Dear Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce Member,

The Greater Irvine Chamber professional staff, Board of Directors, and committee volunteers work as a team to advance economic vitality throughout the greater Irvine area. Our 2018-2019 Legislative Handbook serves as the Chamber’s current legislative platform directing the organization’s advocacy programs locally, and in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. Led by a dedicated Board of Directors, the Chamber serves the local business community, collaborating with public agencies, academia, and corporations and nonprofit organizations to ensure the region’s long-term economic vitality and quality of life.

To support the efforts by both business and government to promote an environment conducive to job growth and economic prosperity, the Greater Irvine Chamber Legislative Handbook has been developed with significant review and contributions from members of the Chamber’s Government Affairs Committee to enumerate the Chamber’s positions on major policy issues. This biennial resource includes contact information for the county’s local, state, and federal elected officials to encourage dialogue between business and government.

I encourage you to become involved in business advocacy in a way that fits your needs, whether being a part of a committee or group or staying informed about matters that affect your business. An electronic copy of this Legislative Handbook can be found online at GreaterIrvineChamber.com. To stay up to date on news and legislative activity affecting the local business community, as well as Greater Irvine Chamber events and member news, subscribe to our digital newsletters through the Chamber’s website or by contacting our professional staff.

Sincerely,

Bryan Starr
President & CEO
Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce
Economic Development
Destination Irvine
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About the Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce

Mission Statement
To advance the economic vitality of Greater Irvine.

- Build the Irvine Brand Profile for Domestic and Foreign Direct Investment
- Strengthen Irvine Innovation & Life Sciences Ecosystem Partnerships
- Enhance Business Development Opportunities
- Align Employers with a Job-Ready Workforce
- Ensure Balanced Government Regulation & Taxation of Business
2018/2019 Board Of Directors

Chair: Kate Klimow*
UCI Applied Innovation

Carissa Bechtlof*

Massis Chahbazian
The Printery

Anthony Cosenza
Concordia University Irvine

Karalee Darnell
Southern California Gas Company

Jeff Davis*
Irvine Company

Michael Drennen
Cox Business

Rachel Dunnington
Google

Dan Han*
Agapay

Justin LaJoie
Zillow Group

Bruce Lazenby
Rose Hills Memorial Park & Mortuary

Isaiah Leslie
Regal Court Reporting

James J. McDonald, Jr.
Fisher & Phillips

Chip Monaco
Waste Management of Orange County

Brian Montes
Scaleocity Works

Albert Napoli*
Metropolitan Water District of SoCal

Dr. Shelly Neal
Brandman University

Scott Norton
Hoag Health

Carlos Oregon
Thinkbox Technology Group

Michael Petersen
Shulman, Hodges & Bastian LLP

Barry L. Rodolff*
The Rodolff Law Firm, APC

Dr. Glenn Roquemore
Irvine Valley College

Scott Schultz*
RH Morris Insurance & Financial

Kim Sherman
Echo Media Group

Paul Simonds
Curt Pringle & Associates

Lisa Thomas*
Taylor Digital

Traci Tran*
White, Nelson, Diehl Evans LLP

Leigh Volkland
Edwards Lifesciences

* Executive Committee
The Greater Irvine Chamber at Work

Everything the Chamber Does is Economic Development

We are an outwardly focused, results–driven organization fueled by the energy and commitment of our members and partners. Our mission is to sustain and grow the economic vitality of the greater Irvine area. Whether it is helping businesses explore new markets with export assistance, attracting new companies and foreign direct investment or connecting people with the right resources, the Chamber specializes in helping businesses grow and compete more effectively.

Selling and Marketing Irvine as a Place for Meetings, Sports Events and Leisure

Travel is What Destination Irvine is all About

The Chamber’s role in bringing meetings, conventions, sports events and leisure travelers to stay in Irvine hotels is the driving focus of Destination Irvine. Collaborating with Irvine’s 21 hotels, we sustain aggressive direct sales and innovative travel marketing initiatives that continue to generate millions to the economy of Irvine – using visitor spending to help sustain our quality of life.
Irvine Snapshot

Irvine was Master Planned to be an Economic Powerhouse
Its national and global reputation continues to grow as the epicenter of life science and information technology in Orange County. Within these broad spectrum industry clusters, Irvine dominates in medical device, ophthalmology, cybersecurity, software developments and digital arts, media and gaming because of its high concentration of STEM graduates, rich diversity, high quality of life and strategic location.

WORKFORCE/INDUSTRIES - EMPLOYMENT
Number of people working in Irvine: **254,250**
Number of companies in Irvine: **Over 17,000 (26,000 business licenses)**

3.0% Unemployment in Irvine

SINCE 2005:
SAFEST CITY IN AMERICA
(population over 100,000) - Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

RUNNER-UP SMALL CITIES - OVERALL & TOP 10: BEST FOR HUMAN CAPITAL, LIFESTYLE AND ECONOMIC POTENTIAL
- For Magazine, American Cities of the Future 2011-2013

3RD largest city in Orange County

#1 Master-planned city
#1 In public safety among large U.S. cities
#1 In educational attainment among large U.S. cities
#1 In fiscal strength in the nation
#1 Southern California has the largest pool of STEM workers in the U.S.
#1 Southern California is the largest economy in the U.S.
The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce fully recognizes that personal privacy is an important and historic part of our free society.
Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports effective and efficient public policies that promote standards or corporate governance that guide boards of directors and corporate officers in managing their corporations in a competent, ethical manner that also promote economic growth for the nation. The Greater Irvine Chamber strongly believes rules regarding the governance and management of corporations, including those pertaining to accounting procedures, are best created and imposed voluntarily by a corporation’s board of directors and officers rather than mandated by law. However, there are some cases where mandatory laws are preferable in order to ensure uniform compliance or to foster public confidence.

Positions:

The Greater Irvine Chamber supports policies, standards, guidelines, and, where appropriate, laws and regulations, that:

• Meaningfully reforms Sarbanes-Oxley to promote economic growth for the nation and the creation of more publicly traded companies.
• Encourage competent, qualified, honest and ethical people to become corporate directors.
• Reinforce the duty of directors to appoint competent and ethical corporate officers.
• Strengthen the ability and duty of directors to oversee, monitor and evaluate the performance of corporate officers.
• Encourage directors to represent the interests of all shareholders.
• Allow directors and officers to work together efficiently for the benefit of the corporation.
• Strike a reasonable balance among the requirements of real-life decision-making, the undertaking of risk inherent in the marketplace, personal and professional liability, and protections against fraud and negligence.
• Address conflicts between state and federal laws in areas such as insider trading, release of corporate information, and other corporate governance matters.
• Promote corporate establishment of internal guidelines which provide clear descriptions of the directors’ and officers’ positions and duties.
• Set criteria by which directors can determine the level of detail required in minutes of board meetings (and supporting documentation) needed to allow regulators and independent auditors to determine whether board members have properly exercised their fiduciary duties.
• Allow corporations flexibility in selecting tools to assist in effective corporate governance, including establishing audit, compensation and other specialized committees of the board of directors; using advisory and oversight committees; using both inside and outside auditors; and educating directors on their duties and responsibilities.
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ...continued

Background:

Highly publicized corporate bankruptcies and scandals of the past decade resulted in public and political pressure for stricter oversight and controls on the manner in which corporations and other business entities are managed. The result has been increased regulation, both from private sector organizations, such as new rules by the New York Stock Exchange and the NASDAQ, and from federal and state governments (most notably, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002).

Ethical business leadership is an important part of establishing and maintaining public confidence in markets, and accordingly, is a key aspect of an efficient system of free enterprise. The conduct of a corporation’s directors and officers can set the operating tone for the entire corporation. Therefore, it is crucial that directors and officers perform their duties in a professional, competent and ethical manner.

In addition, some of the new laws and regulations regarding corporate governance are unnecessarily complex, intrusive, burdensome, costly and difficult to comply with. The Greater Irvine Chamber strongly recommends balancing government oversight with the needs of corporate boards and management to operate efficiently in the marketplace.
Legislative Issues
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Policy Objectives:

Orange County has developed into one of the most economically competitive and prosperous regions in the world. Maintaining the county’s competitive edge requires an intense commitment to preserving and enhancing a positive business climate in the evolving global economy. To maintain competitiveness, the needs associated with the changing economy must be recognized, understood and addressed.

Positions:

• Support robust and sustainable funding for CA GO-Biz.
• Support the California Employment Training Panel program.
• Support the State of California Manufacturers Investment Tax Credit and the Research and Development Tax Credit and other strategies that will support manufacturing and growth industry clusters that produce high multiplier effects and strengthen global competitiveness.
• Support California Competes funding as an incentive for business expansion and growth.
• Support the funding and staffing of an aggressive foreign offices and international trade initiative investment including the International Trade Administration and other programs in Department of Commerce.
• Support programs and legislation that will promote California as a location for business.
• Support programs and organizations that promote capital formation and accessibility for new businesses locating within Irvine.
• Support business attraction and workforce development programs that align with the needs and robust growth potential of Irvine’s top industry clusters: life sciences, advanced manufacturing, digital arts & media, cybersecurity, and all sectors in information technology.

A positive economic development climate should attract and encourage business growth and investment that will stimulate the economy and increased economic activity will in turn increase tax revenues.
Legislative Issues

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT...continued

- Support programs and legislation that will enhance the quality of life in Irvine including housing, transportation and human capital enhancements.
- Oppose further expansion of California enterprise zones and federal empowerment zones.
- Support a balanced regulatory climate that enables businesses to overcome barriers to economic growth and comply with reasonable regulatory requirements.
- Support stable funding through identifiable source(s) and a public policy environment conducive to meeting the region’s transportation, housing and workforce education needs.
- Support effective and timely communication between business, labor and the education community to assure that education and training programs are targeted to the needs of business.
- Support measures that encourage businesses to incorporate in California. Support measures that allow California businesses greater flexibility in choosing the type of entity under which to organize.
- Support legislation, regulations and government agency actions that protect, preserve, and give full consideration to the rights of private property owners, and oppose the same that diminish those rights. As examples, The Greater Irvine Chamber opposes unfair impositions on developers, unwarranted discretion given to government agencies and officials to tie up property rights, depriving property owners of due process, and unreasonable or confiscatory taxes on property or property transactions.
- Support Irvine’s Master Plan which preserves and protects responsible and balanced development within the city limits.

Background:

California is the 5th largest economy in the world. While there are challenges we must address to sustain our position, grow our economy and remain competitive, we can benefit from and leverage the California brand and Irvine’s global reputation to retain, attract and grow businesses.

The perception that California’s tax and regulatory climate is hostile may have an impact on the state’s ability to retain and attract businesses. A positive economic development climate should attract and encourage business growth and investment that will stimulate the economy and increased economic activity will in turn increase tax revenues. The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce will continue to promote Irvine/Orange County as a logical, strategic and desirable place to do business while leading or participating with others to address the challenges that may contribute to a negative perception.
The Greater Irvine Chamber recognizes that quality schools, colleges, universities, and training facilities are essential to real economic growth and are a major factor in attracting businesses to Irvine.
• Support rigorous academic, technical and vocational coursework designed to provide the skills required for employment.

• Support a strong, accessible education system at all levels with statewide, globally competitive academic and performance-based standards emphasizing language, communication and math skills, rigorous academic coursework and practical workplace skills. Encourage focus toward the Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) fields.

• Support locally determined priorities and implementation strategies for attaining statewide academic standards; cooperative action among educators, the business community, parents and community organizations to meet and exceed those standards. This includes discretion over higher, local standards, with local control over curriculum and textbooks and graduation requirements.

• Support business partnerships with universities strong in applied research capabilities to solve problems and provide students with opportunities for practical experience, especially in the areas of arts and sciences. Foster collaboration between campus-based innovation and entrepreneurship with Irvine’s business community to spur job creation and economic development.

• Support programs and reforms that enhance local control and improve education.

• Support full funding for all State and Federal mandated programs, especially as it relates to Special Education funding.

• Support legislation that would reduce, simplify and streamline the long expensive process for resolving special education claims and conflicts in an attempt to determine an appropriate level of service.

• Support school district accountability (while allowing for creative methodology and strategies to achieve such) that is rational in measuring results in student performance on state educational standards when coupled with sufficient resources and local control.

• Support principal/teacher accountability and training at all levels of education.

• Support merit-based promotions for teachers, as well as merit-based retention of teachers.

• Support the ability of local school districts to retain, dismiss and promote teachers in accordance with locally determined needs without restrictions of tenure.

• Support legislation that would streamline the process for employee discipline and dismissal.

• Support the elimination of social promotion, performance-based evaluation of students’ work, statewide academic standards leading to higher expectations in learning and portability in certification.

• Support programs that encourage and develop greater parent and family involvement in a student’s education.

• Support a safe and drug-free school environment.

• Support fully funded class size reduction programs.

• Support efficient, streamlined public school administrations.

• Support the concept of cost effective charter schools with decentralized administration.

• Support equitable funding formulas for all of California’s school districts.

• Support a rational system of state funding for public colleges and universities that recognizes the important roles played by the California Community Colleges, California State Colleges and the
University of California systems. All while expecting each of these systems to prudently invest tax dollars in the most efficient and effective manner possible in support of their unique missions.

- Support the relative independence of the University of California and California State University systems that affords them the capability to focus on their key mission to educate California residents without undue interference by Sacramento lawmakers.
- Support and encourage collaborative partnerships between educational entities involved in job training, such as community colleges, occupational training programs, universities, business organizations and non-profits to develop training programs closely linked to employer and labor market needs.
- Support adult retraining through incentive-based public and private sector programs.

**Background:**

Education and a skilled workforce are the foundation of a healthy, competitive economy. Proficiency in reading and writing English coupled with strong communication skills, math, science and other academic fundamentals, and the practical skills of today’s workplace are imperative for the success of students, business, and the Orange County community. The previous statement is not meant to diminish the value of foreign language programs system wide, as they have a vital place in education.

The Greater Irvine Chamber recognizes that quality schools, colleges, universities, and training facilities are essential to real economic growth and a major factor in attracting businesses to Irvine. The involvement of the business community is very important to their rapid transformation of education and training programs to meet new and challenging needs. Employer partnerships with educational institutions will encourage the identification of skills that include personal communication, creative thinking, problem solving, decision-making capabilities and teamwork. Our education systems must be well positioned to prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today’s world.
Policy Objectives:

Reasonable environmental protections are important for sustaining the City of Irvine and the region’s high quality of life. However, conflicting and costly regulations can jeopardize the business climate, which supports and finances the services enjoyed by businesses and residents. It is necessary to protect our environment without sacrificing economic prosperity or competitiveness. The cost and benefits of current and proposed environmental laws and regulations should be fully analyzed and considered, and environmental quality should be achieved and maintained, to the fullest extent practicable, through market-based, economical solutions that offer maximum compliance flexibility and achieve cost-effective outcomes. The cost and burdens of environmental quality should be spread fairly and not place Irvine, Orange County or California businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

Positions:

- Support legislation that recognizes environmental quality and economic development are not mutually exclusive goals creating a balance to ensure Irvine businesses have the ability to grow and remain competitive.
- Support the involvement of regulated business in developing environmental protection, pollution prevention and emission reduction strategies.
- Support measures that utilize market-based incentives in the pursuit of environmental quality.
- Support environmental regulations that are based on sound science (e.g., realistic risk assessments, accurate pollutant inventories and credible environmental and economic models) and produce achievable, cost effective and measurable benefits to public health and the environment.
- Support legislation that requires conducting thorough, independently reviewed cost-benefit analyses for all existing and proposed local, state and federal environmental laws, regulations and mandates.
- Support statutory and regulatory flexibility for meeting environmental quality standards.
- Support environmental laws and regulations that provide general direction and overall policy and performance goals, rather than codify prescriptive requirements that restrict creativity to accomplish the desired result.
- Support innovative environmental conservation programs that protect or restore the environment but do not restrict economic growth.
- Support streamlining the regulatory and permitting process to eliminate duplicative, and unnecessary regulations.
- Support programs that assist businesses, especially small and medium-sized businesses, in complying with federal, state and local environmental laws, regulations and mandates.
- Support improved methods and techniques for measuring, modeling and assessing environmental impacts and the effectiveness of control measures, including those related to air pollution control, energy usage, and urban runoff.
- Support revisions to the South Coast Air Quality Management Plan with control measures that are cost-effective, feasible, and achievable within the specified timeframes.
- Support relevant changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National
Legislative Issues

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) to streamline environmental review and project delivery, expand participation by project proponents, curb abuses such as excessive litigation and ensure fairness in environmental review fees without compromising the environment.

- Support efforts to address urban runoff and beach water closures that provide for thorough assessments of all sources and the evaluation of cost-effectiveness of treatment options that are compatible with economic growth.
- Support tying cleanup costs and liability to responsible parties, contrary to current law, under which subsequent land owners can be responsible for pollution effects that predate their ownership.
- Oppose local, regional or statewide environmental measures that place Irvine, Orange County, or California’s businesses at a competitive disadvantage.
- Oppose environmental laws and regulations that are excessively punitive, that create criminal liability without requiring traditional criminal intent, which holds managers civilly or criminally liable for acts of employees that are not the fault of, or are not known by managers, or that create liability for non-injury nuisance violations.
- Oppose efforts to place artificial, unnecessary or unreasonable restrictions on development of natural resources.
- Oppose laws, regulations and agency actions that create conflicts or uncertainties in environmental compliance.
- Oppose measures that unfairly impose costs and burdens of environmental quality on small or medium-sized businesses, or that unfairly target specific businesses or industries.
- Oppose legislation that gives too much discretion to government agencies and officials or too little oversight or opportunity to appeal an agency’s or official’s decision.
- Oppose legislation and regulations that do not require, or are not the product of, a reasonable and sound balancing of costs and benefits.
- Oppose proposed climate change legislation that fails to satisfy the following core principles:
  - International nature of global climate change
  - Acceleration of technology development and deployment
  - Preservation of American jobs and the economy
  - Reduction of barriers to development of climate friendly energy sources
  - Promotion of energy efficient measures

Background:

Irvine enjoys a dynamic, growing economy and an unsurpassed physical environment and quality of life. This combination is instrumental in attracting and retaining talented individuals and lucrative businesses. However, excessive and shortsighted laws and regulations can be burdensome to the point of stifling economic growth. Environmental enhancement and preservation must be balanced against economic and fiscal impacts. Regulatory agencies should work collaboratively with the business community to develop policies that enhance the environment and protect public resources while allowing businesses the flexibility to expand and prosper.
Legislative Issues

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports equal opportunity in the workplace, the elimination of special-interest protection and freedom for employers to hire and promote individuals based on merit.

Positions:

• Support fair, reasonable and non-punitive measures to bring about equal opportunity, and oppose unreasonable or punitive measures against employers for non-intentional violations of law.
• Oppose measures that go beyond federal laws or in any way put California or Irvine businesses at a competitive disadvantage, without, at the very least, first requiring a thorough, and objective cost-benefit evaluation.
• Oppose mandatory quotas for hiring and promotion.
• Support principles of non-discrimination, equal access and equal opportunity.
• Oppose any attempt to undermine or circumvent Proposition 209.

Background:

Affirmative action was originally conceived as a means to eradicate earlier inequities in opportunity for minorities and other groups. Over the years, many affirmative action programs have evolved into quotas and preferential treatment. An increasing number of special-interest groups are now claiming entitlement to affirmative action “protection.” In November 1995, former Governor Pete Wilson took the first step to restore an element of fairness in state hiring, contracting, and admission to state colleges and universities. In November 1996, the voters of California approved the California Civil Rights Initiative, thereby agreeing with Wilson’s goal, as stated in his Executive Order, “to promote individual opportunity and merit.” The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce will continue to support public policies promoting equality of opportunity in every aspect of the workplace, reward for performance, and strong enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. We believe our society is best served through free competition and equal opportunity for all.
Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports a continuous, ongoing review of the role of government in providing essential public services for the purposes of making government more understandable, more efficient, and more accountable to voters and taxpayers.

Positions:

• Government should avoid unnecessary duplication among and within its departments and agencies.
• Cities should provide cost-effective municipal services to their communities.
• Orange County should provide only regional services that cannot be cost-effectively provided at the city level.
• State-level restructuring efforts should clarify the roles of state and local governments and should identify long-term, stable funding sources for essential public services as part of a comprehensive statewide finance reform effort.
• State and federal mandates must be eliminated if not adequately funded; local control must be restored to agencies that deliver local services.
• Support enactment of effective research/market-based pension reforms.
• Oppose prevailing wage and living wage mandates and ordinances.
• Support decentralization and more local control where appropriate.
• Support reasonable, objective limits on government growth and expenditures, including caps based on inflation and population growth.
• Support efforts to provide necessary and sufficient opportunities for all members of the legislature to have a fair hearing of their proposals.
• Support efforts to prevent arbitrary and capricious decisions by legislative committee chairs, especially related to fiscal appropriations.

The Greater Irvine Chamber supports legislative review of existing statutes with an eye toward more equitably balancing the rights of employers, employees and organized labor.
Legislative Issues

GOVERNMENT REFORM ...continued

• Support a fairer, more stable, less state-dependent method of funding local governments. It is especially important that, as long as the present local funding system is in place, local taxes from the Irvine region and Orange County that are currently sent to the state be returned at a much higher percentage rate than the current level.

• Support government reform, including legislative and regulatory processes, that give due recognition and consideration to property rights and the principle that businesses generally should be allowed to operate as the owners choose, and oppose unnecessary, unwarranted intrusions into how owners operate their businesses.

• Continue to oppose the proposed Employee Free Choice Act or any other effort to make union organizing easier and/or eliminating the secret ballot in union elections.

• Support limitations on the activities of unions where the employees of a company have indicated a lack of desire to unionize.

• Support limitations on the use of binding arbitration in labor/management negotiations.

• Oppose expanded application of the Davis-Bacon Act in legislative vehicles such as those funding infrastructure projects.

• Support legislative review of existing statutes with an eye toward more equitably balancing the rights of employers, employees and organized labor.

Background:

One of the lessons of Orange County’s bankruptcy was that government needed to be smaller and more directly accountable to the voters. The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce believes it is prudent to regularly review the role of government and the manner in which public services are being provided. Changing times and changing demographics particularly warrant this type of evaluation. The huge state budget deficit presents an opportunity to restructure state government, and The Greater Irvine Chamber believes the state Legislature should take advantage of that opportunity. One of the most important changes the Legislature should consider is to change its budgetary policies that allow state government to continually overspend. The Governor and the Legislature should scrutinize every single tax dollar spent and aggressively limit state spending. Until that happens, California’s economy will continue to be hampered by the over-spending habits of state government. The Greater Irvine Chamber urges the Governor, Legislature and other levels of government to work for the adoption of stable, long-term and reliable financing formulas for local governments that will in turn promote land use approvals that are not solely based upon revenue generation. These endeavors will result in a stronger economy for both the county and state.
Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports common sense health care reform on a national and state basis, which maximizes free market forces, minimizes mandates upon insurers and results in the expansion of affordable coverage for employees and their families.

Positions:

• Support preservation of the current voluntary, employer-provided health coverage system and oppose mandates upon employer-provided coverage.
• Support federal and state income tax deductions for individuals who self-procure health care coverage.
• Oppose any type of price controls. Support fair competition between physicians, hospitals, and health plans in the health care market as the best means to achieve a more efficient and quality-driven health care system.
• Support elimination of cost shifting to the private sector by requiring government-provided and private-sector health programs to pay the full cost of the benefits they provide.
• Streamline administrative costs and oppose increases in existing governmental bureaucracy.
• Oppose new or expanded federal health benefit entitlement programs.
• Support health care related tort reform. Protect from diminution the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act (MICRA), which limits recoveries and attorney fee awards in medical malpractice lawsuits. Advocate MICRA’s adoption at the federal level.
• Support consumerism and market-driven and consumer-driven health plans.
• Support creation of non-government high-deductible medical insurance policies.
• Support innovative health care programs based on quality, outcome data, and preventative care.
• Monitor the federal efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to ensure collective accountability, cost transparency, timely reimbursement to healthcare providers and reducing the red tape to employers.
• Support full repeal of the medical device tax. Repeal will provide medical technology innovators with the long-term certainty necessary to support future job growth and sustainable, cutting-edge R&D that will ultimately lead to the next generation of breakthroughs in patient care and treatment.

Background:

California employers directly spend over $30 billion each year on health care for their employees and contribute, through taxes, a significant portion of the more than $40 billion spent each year on government-sponsored programs, such as Medicare and Medi-Cal. Irvine businesses have a significant interest in ensuring that quality health care is delivered at an affordable price. The health care industry and employers have been working together over the last several years to improve efficiency and lower costs.
Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports policies that encourage the production of a full range of housing options necessary to accommodate Irvine’s population and economic growth. We strive for a sufficient supply of homes within a close proximity to employment locations to meet employers’ workforce needs.

Positions:

- Support the construction of all forms of new housing.
- Oppose any form of rent control.
- Oppose urban limit lines, moratoriums or other measures that slow the production of new housing.
- Support removal of legislative and regulatory barriers to the construction of homes sufficient to meet California’s basic needs for shelter.
- Support public/private partnerships to provide permanent supportive, transitional, and emergency housing, as well as housing for individuals and families that cannot afford market-rate housing.
- Oppose the imposition of taxes, fees and assessments on new housing developments if the tax, fee, or assessment funds community-wide infrastructure needs (roads, water, sewer, schools) that are not directly part of the new development.
- Support legislation and land use policy that promotes a reasonable balance between residential and commercial uses.
- Oppose land use policy that treats businesses unreasonably and/or unfairly.
- Oppose further enforcement of affordable housing formulas/requirements placed on the City of Irvine infrastructure.
- Oppose ballot box zoning initiatives.

Background:

An important part of this master planned community has been an ample supply of quality housing for all segments of Irvine’s growing workforce. The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce needs to work closely with the city and landowners to assure that all types of housing are available to Irvine based employees.

The Greater Irvine Chamber recognizes that the City of Irvine is working with the private sector and non-profits organizations to create more affordable ownership and rental housing options, and that it is important that all segments of the Irvine employee populations have resident opportunities.

There is a growing trend in California to enact building moratoriums, and ordinances that limit housing construction. The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce should work closely with housing providers to meet the growing need for affordable housing in Irvine.

To ensure that Irvine continues to strategically grow we will continue to work to provide adequate housing to meet the needs of Irvine’s growing premier business centers.
Policy Objectives:

The state’s economy depends on a stable, trained workforce, whether documented or undocumented. Immigration reform must be adopted in a comprehensive manner.

Positions:

• Support reforming the H-1B Visa program to supplement the needed talent for highly skilled jobs in Irvine.
• Support a bipartisan solution for borders as a protection against illegal immigration and those who pose security threats.
• Oppose border policies that threaten trade and commerce in southern California
• Support reforming temporary worker programs to meet the needs for high- and low-skilled jobs that are not filled by American workers.
• Support a pathway to legal status for undocumented workers that does not permit “line jumping” the current applicants.

Background:

America’s current immigration system is in need of reform and does not meet the needs of its citizens or businesses. Immigration reform is especially important to California as there are estimated to be somewhere between 2.35 million and 2.6 million undocumented immigrants who call California home—23% of the nation’s total and about 6% of the state’s population—half of whom have lived here for more than 10 years. Many of these individuals are holding jobs and doing work upon which employers and the economy depend.

Approximately 1.85 million undocumented immigrants are estimated to be working in California—approximately 1 in 10 workers in California is an undocumented immigrant. Immigration, both documented and undocumented, is expected to account for almost all the growth in the labor force. The uncertainty over the legal status of undocumented immigrants could be a drag on the economy and, if resolved, would continue to stimulate consumer spending and investment.

The Greater Irvine Chamber supports legislative review of existing statutes with an eye toward more equitably balancing the rights of employers, employees and organized labor.
Legislative Issues

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports legislation and regulations simplifying and clarifying the definition of an independent contractor. Furthermore, The Greater Irvine Chamber supports legislation that safeguards independent contractor tax status and opposes legislation that restricts or prohibits the use of independent contractors.

Positions:

• Support a simple, clear definition of an independent contractor and align state with federal requirements.
• Promote simplified rules that clarify the independent contractor/client relationship and reduce associated litigation.
• Promote fair and consistent regulatory oversight.
• Eliminate financial penalties, as well as back-tax and benefits responsibilities, for businesses that act in good faith but transgress in the classification of their workers as independent contractors.
• Oppose any legislation that imposes new requirements and liabilities on businesses who utilize the services of independent contractors, such as Uber and Lyft-like services.

Background:

In a fast-changing, dynamic economy, many businesses find that independent contractors are an attractive option to either supplement or replace salaried workers. There are a variety of reasons businesses utilize independent contractors rather than employees, including but not limited to the following: volatile business cycles, short-term contracts, greater flexibility, specialized expertise, quality improvement, competitiveness, and cost savings. Unfortunately, use of independent contractors can be fraught with confusion and anxiety if these independent contractors are deemed to be employees by the Internal Revenue Service, other government agencies and/or the courts. This employer anxiety is magnified because there is no simple, strict definition of what constitutes an independent contractor/employer relationship.

Currently, the IRS uses numerous common-law factors to determine independent contractor status. These factors can vary in significance and weight depending on the industry and the particular court of jurisdiction. Additionally, in certain instances, the IRS demand back taxes and assesses significant financial penalties in the event an employer’s independent contractors are deemed to be employees. Finally, recent case authority has held independent contractors to be “common law” employees, making their “employer” liable for health care, unemployment, workers’ compensation, savings plans, pension, benefits, and even stock option benefits and contributions. It is therefore important to independent contractors, their clients, employers and employees alike that federal and state governments clarify independent contractor/client classification rules and processes.
Legislative Issues

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Policy Objectives:
Facilitate multilateral trade throughout the world while adhering to the policies of the United States. Promote international investment in Irvine and trade with Irvine businesses.

Positions:

• Support legislation that allows open and fair competition and enhances the local business environment at the local, regional, national and international levels of trade.
• Support legislation and programs that promote business investment in California and/or Irvine.
• Support all free trade agreements that advance and advantage US and Irvine businesses and encourage and expedite favorable exporting, importing and trade conditions.
• Support the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).
• Support and actively participate in the City of Irvine Sister City program.
• Support efforts by other Orange County agencies and International-American Chambers to expand international trade.
• Support the International Development Committee's initiatives and programs designed to heighten Irvine's global competitiveness, improve export opportunities and increase foreign direct investment (FDI) into Irvine.
• Support adherence to United States’ intellectual property laws, including regulations on patents, copyrights, etc.

Background:
International trade and foreign investment are major sectors in the Irvine economy, increasingly; small to medium-sized businesses are looking to enter foreign markets. The Chamber’s International Development Committee was formed to assist members and the business community access trade resources, expand export opportunities and attract FDI to Irvine.

The Greater Irvine Chamber promotes international investment in Irvine and trade with Irvine businesses.
Policy Objectives:

To support, defend, and advance the Irvine Master Plan, the guiding framework for development in the city, to sustain economic vitality and quality of life in Irvine.

Positions:

• Support the principle of balance between open pace, parks and trails, village design, neighborhood retail centers, safe communities, neighborhood schools and top-tier universities, quality jobs and major employers.
• Oppose policies, regulations, legislation, or ballot measures that threaten the Master Plan or any of its components.

Background:

Irvine was master planned for 60 years to guide the city’s carefully phased, long-term sustainable growth. Stewards of the Master Plan remain committed to guiding land use and infrastructure decisions, ensuring and promoting the wisdom of a balanced community.

Originally master-planned around UCI, Irvine, a town of nearly 250,000 residents, has become world renowned for its charming neighborhood villages, vibrant work communities, top-ranked schools, and the lowest crime rate of any large American city.

The Master Plan philosophy translates into timeless designs, exceptional quality, continued reinvestment, sustainability, thoughtful stewardship, and community engagement.

Sixty percent of the land on the 93,000-acre Irvine Ranch has been permanently preserved as open space, creating a biologically and geologically diverse, 22-mile swath of untouched land in Orange County, Calif. that stretches from the Cleveland National Forest to the Pacific Ocean.

“The Greater Irvine supports, defends, and advances the Irvine Master Plan, the guiding framework for development in the city, to sustain economic vitality and quality of life in Irvine.”
The Greater Irvine Chamber supports a financial development plan that will place no additional tax, financial, or regulatory burdens on Irvine residents or the local business community.
 Legislative Issues

PRIVATIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Policy Objectives:

Privatization and contracting out of government services means protecting taxpayers’ interests. Privatization and contracting out provides a government that remains affordable through streamlining, transferring functions to the private or non-profit sectors, consolidating overlapping functions and returning authority and resources to local government. Privatization also promotes government to spread share ownership as widely as possible among the population, and to obtain the best value for each service government deems necessary to provide.

Positions:

• Support government initiatives that utilize request for bids (RFB) or a proposal (RFP) that privatize services that meet the “Yellow Pages Test;” that is, government should outsource service work that is readily performed by the private sector.
• Support and encourage government to include performance incentives in the RFB and RFP process to reward service excellence and timelines in completing said service.
• Support and encourage government to develop easily understood and specific performance measures so that government can properly monitor the contractor to assure the work is completed as specified in the service contract.
• Support and encourage language in RFB’s and RFP’s that does not discriminate between union and nonunion labor in outsourcing contract work and discourage project labor agreements (PLA).
• Support and encourage government to outsource work for specialized services rather than hiring temporary or permanent workers to do such work in-house.
• Support and encourage government to outsource work in all governmental departments in an effort to increase the level of outsourcing and the development of other innovative cost-saving proposals.
• Support and encourage government to conduct either annual or semi-annual performance audits to further identify areas in which outsourcing will result in a more efficient and well-managed government.
• Support legislation that makes it easier for federal, state and local governments to contract out for goods and services.
• Oppose legislation that adds unnecessary burdens on businesses that want to contract with the government, including socio-economic, wage, benefit or other requirements that inordinately discourage or preclude small businesses from contracting with the government.

Background:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce believes that privatization of government services ensures a larger benefit to customers, employees and the economy as a whole. These customers benefit when this greater efficiency is achieved through privatization. While privatization remains an essential ingredient for government to responsibly manage their operations, it also increases the innovation available to government. Privatization ensures the government is more responsive to changing customer demands, which, in turn, introduces new products and services in the free market, thus benefiting society as a whole.
Legislative Issues

PUBLIC SAFETY

Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports measures enhancing the public’s safety for the businesses and residents of the City of Irvine.

Positions:

• Support a strong state, county and local public safety emergency response system including police, fire and medical treatment components that enhance the safety of residents and workers and the preservation of life and property.
• Support Public Safety programs that enhance the training, equipping and education of public safety personnel to better serve their communities.
• Support technology and equipment issues that better facilitate the delivery of public safety services to the community.
• Support privatization, regionalization, and/or civilianization of public safety programs that would enhance services to the community while reducing costs to taxpayers and businesses.
• Support awareness programs from all levels of public and private organizations that educate people about business, home and personal safety and protection.
• Support legislation and funding for the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of white-collar, investment-fraud, and other business-related crimes.

Background:

The Greater Irvine Chamber believes that a strong public safety response and crime prevention programs are critical components for businesses and citizens to locate, stay and prosper in the community.

It is of vital importance to the business and residential communities that Irvine retains its designation as “Safest City.” Irvine has the lowest rate of violent crime of any City in the nation with a population of 250,000 or more. This is the 12th consecutive year Irvine has earned the Safest City designation.

The Greater Irvine Chamber supports measures enhancing the public’s safety for the businesses and residents of the City of Irvine.
Policy Objectives:

Government and business should work together to create a reasonable, fair, cost-effective, fiscally and technically sound, streamlined and simplified regulatory environment that is business-friendly and does not put Irvine, Orange County or California businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the global marketplace. The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce believes that unnecessary and overly burdensome regulations should be eliminated, that regulations should be applied consistently at all levels of government, that the costs and burdens of regulations should be spread fairly, and that all regulations and permit requirements should be subjected to strict cost-benefit analyses to ensure the proper consideration of economic and fiscal impacts.

Positions:

- Support measures that reduce administrative burdens on businesses created by regulations and permit requirements.
- Support measures that require agencies to include substantial input from the regulated community before promulgating regulations.
- Support measures that increase agency accountability, including adequate and meaningful opportunities to appeal agency regulatory decisions.
- Support placing the burden on government agencies to justify any new regulations, including requiring agencies to evaluate alternatives to determine if there is a more cost-effective means of achieving the desired result.
- Support a requirement that the benefits to the public of any new regulation be shown to outweigh the full economic and compliance costs, as evidenced by a thorough analysis that is based on sound science and economics and includes independent peer review.
- Support mandatory, periodic reviews of existing regulations to ensure their continued usefulness, either by including sunset provisions or requiring the agencies justify existing regulations through independent cost-benefit analyses.
- Support measures that harmonize California and federal regulations, including a requirement that state and local agencies justify adopting any regulation that differs from federal regulations by making a finding that the cost of the state or local regulations is outweighed by a health, safety, welfare, or environmental benefit.
- Support expansion of the “one-stop” permit assistance centers across the state and other measures that streamline the permitting process, including consolidation of permitting processes and concurrent reviews whenever possible.
- Support programs to educate businesses on regulatory and permitting requirements and assist businesses in complying with those requirements.
- Support measures that ensure that regulatory and permitting requirements do not disadvantage small and medium-sized businesses.
- Support periodic reviews of local permitting processes and fees.
- Support measures that allow businesses to conduct voluntary self-audits as part of their regulatory compliance efforts without the information being used against them in civil or criminal proceedings or to impose excessive penalties.
- Support efforts to make regulations clear, consistent and non-duplicative.
Legislative Issues

REGULATORY REFORM/PERMIT STREAMLINING...continued

• Support programs and measures that promote fairness and even-handedness in the regulatory, permitting and inspection processes.
• Support a single statewide permitting entity that administers hazardous waste and materials regulations.
• Oppose measures that undermine, or are contrary to, the stated policy objectives and supported positions.

Background:

Regulatory burdens on California businesses have, in many industries, become overwhelming. In the past several decades, excessive and complex regulations and permitting processes at the local, state and federal levels have placed onerous costs and burdens on California businesses, driving some of them out of business or out of the state. The result is a loss of jobs and a loss of revenue that is necessary to maintain the superior quality of life enjoyed by the citizens of Irvine. Therefore, it is essential to the success and progress of Irvine in the 21st Century to create and maintain a balance that both protects the health, safety and environment of the community and promotes a healthy business climate, a sound infrastructure and a vibrant economy.

Excessive regulation, including an increasing number of local government regulations, is detrimental to this goal. Unreasonable permit requirements, in some cases, subject projects to numerous inspections by a variety of agencies or obligate permit applicants to provide improvements to public property not affected by the permitted project. The results are higher costs of doing business and higher costs to the consumer. Unnecessary and duplicative regulation creates inefficiencies that stifle job creation and divert business dollars away from developing products, investing in growth and adding value to customers and shareholders.
Legislative Issues

SOLID WASTE/RECYCLING GOALS

Policy Objectives:

The City of Irvine is quickly becoming a leader in protecting and maintaining its own and its surrounding environment. The City of Irvine has created a bifurcated, integrated solid waste collection system that has worked well for both business and residents over the past forty years. The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports the City’s environmental commitment through this bifurcated solid waste collection system. Solid waste and recycling issues will remain of great importance, as Irvine must continue to comply with AB 939, the state’s Integrated Waste Management Act, SB 1374, the state’s construction and demolition diversion target bill, SB 1016, legislation that further amended and enhanced AB 939, as well as the potential for mandatory commercial recycling emanating from AB 32, the State of California’s landmark global warming bill of 2006.

Positions:

• Support Irvine’s efforts to maintain its compliance with the state mandated waste diversion goal through AB 939 and SB 1016.
• Oppose any regulatory effort that attempts to mandate a one size fits all approach to commercial recycling.
• Support a balanced approach to solid waste management that does not unfairly burden the business community with high solid waste handling fees.
• Support the non-exclusive solid waste franchise agreements that would protect territories that have historically been subject to open competition and expand competition to new territories that have been subject to the City’s exclusive franchise in order to ensure a balance between competition and necessary City regulation.
• Oppose any expansion of the exclusive solid waste franchise since that expansion would impede competition, business opportunities and economic growth. This includes any territories the City will annex in the future.
• Support a concurrent extension term of the non-exclusive solid waste franchise agreements if/when the City extends the City’s exclusive solid waste franchise agreement and to protect any and all territories currently in open competition.
• Support the retention of the open commercial territories of Irvine to ensure competitive hauling and recycling rates for Irvine businesses.
• Support a possible Chamber role to provide for an enhanced role for promoting and disseminating public education materials that encourage recycling, reusing and reducing, if the Chamber is so inclined to participate.
• Oppose any state or city mandate that could result in increasing minimum content requirements on packaging and manufacturers.
• Opposes any mandate by either the state or city to require waste audits be performed on the waste hauler’s individual client base; rather, the Chamber supports the concept of individual haulers providing this service for their Irvine client base.
• Support legislation that provides tax code advantages to industries that voluntarily participate in producer responsibility/take-back programs in an effort to close the loop and to design more sustainable products in the future.
The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports the City’s environmental commitment through this bifurcated solid waste collection system.
Legislative Issues
TAXES AND FEES

Policy Objectives:
The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports simplified and lower taxes. Taxes should be structured to avoid excessive taxation of businesses, to reduce the administrative burdens on businesses, and to encourage economic growth.

Positions:

• Support balanced local, state and federal budgets that reduce spending without shifting costs to, or imposing mandates upon, other levels of government. Support consideration of all options for federal tax reform, including the flat tax, national sales tax and value-added tax.

• Support consideration of an optional, alternative, flat tax for California taxpayers.

• Support reinstatement of 100% deductions for business expenses, to include the 100% deduction of health insurance premiums for the self-employed and 100% carry-forward of net operating losses.

• Support removal of “home office” restrictions.

• Support tax credits and other incentives for saving and investing, including increased 401(k) percentages and increased ceiling limits on contributions.

• Support the elimination of Orange County’s status as a “donor” county.

• Support the use of private sector investment, rather than governmental taxes and spending, where possible, to accomplish public benefits.

• Support clear distinctions between taxes and user fees. A clear “burden of proof” upon government relative to new fees or taxes.

• Support lower capital gains taxes.

• Support consideration of all options for overhauling Social Security and Medicare to place them on a sound and cost-efficient financial basis with minimal tax rates and no excessive taxes on employers. Consideration should include the option of raising the Medicare deductible.

• Support elimination or reduction of the federal gasoline tax.

• Support reduction or elimination of the Federal estate tax.

• Support elimination of the income tax marriage penalty.

• Support current constitutional protections requiring 2/3 vote to raise taxes and approve state budget.

Taxes should be structured to avoid excessive taxation of businesses, reduce the administrative burdens on businesses, and encourage economic growth.
• Support fairness in crafting and levying taxes, and fair and equitable treatment for all taxpayers by the taxing authorities.
• Oppose taxes that place California, Orange County or Irvine at a competitive disadvantage.
• Oppose split roll taxation.
• Oppose excessive bonded indebtedness.
• Oppose any raids on local tax dollars by the State of California.
• Oppose any tax or fee that disproportionately affects businesses.
• Oppose taxes on services.
• Oppose increases in Irvine business taxes or license fees.
• Oppose labeling general taxes as special taxes, user fees, and other fees or by any other name, in a way that vitiates protections that exist surrounding the creation, raising or levying of taxes.

Background:

Business taxpayers pay more than their share of the cost of government. Business, commercial and agricultural property owners pay two-thirds of California’s property taxes. Additional tax increases, especially those that target business, will hamper California’s economic growth and job creation.

Orange County taxpayers have been particularly hard hit. As a “donor” county, for every $1.00 of property taxes Orange County residents pay to the state, we only receive 7.6 cents in return to invest in our infrastructure. In comparison, the average county in California receives 17 cents in return, and some get as much as 25 cents in return.

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce believes that restructuring activities and long-term funding solutions are keys to relieving the burdens of over-taxation and over-regulation. California, Orange County, and Irvine will be better positioned to compete more effectively in the global economy once these issues are successfully addressed.
The Greater Irvine Chamber supports laws that strengthen the incentives and protections for scientific, engineering and artistic innovations, inventions and trade secrets.”
nearly all businesses will require an adequate supply of high-tech workers. To attract the necessary high-tech workers to Irvine, it is essential to support the policies and positions detailed throughout this Handbook that make Irvine an exceptional place to work and live. Support measures that allow foreign workers with high-tech skills and education to enter the country’s workforce in numbers sufficient to meet the needs of businesses and consistent with national security needs.

• Education
  - Support increased use of technology in the classroom.
  - Support measures that encourage businesses to allow their technology experts to help teach in schools and colleges.
  - Support government and private incentives for workers to obtain continuing education.
  - Because many high-tech jobs require a college or advanced degree, The Greater Irvine Chamber supports measures that encourage the continued excellence of area higher learning institutions.
  - Support the development of additional colleges and world-class research universities in Orange County and Southern California.

• Incorporating Technology. Businesses of all stripes, from manufacturing to wholesale to retail to service industries, must stay abreast of technological advances in order to remain competitive in today’s marketplace. The Greater Irvine Chamber supports measures and programs to:
  - Educate businesses, in particular small businesses, about new technologies that can affect their business.
  - Assist these businesses in adopting appropriate technologies to make their business more efficient, productive and competitive.
  - Promote affordable access to robust and reliable telecommunications and broadband products and services.

Background:

The past 20 years have witnessed the emergence of whole industries – such as personal computer, wireless-communications and Internet-based industries – that are centered on newly created technologies. These high-tech industries now make up a considerable, and vital, portion of the nation’s economy. Indeed, it is these new, high-tech industries where the United States, and especially California, is leading the world.

Profitable high-tech businesses not only are a source of dynamic growth and a large number of jobs, but also create high-paying jobs filled by well-educated, highly skilled employees. Irvine and the surrounding communities have been successful in attracting a number of high-tech companies, and it is important to the future of the area’s economy that the number continues to grow. Moreover, traditional businesses are employing an increasing number of high-tech workers. There is and always will be a need to keep local high-tech jobs filled. It is crucial; therefore, that Irvine and the surrounding communities educate, attract and retain a continuing and adequate supply of highly skilled and educated professional and technical workers.
Policy Objectives:

The efficient movement of information through well-maintained telecommunications infrastructure and broadband networks.

Positions:

- Support the opportunity for consumers to, in a free market, choose their one-stop provider of telecommunication products and services.
- Support availability of broadband technologies to all residents of Irvine.
- Support the creation of an environment that will allow for technology and network companies to increase their investments in the overall infrastructure.
- Support the elimination of unnecessary regulations, which will then allow California to achieve a state-of-the-art telecommunications and broadband networks that will provide support to our business community and all consumers.
- Support legislative efforts that will eliminate or avoid the creation of unnecessary and unfair taxes and fees affecting telecommunications companies, therefore allowing all providers to compete on a level playing field, and in turn allow all consumers to reap the rewards of true and open competition.
- Support private sector investments to develop state of the art broadband capabilities for businesses and citizens in Irvine.
- Oppose taxes, fees, or burdensome regulations that would have the effect of stifling broadband investment, deployment, competition and commerce.
- Oppose government-owned utilities from offering telecommunications services since their powers of taxation and regulation provide an inherent competitive advantage relative to other telecommunications providers.
- Support a state of the art telecommunications and broadband network in Orange County, meeting the needs of residents and businesses, while opposing municipal “third tier” regulation (e.g., imposition of local franchise requirements), which slows the implementation of network infrastructure and increases consumers’ cost for telecommunications services.

Background:

High-speed telecommunications play a critical role in California’s economic and financial health. California leads the nation in high-tech jobs and exports. We rely on broadband to support technological innovations and e-commerce that drive economic growth.
Infrastructure

TRANSPORTATION

Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber advocates for a robust multi-modal transportation network that allows for economic expansion to meet the needs of the business community, increased goods movement, travel choice and enhanced quality of life for the residents of the City of Irvine and the region. To maintain a strong economic footing, The Greater Irvine Chamber must partner with other regional business groups, the state and federal Legislature and state and federal agencies to advocate for transportation solutions that encourage economic growth and entices businesses to relocate from outside the region and state. With that in mind, The Greater Irvine Chamber will adhere to the platform outlined above by taking the following public policy positions.

Positions:

• Support for an integrated, state of the art transportation system in Orange County, meeting the needs of globally competitive businesses and Irvine residents.
• Support for long-term and stable local, state and federal funding sources for road and highway improvements, to include improvements in maintenance, safety and capacity. This includes dedicated revenues for infrastructure projects.
• Support for private sector projects and initiatives addressing community and regional infrastructure needs.
• Support the realistic and thorough review of costs of mass transit projects to ensure benefits outweigh costs.
• Support the completion and full build out of existing roads and/or transit projects, including the State Route 241 Toll Road in South Orange County and the 241/91 Express Lanes Direct Connector project.
• Support legislation to ensure that revenues from managed lanes and toll road facilities remain within the corridor from which they are generated and oppose efforts to divert those revenues for projects outside that corridor.
• Support efforts to ensure that all users of the state’s transportation system pay their “fair share” to maintain and improve the infrastructure system.
• Support efforts to study the development and safe operation of autonomous vehicles and related technologies.
• Oppose efforts and/or legislation that would attempt to take away local control in a transportation decision-making capacity.
• Oppose efforts to link or reprioritize local and state transportation funding to support the state’s greenhouse gas reduction initiatives.
• Support the Orange County legislative delegation working closely with the Orange County Transportation Authority to secure an equitable portion of the increased taxes and fees that will be generated by the passage of SB 1.
• Support legislation and regulations that incentivize and make it easier to undertake design-build procurements and public-private partnerships (P3s). Support private investment in public transportation projects.
• Support legislation, regulations and executive orders that streamline the procurement, permitting,
and environmental review process and provides for incentive-based contracting.
• Support legislation and regulations that accelerate project development and delivery.
• Oppose legislation and regulations that add additional requirements to the approval process for TIFIA loans.
• Oppose legislation, regulations and policies that impose unfunded mandates or other burdens on state and local entities seeking to plan and develop transportation projects.
• Oppose legislation or regulations that would add additional requirements and/or make it more difficult or costly for state and regional transportation agencies to advance capital improvement projects.
• Oppose legislative or regulatory efforts that would divert revenues generated by local sales tax measures to programs and projects not included in the sales tax ordinance.

The Greater Irvine Chamber supports the Orange County legislative delegation working closely with the Orange County Transportation Authority to secure an equitable portion of the increased taxes and fees that will be generated by the passage of SB 1.

Background:

For more than two decades, the state and federal gas tax revenue has not kept up with the demand required to maintain the existing infrastructure or provide for additional capacity as needed by the increase in population and economic growth in the city of Irvine, the region and the state.

The County of Orange is one of 24 “self-help” counties in the State of California that has passed sales tax measures to fund transportation infrastructure in lieu of state and federal resources that have not materialized. In addition, South and Central areas of Orange County, to include the City of Irvine, have the state’s first and largest toll road network funded solely by tolls and development impact fees.

Local control is key to Orange County’s success and serves as the foundation for maintaining a strong and vibrant business atmosphere and workforce. As a business advocacy organization, the Greater Irvine Chamber is dedicated to developing policies that support and enhance the economic climate. As such, it is necessary to advocate for the ongoing development of an infrastructure system that will meet future needs.

In addition to the local funding mechanisms, the passage of SB 1 in 2016 created the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program to address deferred maintenance on the state highway system and the local street and road system. The Greater Irvine Chamber supports the Orange County legislative delegation working closely with the Orange County Transportation Authority to negotiate a plan to secure an equitable portion of the increased taxes and fees generated by the passage of SB 1.
Infrastructure

UTILITY AND ENERGY

Policy Objectives:

Reliable, stable, and competitively priced energy supplies for California’s businesses and consumers.

Positions:

• Supports comprehensive, coordinated national, state and local energy policies that will promote adequate supplies and reasonable pricing in order to facilitate economic growth and quality of life.
• Support a market structure that will promote realistic pricing policies, accurate price signals (devoid of cross-subsidies), market stability, and access to competitively priced supplies.
• Support improvements in generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure required to support future statewide growth and reserve needs. Removal of unnecessary regulatory impediments that could negatively impact these future improvements.
• Support close coordination between state and local regulatory agencies to ensure responsible protections for the environment while supporting reasonable growth needs.
• Support continued research, development and use of cleaner, alternate power sources such as co-generation/distributed generation, carbon free, and fuel cell technologies, with primary goal to meet the state’s GHG reduction mandate.
• Support a more participatory role for business in regulatory processes so as to promote a better understanding of rate structures upon business operations.
• Support federal legislation to provide long-term storage solutions for nuclear waste.
• Support federal and state regulatory and legislative efforts support rates and fees that ensure the equitable distribution of costs among all users of the utility infrastructure.
• Support federal and state regulatory and legislative efforts to find long-term market reform solutions that will result in just and reasonable rates for customers, continued electric system reliability and consumer protections, and the viability of California’s regulated, investor-owned utilities.
• Support efforts to ensure new transmission and distribution capacity in order to provide reliability.
• Support cost effective demand-side management programs, including energy efficiency and energy conservation programs, to enable customers and businesses to manage energy use and costs.
• Support the continued ability of public agencies to contract with the private sector for the purchase of goods and services provided by electric, gas, and telecommunications industries.
• Support increased supply of emissions credits into the RECLAIM Program, and enact other reforms to reduce the price of RECLAIM Trading Credits (RTC’s).
• Support the construction of new sources of electric generation with measures to create additional Emission Reduction Credits (EMC’s), (i.e. NOx, PM) for offsets to accommodate these sources and allow for enhanced business growth within the South Coast Air Quality Management District region.
• Support a state of the art telecommunications network in Orange County, meeting the needs of residents and businesses, while opposing municipal “third tier” regulation (e.g., imposition of local franchise requirements), which slows the implementation of network infrastructure and increases consumers’ cost for telecommunications services.
• Oppose governmental attempts to enter into public service enterprises in which the private sector is currently engaged unless a compelling and necessary public interest can be demonstrated and is currently unmet.
The Greater Irvine Chamber supports a more participatory role for business in regulatory processes so as to promote a better understanding of rate structures upon business operations.
Natural Gas
Deregulation of natural gas at the wellhead began when Congress passed the Natural Gas Policy Act of 1978. This legislation ended federal control over the wellhead price of “new” gas on January 1, 1985, but kept in place price controls for gas produced from wells drilled prior to 1977. In 1989, the Natural Gas Wellhead Decontrol Act lifted all remaining federal wellhead price controls on natural gas. Since then, the price of natural gas all across the United States has been subject to market forces, rising and falling with changes in supply and demand. In this competitive market, the price of natural gas is set between all buyers (including industrial users, power generators, marketers and gas utilities like The Gas Company) and all sellers (including independent producers and major oil and gas companies).

Demand for natural gas has continued to increase throughout the United States, but supply production pace with demand. According to the Energy Information Administration, demand for natural gas is increasing at more than three percent per year.

In Southern California, regional factors have also contributed to the increase in gas commodity prices: 1) high electric demand; 2) low hydropower production; 3) unplanned electric generation outages; and 4) the need to expand the transmission system into the region.

Experts in the industry believe natural gas resources are expansive and, to date, underdeveloped. Although the number of rigs drilling for natural gas declined during 1998 and 1999 due to a low return on investment for producers, this situation has now reversed, increasing the number of rigs significantly. New fields and new rigs will increase supply.

Natural gas infrastructure must be made ready to serve the increasing demands for electric generation and they must be able to offer generation the highest priority for service.

The Greater Irvine Chamber and its advocacy partners advocate national, state and local policies that support increased production with a reasonable rate of return on investment, provide adequate transmission and distribution infrastructure systems, and promote efficient use of energy.
Policy Objectives:

Wage issues have a direct impact on labor costs and the costs of doing business, and therefore a direct correlation to a business’ competitiveness. California has enacted policies and regulations that go well beyond federal protections for employees. This places California businesses at an economic disadvantage when competing globally with businesses from other states and has the potential to drive businesses to other states.

Positions:

- Support California’s conformity with federal overtime laws.
- Support realistic compliance to ergonomics issues.
- Support alternative schedule flexibility.
- The Greater Irvine Chamber supports efforts to keep California from exceeding federal laws for:
  - Minimum Wage
  - Exempt and non-exempt classifications
  - Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
  - Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) discrimination (age discrimination, sexual harassment, etc.)
- Support measures that encourage efficient, fair resolution of wage and employment disputes, and oppose measures that encourage needless, wasteful litigation.
- Support measures that establish and maintain a sound, efficiently operated unemployment insurance fund with fair and reasonable payouts.
- Oppose unwarranted intrusions by government agencies into the private workplace.
- Oppose measures that impose criminal or punitive sanctions on employers for non-malicious conduct in the employer-employee relationship.
- Oppose mandating wages such as Prevailing Wage, which restrict open and fair competition at lowest cost.
- Oppose the elimination or curtailment of secret ballots in union elections and any related measures to do so such as “Card Check.”

Background:

Public policies and regulatory climates can either boost or negatively impact the ability of California’s businesses to compete locally, nationally, and globally. In considering public policies and regulations impacting the workplace, it is important for decision makers and regulators to be mindful of the ramifications of their decisions for business owners in California who are striving to remain competitive in the global marketplace.
Infrastructure

WATER, WASTEWATER, URBAN RUNOFF & STORMWATER

Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber supports clean, adequate and reliable cost-effective water supplies and wastewater treatment to support the many needs of economic growth in Southern California.

Positions:

• Support development of cost-effective, innovative and resilient water supplies that achieve greater water reliability for Southern California and the greater Irvine community, including supporting legislation, policies and locally-sponsored projects related to water marketing, voluntary water transfers, development of groundwater resources, water use efficiency and conservation, and water recycling.

• Support accelerated development of a secure and reliable alternative conveyance system (the California WaterFix) in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta that achieves the co-equal goals of Delta ecosystem restoration and improved water supply reliability. The alternative conveyance system should improve water supply reliability and water quality of imported water supplies important to the majority of California, including Orange County.

• Support beneficiary pays principles in water and wastewater infrastructure funding and oppose statewide user fees or taxes on water or wastewater services.

• Support state and federal water and wastewater infrastructure funding, including funding for improvements in water quality and salinity control. State and federal water and wastewater infrastructure funding should be distributed based on a competitive basis or by formulas which are equitable to ensure Orange County receives its fair share.

• Support regional water and wastewater projects that are cost-effective and needed, if the projects are funded by state or federal money and/or by the local agencies who need, are benefited by, and want to pay for the improvements. A local agency who does not need or whose customers are not benefited by a project should not be required to pay for that project.

• Support legislation, projects and funding to expand cost-effective groundwater and surface water storage to improve water reliability within California and the greater Irvine area.

• Support expanded use and storage of recycled water supplies, both potable and non-potable and statewide, including potable reuse projects like the Final Expansion of the Groundwater Replenishment System and recycled water storage projects like the Syphon Reservoir Improvement Project.

• Support Orange County water agency development of drought resilient and emergency water supplies, including investments in banked water, to ensure sufficient amounts of water are available to Orange County during drought or water shortages.

• Support voluntary water district consolidations which lead to greater management efficiencies where the consolidation does not result in a cross subsidy between existing ratepayers and the ratepayers of the consolidating agency.

• Support ongoing maintenance of water and sewer pipelines and facilities and other local infrastructure, encouraging sound financial management by local agencies to provide for infrastructure maintenance and replacement needs.

• Support science-based and smart regulation of water and wastewater that allows for the proper maintenance and management of water and wastewater resources and facilities.
Infrastructure

WATER, WASTEWATER, URBAN RUNOFF & STORMWATER

...continued

- Support cost-effective watershed protection projects within the San Diego Creek watershed, including the operation of the San Joaquin Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary and Natural Treatment System that provide beneficial treatment of urban runoff within the greater Irvine community and provide water quality, habitat, and environmental benefits to the San Diego Creek and the Upper Newport Bay. Oppose the imposition of greater federal and state regulation on such projects.
- Support groundwater treatment projects by local agencies that protect Orange County’s water supplies, including the Irvine Ranch Water District’s Deep Aquifer Treatment System Project and the Irvine Desalter Project.
- Support stormwater and flood control protection of Orange County residents and businesses, including the Santa Ana River Mainstem project and Prado Dam.

Background:

California’s economy, jobs and water are inexorably linked. Job growth cannot continue without sufficient water supplies to support the economy. Commerce and industry depends on the availability of a safe, reliable and affordable water. Toward that end, the Greater Irvine Chamber serves as a resource for educating its members, elected and appointed officials and the public at large about projects that will address this need.

The vast majority of California is highly dependent upon imported water supplies from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta and the Colorado River. In Orange County, nearly fifty percent of the water utilized in Orange County is imported. Within the greater Irvine area, that percentage is far less—at approximately fifteen percent—because of the community’s investment in cost-effective alternative water supplies. These investments have benefited the greater Irvine area through increased water supply reliability and low water rates.

The Greater Irvine Chamber therefore supports activities leading to a cost effective, fair, timely, comprehensive and implementable long-term solution to water challenges within Orange County and the state. The Greater Irvine Chamber also recognizes the need for cost effective and prudent investments in wastewater, which are important for public health and safety.

The Greater Irvine Chamber recognizes the importance of stormwater and flood protection to Orange County residents and businesses, and supports the entire Santa Ana River Mainstem Project as originally planned. In the event of a major flood, the Corps of Engineers estimates that this project could save more than 3,000 lives, prevent economic losses of more than $14 billion in Orange County, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, and save millions of dollars across Southern California in mandated federal flood insurance costs.

Continued investment in water, wastewater, stormwater and flood protection infrastructure, and the setting aside of funds to ensure the replacement of such infrastructure, is important for Orange County’s economy and necessary to ensure the continuation of the high quality of life found within our region.
Legislative Issues

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION

Policy Objectives:

The Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce supports a balanced compensation system that efficiently provides timely and fair benefits to injured workers and minimizes administrative and frictional costs to employers.

Positions:

• Support for competitive workers’ compensation premiums with protections for employers from carrier insolvency.
• Support for controlled claims costs through continued reforms, including:
  − The elimination of fraud
  − Reduced or eliminated “frictional” costs for litigation on work-related injuries/illness, medical/ legal exams, etc.
  − Realistic permanent disability ratings through a clear, concise and objective measuring tool such as the RAND report.
  − Support for employer protections against double jeopardy:
    − The closure of loopholes which allow employees to litigate worker’s compensation claims issues in other venues
    − Allowing employers to make, and apply equally to their workforce, bonafide employment decisions, without fear of litigation due to the disability status of certain workers.

Background:

By the late 1980s, California’s workers’ compensation system was flawed. Employers paid some of the highest premiums in the country, yet legitimately injured employees received benefits below those in many other states. The system was rife with excessive litigation, waste, abuse and fraud. The system was also cited as a major cause for business relocation to other states and a chief reason why companies in other areas choose not to locate or expand in California. Comprehensive reform measures implemented in 1990 and 1993 helped improve and stem the tide of businesses leaving the state.

Those earlier reforms, however, did not last. By 2004, California employers were facing prohibitive premium increases and workers were receiving some of the lowest payouts in the country.

True long-term savings in workers’ compensation will come from continuing reform efforts — eliminating the incentives for costly litigation, controlling medical costs, and returning injured workers to productive employment as quickly as possible — and the continuing development of new products, such as 24-hour care, to meet workers’ compensation needs.
Legislative Issues

WORKFORCE PREPAREDNESS

Policy Objectives:

Increase awareness among the technical and professional employees, in the labor market, of employment opportunities within partner / sponsor companies. Increase the communications on labor market needs between the private sector and educational institutions. Continue development of employment and training systems based on employer needs and market data.

Positions:

- Innovate and support strategies and programs that allow the business community to communicate labor needs and trends to stakeholders in the educational process.
- Support strategies and programs that encourage technical curriculum development in high schools and community colleges.
- Support a strong education system at all levels with statewide, globally competitive academic and performance-based standards emphasizing English language capability, rigorous coursework and practical workplace skills.
- Support collaboration between community colleges, occupation training programs, and programs for continuing education involved in job training to develop training programs closely linked to employer and labor market needs.

Background:

Irvine, as well as Orange County and most metro areas in the United States, is experiencing shortages in technical and professional employees. The shortage is greatest in the Information technology area. Chamber members who are partners in Destination Irvine have stated that this is the biggest problem facing their operations today. The Destination Irvine Workforce Committee is working with these companies to assist with this problem.
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