort Hood's exiting military service members and their spouses.

Priority 2

Ensure local control of workforce funding.

- **Eliminate unnecessary requirements and rules.**
- **Increase devolution of funding to local workforce boards to allow maximum flexibility for planning, oversight and evaluation of programs and services.**

LEGISLATIVE POSITION STATEMENTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Sales Tax for Economic Development

- Support continued use of a locally approved ½ cent sales tax collected by cities to fund economic development efforts.
- Oppose efforts to reduce local control of these funds.

Incentives

- Support local control and flexibility in the use of tax abatements, tax increment financing, reinvestment zones and other incentives to create jobs.

ENERGY

- Support legislative efforts to increase the supply of energy using a diverse mixture of fuels applied in an environmentally safe manner coupled with encouragement of conservation and the practical use of renewable energy sources.
- Support removal of economic and supply barriers that distort fuel competition and free-market influences.
- Oppose new legislative efforts that would require the use of specific fuels for industrial sources.
- Oppose increased taxes and fees on energy sources.
- Eliminate tax inequities between energy sources.
- Discourage the use of subsidies.
- Encouraging conservation of resources.
- Balance environmental concerns with energy production and usage.

Electric industry regulation.

- Support competitive electric markets in all areas of the state.
- Reduce regulation.
- Support efforts to create a more responsive Public Utility Commission that facilitates growth in energy supplies.
- Oppose legislative mandates on the type of energy used in electric power generation because they discriminate among energy options, inhibit efficient markets and harm both business and public interest.

GENERAL EDUCATION

Dual credit. Encourage collaboration between public and higher education providers to provide dual credit opportunities to students.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Accountability. Support alignment of the state and federal accountability systems to simplify demands on school districts.

Alternative certification. Support implementation of additional alternative certification programs that give school districts flexibility in hiring qualified instructors.

Career and technology funding. Encourage funding for technology including on-site or virtual on-site training.

Curriculum. Support efforts to increase rigor in curriculum. Support efforts to increase relevance in curriculum.

Classroom size. Allow school districts the flexibility to use the 23:1 students to teacher mandate as a district average.

Competition. Support pilot programs to inject competition in school choice.

Dropout prevention. Support the adoption of a method to measure drop out statistics consistently from school to school and district to district.

Local control. Support measures that give school districts the flexibility to meet the needs of students including:

- Control of school calendars;
- Discretion in the allocation of proceeds from local taxes; and
- Standards and implementation of teacher compensation programs to reward performance.

P-16/P-20 Initiatives. Support initiatives to align all levels of education with workforce development and employer need to create efficient and effective processes.

Parental involvement. Support measures that encourage parents to become active partners with their children's teachers and administrators.

Pay for performance. Support legislation that allows school districts to financially reward campuses where students achieve high performance standards.

Student testing. Support legislation that raises standards for students.

Teacher incentives. Support teacher advancement incentives, like differentiated pay, to help alleviate shortages of math and science teachers.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Community colleges. Support education at the community college level as an important contributor to preparing students for the workforce and to relieve pressure on upper-level institutions.

Upper level.

- Support the development of unified plans, processes and goals for the development of additional university capacity in the state.
- Support the development of objective criteria and accountability standards for communities to follow in the development of additional university capacity in their communities.
- Support reasonable regulatory and legislative oversight of the higher education system.
- Encourage and reward collaborative approaches among Texas' higher education institutions in research and development funding strategies, technology deployment and distance education in order to avoid duplication and waste.
- Support reforms to the top 10% rule for college admissions that would also allow colleges to expand enrollment to include other criteria and special talents including student leadership, musical virtuosity or special aptitude in math, science or literature.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

Check card legislation. Oppose legislation allowing union organizers to intimidate employees by collecting signatures via employee authorization card. Support legislation mandating that employees cast union votes by secret ballot.

Devolution of federal programs to the states. Support transferring control over federally mandated programs, like unemployment insurance, to the states to reduce employer's tax burdens.

Drug testing.

- Oppose attempts to restrict the rights of employers to conduct random and/or universal, reasonable drug testing of employees.
- Take all steps to ensure that unemployment benefits are limited to those claimants actively seeking employment and who are employable.

Employer control over work environment. Support efforts to maintain employers' prerogative to control the workplace, thereby creating a safe, satisfying and harmonious working environment so long it can be done so with violating the employees constitution rights.

Employment at will. Oppose legislation that would erode employment-at-will as a right for all Texas employers and employees.

Fair Labor Standards Act reform. 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.

Family and Medical Leave Act. Oppose efforts to modify the FMLA and oppose any initiatives to require employers to pay for FMLA leave with unemployment insurance taxes.

Fraud control. Support legislation to allow the Texas Workforce Commission to hire outside contractors on a pay-for-performance basis to assist in efforts to detect and remedy unemployment benefits fraud.

Living wages. Oppose any legislation requiring employers to pay a wage level higher than the federally required minimum wage.

Public collective bargaining rights. Oppose any expansion of collective bargaining rights in the public sector.

Right to work. Support efforts to keep Texas a right-to-work state.

Sexual orientation. Oppose expansion of current coverage of the Texas Human Rights Act.

Subsidized training wage. Support legislation to allow employers to apply part of their unemployment insurance taxes toward the cost of training workers for their businesses.

Unemployment insurance reform. Support unemployment insurance reform to improve effectiveness and reduce the burden on employers including legislation treating severance pay the same as wages in lieu of notice, improving work search requirements for claimants, and improving TWC's verification procedures for unemployment claims.

Unemployment savings accounts. 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 for employees that would be available, as needed, for unemployment, training, or as a supplement to retirement income.

Union dues check-off. Oppose efforts to allow public employees or require private employers to subsidize or promote labor unions or similar organizations through payroll collection of dues and contributions.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Clean air. Support scientifically supportable and practicably achievable efforts to help areas which are in non-attainment come into attainment under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, help near non-attainment areas stay in attainment, ensure that the responsibility for emission reductions is shared equitably among all emissions sources, and assure that efforts toward cleaner air are directed in a manner that balances environmental gain with economic impact.

Climate change (Global warming). Insist that any legislation be based on valid, proven scientific fact, while taking into consideration consumer affordability and global competitiveness.

Cost of federal and state legislation.

- Support Texas law that requires state environmental agencies to estimate the cost and net benefits to regulated entities before adopting any major proposed rule.
- Oppose legislation that places additional requirements on business and industry without appreciable benefit to the environment.

End of life take-back programs.

- Support voluntary take back programs for consumer electronics and appliances, and support research programs that would lead to increased recycling, refurbishment, and reduction of hazardous materials in landfills.
- Oppose legislative efforts to implement government-run, mandatory consumer electronics and appliance take-back programs that unfairly place the cost burdens on manufacturers and/or distributors.

Environmental education. Support activities for teachers and student in Texas public schools that promote a balanced perspective in environmental education based on sound science.

Environmental fees. Oppose the imposition of new fees to pay for environmental quality programs unless such fees are broad-based user fees for services and unless such programs demonstrate critical environmental needs impacting health and safety.

Environmental justice.

- Support the granting or renewal of permits on environmental and health-based standards.

- Oppose permit programs that favor any community strictly because of its racial or economic composition.

Environmental regulatory structure. Support an environmental regulatory structure that bases state law on the enactment of federal environmental laws and regulation so that consistency is maintained.

Green buildings. Oppose legislative mandates in the area of energy and energy efficiency that pits products against each other based on artificial or unsound science. The market place should be allowed to dictate the choice of building material based on performance standards.

Streamlining the permitting process. Support legislation to streamline the permitting process to ensure that businesses can maintain and enhance environmental compliance and at the same time minimize roadblocks that result in expensive procedural delays.

GENERAL BUSINESS

No pay, no play. Support reforms that would prevent uninsured motorists from collecting pain and suffering damages if they are in an accident with an insured driver.

Outsourcing and off-shoring. Oppose legislation which infringes on a company's right to contract business outside the company or out of the U.S. Outsourcing and off-shoring are tools companies use to remain competitive in a world market and to preserve manufacturing jobs in Texas and the U.S.

Relocation of facilities in municipal and state rights-of-way. Support a return to the long-standing state law whereby utilities that have placed facilities in public rights-of-way to serve the state's citizens are not forced to pay for relocation required by governmental entities for improvement and projects beyond normal roadway widening.

Sarbanes-Oxley. Oppose any effort to enact laws on the state level that would duplicate the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002.

Staff Council. Oppose legislation to limit the use of staff counsel by insurance companies to defend policyholders.

HEALTH CARE

Access. Support market-driven health policies that maximize consumer and public benefit and allow for the continuation of employer-sponsored voluntary health care coverage.

Consumer-directed health care. Support legislation to promote consumer-directed health care models. Encourage employees to be more involved in their health, and encourage education of employers and employees on actual health care costs and fees. Promote understanding that a healthy employee and a healthy family create a productive workforce.

Consumer information. Empower employees and consumers with information regarding the cost and quality of health care services to allow consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.

Corporate practice of medicine. Support legislation to eliminate state prohibitions on the direct employment of physicians by hospitals and other providers of health services.

Health care administration. Encourage electronic streamlining to enhance outcomes and lower administrative burdens. Accept the use of electronic claims in the transaction between insurance companies and health care providers.

Health care contracting. Oppose legislation that restricts the ability of health insurers to negotiate contracts with physicians and providers.

Liability.

- Support legislation to curb existing abuses and the filing of frivolous lawsuits.
- Prevent needless increases in cost and litigation through the expansion of any kind of medical liability.

Mandated benefits. Reduce existing mandates and oppose additional mandates on employers providing health care so that the number of uninsured Texans decreases by making private insurance more available.

Personal responsibility for health. Support legislation and other state actions to encourage and equip each Texan to accept personal responsibility for his or her health throughout their lifetime.

Quality. Preserve quality in our health care system by reducing government regulation.

State-sponsored health care. Improve Medicare and CHIP programs with reforms to encourage budget certainty and savings while improving care through

the utilization of managed care in delivering services. Seek federal flexibility to maintain control of state spending.

Supply of healthcare professionals. Support legislation to expand the ability of public colleges and universities to increase the number of professionals entering healthcare.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Record votes. Support the recording of legislative votes during and after floor debate in the Texas Legislature.

TAXATION

Efficiency. Encourage all agencies to adopt business models to increase efficiency and to reduce government spending.

Equity. Business sector taxes must be equitably distributed among all businesses. Homeowners and businesses should share in supporting schools.

Fairness. Support the following Council on State Taxation taxpayer fairness proposals:

- Provide taxpayers equal interest rates on overpayments and underpayments;
- Provide a 90-day protest period for taxpayers;
- Allow taxpayers an automatic filing extension with a federal extension; and
- Eliminate provisions that require taxpayers to prepay tax or post a bond to obtain access to trial courts.

Franchise tax.

- Support refunding excess revenues to taxpayers.
- Support exempting flow-through funds that are mandated by contract to be distributed to other entities.
- Authorize business losses to be carried forward up to ten years.

Gross receipts tax. Oppose the imposition of a gross receipts tax.

Inventory tax. Support elimination or reduction of local inventory taxes.

Mandates. Oppose unfunded government mandates which shift the cost of financing programs to the private sector or other levels of government.

Real estate transactions. Oppose mandatory price disclosure on commercial real estate transactions.

Regulatory policy. Maintain a regulatory climate that does not impose hidden taxes on employers through excessive fees and fines and reduces excessive regulations to promote, rather than impede, economic growth and job creation.

Research and development tax incentive. Support the continued expansion of tax incentives designed to aid our state's research and development industries.

Sales tax – Exemption for research and development. Support a sales tax exemption for the cost of materials and equipment purchased for the purpose of research and development.

Split roll. Oppose any tax plan or component that allows the state to treat businesses differently from homeowners.

State budget. Support fiscal restraint in state spending.

State tax system. Support tax systems that do not place a disproportionate share of the tax burden on business. Any revisions in the business tax structure should reduce the percentage of taxes paid by business or be revenue neutral.

Video lottery terminals (VLTs). Support legislation to allow voters to decide whether to permit the installation of interactive video lottery machines with the funding to be dedicated to schools.

Windfall profits tax. Oppose any effort to impose a "windfall profits tax" for any reason.

TORT REFORM

Frivolous legislation drives up the cost of products and services paid by all.

Alternative dispute resolution. Support legislation that creates mechanisms and incentives for the use of alternative dispute resolution.

Judicial selection. Support legislation that created a mechanism for the merit selection and non-partisan retention election of qualified jurists.

Medical malpractice. Protect reforms enacted to address rising medical malpractice insurance costs.

Special courts. Support legislation to allow the Texas Supreme Court to create special courts and/or assign cases to specific courts in matters requiring medical or technical expertise.

TRANSPORTATION

An efficient transportation system is essential to the continued economic success of our state. Texas must aggressively fund and construct new roads and it must advance other transportation options.

- **Bonds.** Support the issuance of Garvee Bonds and the Texas Mobility Fund as funding mechanisms for highway construction.
- **Design-build projects.** Support the expansion of opportunities for design build projects.
- **Gas tax limitations.** Reduce diversions to the fullest extent possible.
- **Improved Highways.** Support improved highways and other infrastructure that facilitates trade, tourism and economic development.
- **Outsourcing state work.** Support opening government monopolies to competition by comparing the cost of project to determine if a private sector business can do the job at a lower cost.
- **Toll Roads.** Support the construction of toll roads as a viable tool to expand the state's highway network.
- **Trans-Texas Corridor Plan.** Support plans consistent with free market principles.

WORKER'S COMPENSATION

Administrative simplification. Support legislation to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens in the workers' compensation system on employers, insurance carriers, injured workers and health care providers.

Arbitration. Oppose additional restrictions on arbitration. Oppose any efforts to disallow or negatively impact arbitration.

Employer participation in selection of medical providers. Develop and support legislation that allows employers to provide benefits through health care networks for the treatment of workers' compensation injuries.

Exemplary damage caps. Oppose legislation to remove caps on exemplary damages in workers' compensation claims.

Fraud: monitoring, detection and prosecution. Support legislation that increases the Texas Department of Insurance focus on identifying and prosecuting fraud and abuse within the workers' compensation system.

Mandatory Worker's Compensation. Oppose legislative efforts to mandate workers' compensation coverage.

Opinion of chosen doctor. Support legislation to clarify that claimants may not appeal the opinions of their treating doctor in areas of medical treatment, impairment and dispute process.

Recent reforms. Oppose any legislation that would weaken the reforms passed in recent legislative sessions.

Reduction of unnecessary laws. Support legislation to reduce unnecessary administrative and legal burdens on all employers.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Skills Development Program. Support increased funding for the Skills Development Program administered by the Texas Workforce Commission.

Federal/State Funding Match. Use state funding to draw down the maximum federal funding.

Re-employment of Unemployment Insurance Claimants. Provide adequate funding at the local level for workforce boards to meet the legislative mandate of rapid re-employment of claimants to reduce cost to employers.

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**FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES
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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

AIRPORT FUNDING

Construction of a second runway at the Killeen-Hood Regional Airport/Gray Army Airfield is a priority. A task force, consisting of members from the community and Fort Hood, is working to plan and develop the project.

A second runway is important to commercial aviation because it will provide badly needed maintenance flexibility. Additionally, when completed, it will provide the opportunity to consider consolidating the city's aviation facilities in one location.

A second runway is important to military aviation because provide additional aviation capacity to house new military missions and joint training.

The Killeen Economic Development Corporation has advanced the funding in the form of a loan/grant, in the amount of \$1.5 million, to conduct preliminary engineering and environmental work on the second runway. That work is underway.

Funding for construction of the second runway will come from a number of federal sources.

Priority 1

Obtain \$1.5 million, in federal funds, to repay the KEDC loan.

Priority 2

Continue to work with allies, at the Federal Aviation Administration and in the Department of Defense, to keep them informed as to the status of the project and to prepare them to assist with funding.

ENERGY

National security and our economy is impacted by the import of foreign oil and the price volatility that accompanies it. Energy independence is an achievable and worthwhile national goal.

Priority 1

Eliminate dependence on energy supplies outside the control of the U. S. by:

- **increasing the supply of energy using a diverse mixture of fuels applied in an environmentally safe manner coupled with**
- **encouragement of conservation and the practical use of renewable energy sources.**

Priority 2

Rely on market forces to provide adequate and reliable energy supplies.

Priority 3

Support access to resource acreage to increase production utilizing proven environmental protection practices.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate change (Global warming).

Priority 1

Insist that any legislation be based on valid, proven scientific fact, while taking into consideration consumer affordability and global competitiveness.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Priority 1

Border security. Secure the border so that illegal immigration can be controlled.

IMMIGRATION

Estimates are that there are somewhere between 12 and 20 million illegal aliens in the United States. Our immigration system is so flawed that we have no way of knowing the actual number.

Priority 1

Immigration reform. Reform the current, dysfunctional immigration system so that:

- Legal immigration can be used to meet the needs of U.S. employers;
- Undocumented immigrants are identified;
- Undocumented immigrants in essential jobs can earn legal status;
- Undocumented immigrants in non-essential jobs can be sent home; and
- Employers have access to a system that permits them to accurately verify the citizenship of job applicants.

TAXATION

Priority 1

Tax reform. Revise and simplify the tax code. Reduce taxes at all levels.

LEGISLATIVE POSITION STATEMENTS

DISASTER RECOVERY

Support initiatives to improve disaster response and recovery funding for natural disasters.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Accountability.

- Support alignment of the state and federal accountability systems to simplify demands on school districts.
- Support a system that measures the progress of students as well as the performance of school districts.
- Support the idea that, in return for increased federal spending, school districts must be effective in turning out students who are better prepared.
- Support a system that provides a mechanism to shut down or restructure school districts who continue to fail through local action.

Competition. Support pilot programs to inject competition in school choice.

Curriculum. Support efforts to increase rigor and relevance in curriculum.

Funding. Support legislation that would cause funding for students returning to continental U.S. schools from Department of Defense overseas schools to flow with the student.

Interstate Compacts. Support the development of Interstate Compacts for educating military children.

Impact Aid. Increase Impact Aid appropriations from 60% of authorization to 100% of authorization.

Local control.

- Support measures that give school districts the flexibility to meet the needs of students.
- Oppose efforts to govern school districts through federal intervention.

Funding. Give flexibility to local school districts to allocate federal funds in the greatest areas of need. Oppose measures to place demands on the specifics of spending federal monies.

HIGHER EDUCATION

University-based research.

- Follow recommendations issued by the U.S. Council on Competitiveness and the National Academies report entitled *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* to strengthen the climate in the U. S. for innovation.
- Encourage Congress to provide additional funding for university-based research including greater increases in the budget for the National Science Foundation and other engineering-related research initiatives.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR). Oppose attempts to amend the Federal Arbitration Act or prohibit or restrict the right of employers to make binding arbitration or other ADR programs a condition of employment.

Check card legislation.

- Support legislation mandating that employees cast union votes by secret ballot.
- Oppose legislation allowing union organizers to intimidate employees by collecting signatures via employee authorization card.

Devolution of Federal programs to the states. Support transferring control over federally mandated programs like unemployment insurance to the states, thereby reducing employers' tax burdens and increasing local control over workforce-related programs.

Fair Labor Standards Act Reform.

- 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.
- Support the effort currently underway in the U.S. Department of Labor to bring the regulations regarding white-collar exemptions more into line with modern business realities.

Family and Medical Leave Act.

- Oppose efforts to lower the threshold for FMLA coverage from the current 50 employees that would subject even more employers to the complicated and burdensome requirements of that law.
- Oppose any initiative to require employers to pay for FMLA leave with unemployment insurance taxes.

Minimum wage. Oppose any additional efforts to increase the minimum wage.

Tort Reform.

- Encourage appointment of judges who will support rational limits on damage awards in all cases, including employment-related litigation.
- Support legislation to strengthen and extend recent state and federal Supreme Court rulings regarding the reasonableness of punitive awards in all types of cases.

Unemployment savings accounts. 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 for employees that would be available, if needed, for unemployment, training, or as a supplement to retirement income.

Union dues check-off. Oppose efforts to allow public employees or require private employers to subsidize or promote labor unions or similar organizations through payroll collection of dues and contributions.

ENERGY

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Support the drilling and production of hydrocarbons from ANWR in an environmentally responsible manner.

Clean energy development. Encourage significant expansion of federal research and development programs for clean coal technology with a high priority toward development of near zero-emissions coal-based power.

Electricity.

- Support full and fair competition and customer choice in the electricity industry.
- Streamline the regulatory process and reduce regulatory hurdles to the construction of new power plants and transmission lines.
- Oppose mandates on the type of fuel used in electric power generation because they discriminate among energy options, inhibit efficient markets and harm consumer, investor and public interest.
- Oppose subsidies, loan guarantees, or indemnification incentives that favor particular energy options.

Fuel diversity. Diversity of supply sources enhances security of supply. Increase the supply of energy by expanding production by all means including oil, natural gas, coal, nuclear, oil shale, wind, solar, hydropower, economically reasonable conservation and any other means.

Offshore. Support the full development of our natural resources offshore.

Pipeline and transmission capacity. Support construction of additional pipeline and transmission capacity from producing regions to consuming regions to meet growing demand.

Public lands. Adopt policies to increase production of energy resources from federal onshore leases by increasing the acreage available for leasing.

Refinery capacity. Support the development of new refining capacity in the U.S. and the expansion of existing refining capacity in the U.S. by streamlining the permitting process and reducing regulatory hurdles.

Tax and capital formation. Support reasonable laws and regulations to ensure capital formation from the private sector, reduce costs and support the goal of energy independence.

Windfall profits tax. Oppose punitive tax legislation.

ENVIRONMENT

Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards.

- Support Congressional review of the effectiveness and impact of the CAFÉ standards for automobiles, considering their impact on safety and consumer choice as well as clean air and the environment.
- Support the provision of consumer tax credits to encourage the purchase of new types of highly fuel efficient advanced technology vehicles.
- Oppose attempt to increase CAFÉ standards that would adversely affect vehicle safety, consumer choice, and the development of advanced technology solutions.

Emissions caps and trading.

- Oppose any effort to extend emissions caps and trading programs to include carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases because these kinds of programs would have an insignificant impact on climate change but an enormous fiscal impact on Texas consumers, businesses and economic growth..

End of life take-back programs.

- Support voluntary take back programs for consumer electronics and appliances and support research programs that would lead to increased recycling, refurbishment, and reduction of hazardous materials in landfills.
- Oppose legislative efforts to implement government-run, mandatory consumer electronics and appliance take-back programs that unfairly place the cost burdens on manufacturers and/or distributors.

Environmental justice.

- Support the granting or renewal of permits on environmental and health-based standards.
- Oppose permit programs that favor any community strictly because of its racial or economic composition.

Green buildings.

- Oppose energy and/or energy efficiency legislation that pits products against each other based on artificial or unsound science.
- Support the notion that the market place should be allowed to dictate the choice of building materials based on performance.

Reinterpretation of environmental rules. Oppose efforts by EPA to reinterpret longstanding federal environmental rules and guidance documents which expose industry to unjust claims of non-compliance.

Water quality. Support efforts to promote sensible federal regulation of water quality based on technically sound, practical and economically achievable methods.

FISCAL POLICY

Earmarks. We support efforts to restrict the use of earmarks attached to federal legislation to fund projects. At the same time, we support the continued use of earmarks by our representatives, until restrictions take effect, so that our district and state is not penalized.

A legislative earmark is language attached to a bill, often in committee, that authorizes federal funding for a specific project or projects, often unrelated to the bill. Earmarks offer legislators an expeditious means to obtain funding for projects in their districts or states without having to subject the funding to the full legislative process.

Earmarks are often used as a tool to gain needed votes in support of, or in opposition to, a specific piece of legislation.

Spending levels, authorized through the use of earmarks, have exploded in recent years. Federal spending continue to rise. The use of earmarks has grown so pervasive that a legislator must make use of them to keep from penalizing his or her district or state. To positively impact out of control spending, the playing field must be leveled by restrictions on the use of earmarks.

HEALTH CARE

Access. Support market-driven health policies that maximize consumer and public benefit.

Electronic prescriptions. Support a national standard for electronically submitting prescriptions to reduce administrative costs and human error.

Free market solutions. Ensure market based solutions are sought out to solve health care system issues. Monitor and oppose new regulations.

Mandated benefits. Increase the availability of employer-offered health insurance by reducing mandated benefits.

Medical savings accounts/Health savings accounts. Empower individuals to better handle their share of health care costs and improve access to coverage through the expansion of Medical Savings Accounts.

Medicaid. Support strengthening and improving Medicaid with comprehensive reforms using market-based solutions.

Medicare Reform. Pursue policies that promote and protect the availability of private market solutions.

IMMIGRATION

H-1B Visa Caps. Global access to highly skilled technical workers is critical to the U.S. economy.

- Support continued access to H-1B visas.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Funding for research and development. Federal funding for research and development at universities is essential to keep U.S.- based technology and biotechnology companies competitive in the global market. Support a level of federal R&D investment in Texas commensurate with our population and our standing as the number two high technology state.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. Defend America's traditional openness to foreign investment so long as it has no negative impact on national security.

Export controls. Oppose regulations that limit U.S. exports of widely available products so long as they have no negative impact on national security.

Global sourcing. Oppose barriers to international business that curtail global sourcing.

Promote free markets globally. Lay the foundation for market-oriented reform and private enterprise in emerging markets by building institutions that support open societies and a culture of entrepreneurship.

Trade facilitation. Work to make the flow of international commerce faster, cheaper, and more efficient through reforms of customs and port administration.

Trade promotion authority. Extend the president's Trade Promotion Authority to permit continued negotiation of additional free trade agreements.

TAXES

Capital gains. To raise revenues, spur capital investment and raise stock values, further reduce the capital gains tax or, at a minimum, make the current reductions permanent.

Death tax. Repeal the death tax immediately instead of letting it expire under Congressional direction in 2010 and return again in 2012.

Efficiency. Encourage all agencies to adopt business models to increase efficiency and to reduce government spending.

Fiscal policy. Eliminate deficit spending and limit increases in spending to no greater percentage that the increase in personal income.

Income tax cuts. Continue efforts to reduce marginal tax rates and make all previously enacted tax cuts permanent.

Privatization. Encourage privatization efforts in government for increase efficiency and to reduce government spending.

Taxation in a global market. Bring federal tax rates more in line with corporate taxation in other countries to help make U.S. manufacturers more competitive.

Sales tax deductibility. Allow Texas taxpayers to deduct state sales tax from federal income tax.

Windfall profits tax. Oppose any effort to impose a "windfall profits tax" for any reason.

TORT REFORM

Class action lawsuits. Reform class action rules.

Medical screenings. Support reforms to alleviate the problem of mass tort medical screenings.

Mold claims. Support reasonable solutions to address mold claims and the effect on the availability and affordability of insurance.

TRANSPORTATION

Highways.

- Fully fund ISTEA/TEA-21/TEA-LU.
- Insure that each donor state gets at least a 95% return of its contribution to the federal Highway Trust Fund.

Rail.

- Reform legislation to provide fairness and openness in the negotiation between railroads and their customers over rates and service

WORKFORCE

Federal block grants. Support efforts to fund state workforce programs through federal block grants with maximum flexibility on the use of the funds.

Workforce Investment Act. Reauthorize at current funding levels.

Restructure. Support efforts to restructure programs using the Texas and Florida systems as models. These systems integrate all programs into one system to create maximum flexibility in the use of funds and to eliminate the duplication of services.