

2015 – 2016

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS &
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**



MISSION AND PURPOSE

The mission of the Roseburg Area Chamber of Commerce through its government affairs division is to represent and protect the interests of the Douglas County business community. To this end, the chamber monitors issues and activities of local, state and federal government and, when appropriate, takes positions of support or opposition on behalf of business. In further pursuit of the most business-friendly environment possible, the chamber will, solicit pro-business, chamber-friendly candidates to serve on commissions and run for public office. The RACC board of directors will endorse candidates for public office when it determines the mission of the chamber will be best served by said candidates election to office.

The chamber weighs in on a number of business issues. The following are the public affairs and legislative initiatives of greatest interest to the Roseburg Area Chamber in 2015—2016:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC AFFAIRS ISSUES

General

- Foster a business-friendly, collaborative environment and open communications among and between the RACC, its members and the business community and local government entities.
- Monitor, advocate and communicate about tax, license and fiscal policy issues that affect the RACC membership and the general business community.

County/City Specifics

- *Transportation Infrastructure*
Transportation infrastructure funding is critical to economic development in our community, and as such is a major priority of the RACC. We will research local transportation infrastructure proposals and projects and actively support those deemed beneficial to local business and commerce.
- *Economic Development*
The RACC will support local initiatives that facilitate economic growth and development for Douglas County. The RACC will work cooperatively with community partners, local governments and other institutions and organizations to improve Roseburg and Douglas County's competitiveness in attracting new jobs and growing community investment. We will support local initiatives that reduce the costs of job creation. It is also our commitment to ensure home-grown businesses have no reason to look elsewhere when considering expansion and that prospective businesses will find Douglas County an unquestionable first choice. We must streamline our development process and ensure our standards for development are reasonable.
- *Local Transient Lodging Tax Funds*
The RACC will continue to monitor the city's use of transient lodging tax dollars not distributed to the RACC under contract for visitor services to ensure they are used to effectively promote tourism in accordance with Oregon law. The RACC will monitor (and advocate for its business members) any attempt to increase existing local transient lodging tax or create new countywide tax.

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- *Budget Priorities/Fiscal Responsibility/Government Efficiency*
The RACC believes each local government entity should maintain a general objective that expenditures not increase at rates greater than population and inflation. Exceptions would be made conditionally for capital improvement projects needed for infrastructure. Taxes should be used equitably to provide services and programs that benefit economic growth and the health and welfare of citizens. All levels of local government must be prepared to prioritize their needs to prepare for a future that holds the potential for less state/federal financial support. Decision-making processes and policies should consider impact on private-sector job creation or private-sector job elimination.

City Specifics

- *Transportation System Development Charges (SDCs)*
The RACC will monitor the city's transportation SDCs to ensure 2014 reduction remains in effect.
- *Other System Development Charges (SDCs)*
The RACC will monitor and potentially weigh-in on the city's sewer, water, storm water and parks system development charges.
- *Building Dept/Permitting*
The RACC would support efforts by the city to bring building department back to the city to ensure more efficient and timely review, determinations and issuances of building and related permits.
- *Urban Growth Boundary Expansion (UGB)*
The RACC will continue to support UGB expansion as it relates to business, commercial and industrial growth and development.

STATE LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS ISSUES

By and through its professional staff, with the support of an active Government Affairs Team, the RACC will promote and enhance mutually beneficial relations among its members, the business community and the Douglas County legislative delegation in order to address the following:

- *Natural Resources/Forest Management and Timber Harvest*
The RACC will advocate for and support increased timber production on state-held lands. As federal payments diminish and ultimately cease, the need for proper forest management that allows for harvest and reforestation is imperative to the economic growth and sustainability of our community. RACC will work with local, state and federal officials and entities, business and timber-industry leaders to implement the BLM's desired alternative of the Western Oregon Plan Revision.

- *Employment*

RACC would support legislation to remove the 10-hour daily overtime statute for manufacturers; legislation reforming key elements of Oregon's family leave law so it is in alignment with federal regulations; legislation protecting confidential investigation materials in personnel files from inspection by employee. Additionally, the chamber supports legislation that would strengthen provisions for denial of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits for workplace misconduct. The chamber continues to back legislation that would support an employer's right to apply and enforce zero-tolerance workplace drug policies.

RACC will oppose legislation that would place regulatory burden on employers, including the expansion of mandated unpaid leave opportunities including potential mandated paid-family-leave legislation, paid for either by employee or employer, mandated employer-paid medical leave for all employees in the state of Oregon and/or further expansion of other mandated paid leaves. RACC opposes any legislation expanding the use of UI benefits beyond intended use, including legislative "sweeps" of UI funds or UI funds for striking workers or employees on family or medical leave.

On January 1, 2015, Oregon's minimum wage increased to \$9.25. The annual automatic increase in Oregon's minimum wage is based on the Portland CPI. The RACC will support options for reform and relief including tying the annual increase to a regional formula, the creation of a youth employment plan for 16-18 year olds or a "training stipend" to name a few. The RACC opposes any proposed legislation to further increase Oregon's minimum wage beyond current rate.

RACC would oppose legislation increasing Oregon OSHA penalties and potential legislation mandating a blanket ergonomic standard for Oregon employers; legislation that would weaken or undermine the Oregon Supreme Court's decision in *Emerald Steel v. BOLI*; or any legislation that would expand employer liability through new and/or expanded protected classes and activities.

RACC opposes legislation that would expand prevailing wage law, especially to private construction, because of potential damage to the economy and job creation.

- *Transportation Infrastructure Funding*

The RACC will consider and support proposals that increase state funding allocations for road infrastructure needs. There is currently a significant funding gap for road infrastructure needs across the state. RACC will support, endorse and aggressively advocate for funding for current and future transportation and transportation infrastructure projects deemed important to business and commerce. RACC would support legislation reforming ODOT's permitting procedures for access to state highways.

- *Environment/Energy*

RACC supports legislation or policy suspending new or expanded environmental and energy regulatory programs and efforts to streamline existing programs. RACC is also supportive of legislation that would retain or expand the Oregon Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC).

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RACC would oppose legislation creating a new layer of approvals/permitting with a state EIS program and any legislation increasing maximum penalties imposed by Oregon DEQ. RACC would oppose any effort to remove sunset and make permanent 2009 legislation authorizing DEQ's adoption of severe carbon intensity standards and/or any legislation linking the state's procurement of goods and services to greenhouse gas production of materials, transportation and manufacturing.

- *Workforce Development*

The RACC will support initiatives that positively influence the quality of our workforce. These include initiatives to retrain dislocated and existing workers to improve their job skills; fund local business and industry seeking to expand workforce through training; programs focused on preparing youth for the workforce with marketable skills that employers find desirable (including "soft skills"); identifying current and future needs of the local business community and supporting a state and local workforce development system (including K-12 and higher ed) that meets those needs. RACC would support legislation targeted workforce investments in high-demand areas that generate high-wage career opportunities vital to economic development such as manufacturing and engineering.

- *Transient Lodging Tax Funds*

The RACC will oppose any attempt to repeal the state of Oregon's 2003 Transient Lodging Tax law.

- *State Budget Priorities/Fiscal Responsibility/Government Efficiency*

The chamber continues to support any legislation that would repeal or sunset Measures 66 and 67; reducing personal income tax rates applied to capital gains; business tax credits that promote economic development and job creation. The RACC would oppose proposed M66 or M67-like legislation or measures. RACC would support legislation requiring that all Department of Revenue and county property appraisers' valuations of private property comply with Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal practice. RACC supports PERS reform legislation that is fair, equitable and sustainable for all Oregonians.

The use of taxes should be fair and equitable in providing services and programs that benefit economic growth and the health and welfare of citizens. The RACC will support incentives to encourage government mergers and consolidations at all levels; eliminating duplication of services and performance audits to determine the effectiveness of programs. Spending decisions must be prioritized in order for sustainable tax relief. Key assets for economic growth, such as funding for roads and workforce education and training should be maintained and even enhanced where private sector economic activity will be bolstered. Decision-making processes and policies should consider impact on private-sector job creation or private-sector job elimination.

- *Education Funding*

The RACC will continue to support educational programs and proposals (both K-12 and higher education) that will train the workforce to meet the current and future needs of our area's private sector. RACC will continue to advocate for stable and secure funding of Oregon's education system. (See Workforce Development)

- *Health Care*

The chamber would oppose legislation that would increase cost shift from public programs to private payers in order to cover the significant budget shortfall for the state of Oregon's Medicaid programs; legislation that would in any way change the way public employee health benefits are provided if it leads to additional cost shifting; or, any legislation proposing additional health care mandates not based on medical necessity.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS ISSUES

By and through its professional staff with the support of an organized and active Government Affairs Team, the RACC will promote and enhance mutually beneficial relations among its members, the business community and the Oregon Congressional Delegation in order to successfully advocate on behalf of the following:

- *Natural Resources/Forest Management and Timber Harvest*

RACC will continue to advocate for effective forest management to include timber harvest on federal land. RACC will work with local, state and federal officials and entities, business and timber-industry leaders toward the implementation of the BLM's desired alternative of the Western Oregon Plan Revision. As federal payments will diminish and ultimately cease, the need for proper forest management that allows for harvest is imperative to the economic growth and sustainability of our community. RACC will join community partners, local government and state officials in support of the federally-proposed O&C Trust, Conversation & Jobs Act—HR 1526 or better.

Additionally, RACC will continue to support local efforts (i.e. Communities for Healthy Forests) to effect changes in federal administrative rules to require prompt assessment, fuels reduction and restoration of forests on federal lands after a fire or other catastrophic event.

The RACC will oppose proposed federal legislation or administrative rules that would adversely affect the development and/or growth of our region's biomass energy industry.

- *Transportation Infrastructure / Highway Trust Fund*

To effectively facilitate the development and funding of critical transportation infrastructure priorities, the RACC will promote partnerships among its members and the business community, local governments and ODOT. The RACC will call upon our federal delegates to continue to see effective solutions to all aspects of transportation funding and, specifically, the reauthorization of any potential federal highway or transportation infrastructure funding or bill.

RACC would support passage of a modest, phased-in increase of the federal gas tax, indexed to inflation, to fully fund the Highway Trust Fund. The Highway Trust Fund is dedicated to maintaining and modernizing our surface transportation infrastructure, primarily funded through revenues from the federal gas tax, which has not been increased for over twenty years. These revenues have gradually fallen short of what is needed to address transportation

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needs as Americans are driving less and vehicles are more fuel-efficient. In July 2014, Congress enacted temporary measures to provide adequate funding through May 2015. However, without additional action, the Highway Trust Fund will again face bankruptcy. Furthermore, it will need nearly \$100 billion in new revenues to simply maintain current spending through 2020. According to the State of Oregon, the state receives over half a billion dollars each year from the Highway Trust Fund, which is the only source of funding for new construction projects that preserve and improve our state highway system.

- *Card Check (proposed as “The Employee Free Choice Act”)*
The RACC previously opposed the Employee Free Choice Act as it would eliminate the secret ballot currently used to determine if unions will represent employees in the workplace and could expose employees to coercion and intimidation. One-sided increases conflict with any sense of fairness or balance. The RACC has no position on whether unions are of benefit to employees or not; that decision is up to employees.. While this is not a current or anticipated issue for 2015-16, the chamber’s position remains.
- *Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im)*
RACC would support a long-term reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank to ensure continued competitiveness of American exporters (in 2014 Congress extended the bank’s reauthorization until June 2015). The Export-Import Bank is a small federal agency that provides financing to U.S. companies, including small and medium-sized businesses, to sell their products in global markets. Without it, many small businesses would lose out to their overseas competitors, many of which are backed by export credit agencies 18 times the size of the U.S. Ex-Im Bank. In today’s highly competitive markets, access to financing provided by the Ex-Im Bank often determines which firm—from which country—gets the sale. Its positive impact on American business is undeniable. In fiscal year 2013, it provided financing or guarantees for \$37.4 billion in U.S. exports, thereby supporting more than 200,000 American jobs. Nearly 90%, or 3,413, of Ex-Im’s transactions supported U.S. small businesses in 2013. In Oregon, the Ex-Im Bank supported over \$1 billion in exports from 88 companies.
- *Immigration Reform*
RACC would support sensible, comprehensive federal immigration reform that 1) reforms the visa system for both low and high-skilled workers, 2) creates a mandatory national worker verification system, 3) creates a path to legalization for the over 11 million undocumented workers currently in the United States, and 4) secures the borders. RACC believes passage of such legislation is necessary to give the United States and U.S. businesses an immigration system necessary to remain competitive in the global economy. Our current immigration system is not serving the interests of our economy, our businesses, our workers, or our collective security. Without immediate reform, America will not be able to compete for the world’s best talent, hardest workers, or biggest dreamers. And, we will be unable to sustain vital programs for the elderly and needy without the additional workers—both low-skilled and high-skilled—necessary to grow our economy and tax base.



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