

Executive Summary

**FORT WORTH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
2009 STATE POLICY POSITIONS**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce supports increased funding of the Texas Enterprise Fund, a statewide economic development incentive program created by the 78th Legislature. The Texas Enterprise fund has a successful record of stimulating job creation, encouraging infrastructure development, attracting capital investment and providing for job skills training.

The chamber supports local control of economic development incentive programs that are financed with local revenue. The Texas Economic Development Act, enacted in 2001, has resulted in significant business development in Fort Worth and is projected to create an estimated 200,000 jobs and increase state general revenue by \$4 billion. We support the continued implementation of the Texas Economic Development Act until December 31, 2013, to attract jobs and capital intensive industries to the Fort Worth area and to the state.

The chamber supports the Emerging Technology Fund and associated Regional Centers for Innovation and Commercialization to ensure future employment of Texans through technology research, development, commercialization and start-up incubation.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Air Quality

The Fort Worth Chamber urges the Legislature to fully appropriate all funds collected for The Texas Commission of Environmental Quality's (TCEQ) Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP) and the Low Income Repair and Assistance Program (LIRAP) for the continued reduction of mobile source emissions and the achievement of compliance with federal air quality standards. The chamber also urges the Legislature to continue to provide for a targeted public information campaign addressing public awareness of air quality issues.

Water

The Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce supports Texas' statewide water plan, keeping the proposed plan intact during the legislative session and opposing any legislation removing any water management strategies from this plan. Additionally, the chamber specifically supports strategies and elements of this plan found in SB3 from the 80th Legislative Session, including increased conservation, reuse and recycle projects, connection of existing supplies and development of needed new sources of water, including reservoirs.

TRANSPORTATION

We urge the legislature to reverse current biennial legislative diversion of transportation resources to non-transportation uses.

The Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce supports legislative appropriations to the Texas Mobility Fund. The fund provides the state with a creative mechanism to substantially leverage transportation dollars that will enable the Fort Worth and Tarrant County area and the D/FW Metroplex to aggressively pursue essential transportation projects including additional roadway capacity, the development of a regional commuter rail system and improvements in freight mobility.

The chamber urges the legislature to take action that would allow the motor fuels tax to adjust according to economic trends by tying the rate to an appropriate economic index.

The chamber supports achieving a seamless system of rail transit services throughout the region by utilizing a metropolitan area's ability to call public referendums to consider transportation taxes and fees for regional transportation investment.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The chamber urges the legislature to provide adequate and equitable funding for school districts and the continuance of Texas' accountability and assessment systems in education as well as support measures to decrease dropout rates in all Texas schools. The chamber supports initiatives to expand and improve the quality of early care and education opportunities.

The chamber supports the development of additional comprehensive Tier 1 universities. The chamber urges state support for scholarship and financial aid programs which increase access to public and private higher education opportunities.

The chamber supports the continuation and enhancement of the Skills Development Fund, to include trade and technical training for Texas' high wage, high growth industries. The Skills Development Program, administered by the Texas Workforce Commission, supports local economic development and allows employers and Tarrant County College to work in partnership to effectively address local job training needs.

The chamber also supports maximum funding for the TEXAS Grant Program for eligible students, the restoration of Tuition Equalization Grant Program, and further funding of the B-On-Time Loan Program.

HEALTHCARE

The Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce believes that affordable access to healthcare is a strong component in recruiting businesses to our area. Healthcare providers and health-related companies are large employers, and their services ensure the community maintains a vital, healthy workforce needed to attract economic development. In addition, the Chamber supports legislative efforts to reduce the number of uninsured and underinsured.

The Chamber also supports a pilot program designed around moving healthcare delivery from a county-based model to a regional, multi-county approach in order to ensure the availability of appropriate funding and infrastructure in key areas including trauma, intensive and specialty care, burn and emergency preparedness. Finally the chamber supports the availability of an adequate healthcare workforce by restoring state-funded graduate medical education (GME) for medical residents and by providing increased funding to nursing institutions.