# **Government Affairs Committee**

# Policy Statements for Washington County 2011

The following are the Policy Statements of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors as authored by the Government Affairs Committee. These Policies are deemed to be of utmost importance to the local business community and to the economic health of Washington County. The board encourages Chamber members to take an active role and be involved in government affairs. The Chamber exists to be the "voice of business" at the local, state and federal level, but members need to stay active by submitting input to the Chamber board and encouraging all employees to vote in elections.

This list of statements is not placed in order of importance nor does it necessarily exclude others, which the Chamber Board may state at a later time.

# **Job Growth & Business Recruitment**

Recognizing that a healthy economy will serve to encourage a positive economic impact and quality of life, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce believes in a fully-employed business community paying market wage rates.

We support legislation that encourages diverse businesses and industries to locate in Texas, such as (1) controlling excessive and burdensome taxes, and (2) providing incentives for business recruitment, retention and expansion.

We encourage the local units of government to be aggressive in using incentives that have been provided through state and federal legislation.

### **Transportation**

Recognizing that the economic well-being of the Washington County business community is highly dependent upon the ability to efficiently transport people and products to, from and within the region, the Chamber promotes programs that improve transportation opportunities and facilities while preserving the rights of landowners and individuals.

We support the Highway 290 Improvements project currently underway in Brenham and future additional projects to create continuous service roads along the entire Hwy. 290 corridor.

We encourage the development of capacity improvements, site corrections and intersection improvements to the highways within the county such that we efficiently connect all industrial and commercial areas to the highway system and to the businesses served by those roadways.

We encourage efforts to maintain and upgrade county roads and city streets to be safe, clean and efficient.

We encourage development to reduce congestion in high traffic areas, such as the Hwy 290 West/Cloverleaf section and the Hwy. 36 North section that needs to be widened.

# **Growth Management, Planning and Zoning**

Recognizing that land use planning and zoning, when used together, are one of the key tools to achieve a vibrant community with a pleasant quality of life, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce believes that a long term plan should be developed that reasonably considers both the needs of the business community and the resources available and that zoning considerations reflect the plan.

We encourage all units of city and county government to create a collaborative, long term regional land use plan that identifies targeted areas for residential, commercial, industrial and agriculture uses.

We urge that a long range plan would then drive zoning and the development of collaborative, environmentally-conscious municipal and county services to support the plan and preserve our community's positive quality of life.

We recommend that zoning ordinances be understood, fairly administered, and strictly enforced. We believe the granting of variances tends to erode the value of zoning ordinances, and recommend they be used sparingly.

## **Healthcare**

Recognizing that cost-effective healthcare provided to area businesses and families is an essential element of successful business growth and a healthy community, Washington County Chamber of Commerce supports an environment in which healthcare remains affordable to employers and where our local providers may thrive.

We support legislation that helps employers regain control of the health insurance benefits they offer to employees.

We support initiatives to encourage wellness and healthy lifestyles.

We support our local healthcare facilities in that locally managed and directed facilities provide the most high-quality, affordable services tailored to the community's needs.

#### **Communications & Technology Infrastructure**

Recognizing that communication technology and the exchange of information is vital to economic development, now more than at any point in our history, Washington County Chamber

of Commerce believes that information technologies in the hands of area business, schools, government and families will serve to make our area globally competitive.

We support community and private-sector efforts to build and deliver state of the art information technologies and infrastructure throughout the county.

# Intergovernmental Agreements

Recognizing the need for cooperation between units of government to promote economic growth and a positive quality of life for residents, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce believes that collaboration and improved relations between governmental and regulatory units in Washington County are essential to bring about positive change.

We support activities designed to foster collaborative action between all units of government and encourage those units to act in cooperation.

# **Education**

Recognizing that the ability of tomorrow's workforce to succeed depends on the educational foundation we lay today, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce supports programs, processes, activities and facilities that promote a strong local education system that, together with business and community leadership, prepares students for a productive role in the world.

We support legislation and programs that provide career awareness, exploration and experiences for all students through activities that involve businesses, schools and community in partnerships. Education and business must intensify their partnership so that the education sector knows what skills are needed in the workforce and business knows what skills are being taught.

We support the availability of locally provided, post-secondary education and training for area residents and customized education services to businesses.

#### **State Supported Living Centers**

Recognizing that the Brenham State Supported Living Center is a part of the local community and an important part of the local economy, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce supports all legislation that promotes choices for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, including the choice to receive services in a State Supported Living Center. The Chamber opposes any legislation seeking to close State Supported Living Centers or that limits a person or their family's choice to receive services in a State Supported Living Center.

# **Housing**

Recognizing that job growth in the community will require housing for new and expanding families, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce supports efforts that will stimulate the development of an increased supply of affordable housing and multi-unit properties.

# **Crime/Law Enforcement**

Recognizing that to maintain a positive quality of life, the crime rate in a community must be kept as low as possible, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce supports the efforts of the police and sheriff departments.

We support efforts to enhance public awareness of substance abuse and gang activity and prevention campaigns.

We support the enforcement of punishment for repeat offenders, especially at the district court level.

# **Tourism**

Recognizing that the tourism industry and leisure/recreation facilities are vital to a healthy economy and quality of life, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce supports efforts that promote tourism and tourism marketing.

As the home of the "Birthplace of Texas," Washington County Chamber also supports efforts that provide for the preservation of historic sites and education of Texas history.

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