



**TO: Chamber's Board of Directors**

**FROM: Chamber's Policy Council**

**SUBJECT: 2021 Federal Legislative Agenda**

**STATUS: ADOPTED**

**DATE: February 25, 2021**

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**RECOMMENDATION: Support the following federal legislative priorities:**

**STATEMENT:**

For 43 years, the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce has traveled to Washington, D.C., to promote and drive important initiatives that benefit San Antonio's business community and ensure the city remains the best place to live, work, and play.

During the 117th Congress, the Chamber will support legislation and appropriations for: improved infrastructure; public and higher education; improved access and affordability of healthcare, as well as sustaining and growing military missions.

Additionally, the Chamber will support direct, flexible funding assistance to cities dealing with the ongoing health response and economic community impacts and relief assistance for small businesses and hard-hit industries, such as restaurants and bars, tourism and hospitality businesses, healthcare providers and schools.

## The Chamber –

### GENERAL BUSINESS

- Supports legislation that addresses businesses' and other affected entities' concerns about liability protections while operating during a pandemic. Any such liability protections should be retroactive to December 2019 so long as reasonable efforts were taken to comply with applicable government standards and public health guidance.
- Supports continued CARES ACT funding through 2022 to help businesses through COVID-19 relief.
- Supports funding to expand broadband infrastructure and increased access for all residents to affordable internet services, devices, and digital literacy.
- Supports the Small Business Audit Correction Act which provides relief to privately held, non-custody brokers and dealers that are in good standing from certain requirements under title 1 of Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, and for other purposes.
- Opposes labor provisions that would inhibit economic growth and job creation, such as the Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act), which would be costly for businesses and strip employees of critical rights and flexible work opportunities.
- Opposes the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) proposed revision to the "estimated cost of the assistance" disaster declaration factor that it uses to evaluate a Governor's request for a major disaster under the Public Assistance Program.
- Opposes the \$15 federal minimum wage increase, given the disruptive impacts on employers, particularly small businesses, as well as negative effects on the job opportunities for first time and lower skilled workers.

### **AEROSPACE:**

*The Chamber supports one of the top priorities of the National Defense Strategy, as echoed by senior military officials, to rebuild military readiness, which involves Congress encouraging the Department of Defense (DoD) to continue to seek new Public Private Partnerships and protect existing ones. Additionally, we support Congress prioritizing infrastructure, and workforce and training programs that enhance aerospace companies' ability to successfully partner with DoD and commercial companies to modernize global fleets and continue to incentivize industry investment in San Antonio becoming a global expert in aircraft and engine modernization.*

- Supports robust public-private partnerships between the DoD and the private sector on sustainment of aircraft and engines, thereby leveraging decades of expertise and efficiency to ensure continued military readiness and long-term cost savings to the

United States Government and taxpayers.

- Supports the retention and extension of aircraft and engine maintenance workloads in San Antonio.
- Supports efforts to establish/expand funding mechanisms for transportation infrastructure, including industrial airport facilities such as Kelly Field that serve as critical and strategic assets for industry, trade, and our military, as well as for disaster response and emergency management.
- Supports securing full funding for the aviation technicians and pilot education programs (\$5 million each) as part of the FY 2021 appropriations process.
- Supports authorizing and appropriating additional funding to improve Department of Defense (DoD) military readiness rates and reduce the maintenance backlog in tactical aviation in our military services.
- Supports additional engineering, maintenance, and modification work to support the DoD, military missions, and commercial aviation industrial work in San Antonio, thereby leveraging San Antonio's excellent capability, capacity, and competitive rates.

### **CYBERSECURITY:**

*The Chamber supports federal programs that benefit the existing public, private, and non-profit cybersecurity-related organizations in San Antonio. This includes legislation and funding increases for growing federal cyber partners located in San Antonio and increased programs for education and training secondary, post-secondary, and professional curricula. Also, initiatives are needed that provide additional emphasis and funding for securing infrastructure and facilitating vital information sharing. Finally, we support the further implementation and enforcement of recent acquisition and supply chain reform legislation.*

- Supports critical cybersecurity efforts through:
  - Increased funding to house the new 16AF missions, and consistent funding for federal partners in San Antonio, including F.B.I, U.S. Secret Service, and NSA in Texas.
  - Securing Funding from:
    - The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grants such as the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) and the Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attack (CCTA); and adjusting the UASI formula to properly account for the national security risk profile of San Antonio.
    - The DHS Cyber Incident Response Teams Act of 2018

- The HR 1344 State Cyber Resilience Act
  - Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment for Supplier Development DFARS/NIST Cybersecurity Training
  - Department of Defense – Office of Economic Adjustment for compatible land use projects through Joint Land Use studies
- Supports enhanced information sharing and strengthening, protecting, and funding (through cybersecurity practices and other means) of critical infrastructure, including:
  - Chemical; communications; commercial facilities; critical manufacturing; dams; defense industrial base; emergency services; energy; financial services; food and agriculture; government facilities; healthcare and public health; information technology; nuclear reactors; materials; and waste; transportation; water and wastewater; as well as elections
- Supports implementing acquisition reform and strengthening national security through:
  - The Federal Acquisition Supply Chain Security Act of 2018;
  - Integrating Section 809 panel's recommendations into the Federal government;
  - Enforcing the Data Breach Prevention and Compensation Act; and
  - The Evaluation of Agile or Iterative Development of Cyber Tools and Applications, which directs CYBERCOM to conduct an evaluation of alternative methods for developing, acquiring, and maintaining software-based cyber tools and applications for DoD.
- Supports modernizing government information technology by:
  - Fully funding the Army Futures Command in Austin, Texas;
  - Continuing to implement and fund the Modernizing Government Technology (MGT) Act; and
  - Incentivizing federal agencies and military partners to seek solutions beyond the Beltway.
- Supports creating and funding a cybersecurity/national security infrastructure investment zone in San Antonio to serve as a national cyber innovation and research corridor to these efforts from the regional ecosystem, including the University of Texas Board of Regents and Port San Antonio.

- Supports funding to develop a National Standard for Secondary Education Cybersecurity Curriculum.

## **EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:**

### **Public Education**

*The Chamber supports federal programs that benefit the diverse population of 5.4 million students in the Texas public school system including funding for early learning programs, full access to services for students with special educational needs, sufficient grant funding, and adequate resources to support school safety initiatives.*

- Supports comprehensive infrastructure funding that includes public schools and high-speed broadband access expansion.
- Supports quality universal full day Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Education for all students (three and four years old) to include needed infrastructure to support these students.
- Supports improving flexibility in Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by allowing additional exceptions for efficiency, reduction of funds, and extraordinary circumstances.
- Supports adequate funding for implementation of the recommendations made in the Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety.
- Supports enhanced funding for:
  - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers,
  - Corporation for National and Community Service, and
  - Youth Mentoring Grant

### **Higher Education**

*The Chamber supports legislation that will help increase post-secondary education attainment through affordable, flexible access to high quality degrees and credentials aligned with workforce needs. Additionally, we support legislation that can facilitate collaborative partnerships to increase the number of post-secondary degrees and high-quality certificates in the community.*

- Supports Enhanced FY22 funding for our nation’s academic health centers through increased appropriations to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Health Research Services Administration (HRSA), the Department of Defense’s (DoD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP), and other related federal agencies, an action which will benefit health education, research, and patient care in San Antonio, the South Texas Border Region, and beyond.

- Supports preserving and enhancing the Federal Pell Grant program by:
  - Extending eligibility to short-term training programs;
  - Increasing the annual maximum amount;
  - Expanding eligibility to incarcerated students (“Second Chance Support”);  
and
  - Increasing lifetime eligibility to 14 semesters
  
- Supports increased funding for vital institutional aid programs that include:
  - Strengthening Institutions (Title III-A of the HEA) program
  - Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions
  - Historically Black Colleges and Universities
  - TRIO; and
  - GEAR UP
  
- Supports implementing policies, rules, and regulations that allow for the investment in successful workforce development programs such as:
  - Federal incentives to businesses that offer internships and apprenticeships;
  - Adult education and training programs;
  - Veteran training programs;
  - Expanded Opportunity Youth program funding; and
  - Educator development programs.

### Workforce Development

*The Chamber supports legislation that will help sustain an existing skilled labor pool, develop a talent pipeline of the future, and provide for the ability for industry partners and educators to collaborate on these issues that are critical to the success of the business community. This will allow key stakeholders in workforce development to create solutions for today’s challenges and strategize for tomorrow’s needs to ensure the business community has access to world-class talent.*

- Supports funding, technical assistance and other support services for new emerging workforce, education and training programs for youth, adults, and veterans such as the city of San Antonio’s Ready to Work program.

- Supports legislation that establishes a permanent solution allowing DACA participants to receive lawful permanent status and continue their contributions to the United States.

## **ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY:**

*The Chamber supports legislation that provides guidance and additional funding for nonattainment areas to reach and maintain attainment, as well as financial assistance to our San Antonio community members unable to pay their energy bills. Additionally, we support Congressional efforts and proposals to incentivize research, demonstration and deployment of evolving advanced technologies that will promote innovation and assist with net emissions reductions.*

- Supports additional funding and federal support for marginal nonattainment areas to reach and maintain attainment.
- Supports legislation that provides guidance/requires EPA to recognize the impact of transport, background ozone, as well as anthropogenic sources, on a region when promulgating the next ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS).
- Supports the EPA adoption of the Federal Clean Air Act (FCAA), §179B Demonstration State Implementation Plan (SIP) Revision.
- Supports Congressional efforts and proposals to incentivize research, demonstration and deployment of evolving advanced technologies that will promote innovation and assist with net emissions reductions.
- Supports carbon-reduction proposals that are resource-neutral, economy wide, and give San Antonio the flexibility to invest in and transition to low-and non-emitting technologies in a manner consistent with our community's priorities and the Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP).
- Supports additional federal funding for programs such as the Low-Income Housing Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as it provides invaluable support and financial assistance to our San Antonio community members unable to pay their energy bills.

## **HEALTHCARE:**

*The Chamber supports legislation to increase access to healthcare, including Congressional action for telehealth, promotion of vaccinations and immunizations, the protection of the 340B Drug Pricing Program, and extension of the 1115 Texas Transformation Waiver. Additionally, we support education and policies and program funding to effectively address health concerns in our community.*

- Supports protecting the 340B Drug Pricing Program.
- Supports Congressional action for telehealth.
- Supports the extension and renewal of the 1115 Texas Transformation Waiver.
- Supports regulatory action that promotes the importance of vaccinations and immunizations in the United States.
- Supports improving access to mental health crisis prevention and trauma-informed care education.
- Supports policies and programs to prevent domestic violence. Furthermore, support funding for prevention education and intervention services to effectively address these issues in our community.
- Supports increased funding for prevention and treatment of substance use disorders.
- Supports legislation encouraging greater regulatory and oversight of e-cigarettes and vaping products.

## **HOUSING:**

*The Chamber supports increased and/or maintained federal funding to promote affordable housing through key housing and community development programs as well as the expansion of federal housing tools, such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program and Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD).*

- Supports increasing and/or maintaining funding for programs, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Programs, Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), CHOICE Neighborhoods, Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME) and other federal programs.
- Supports affordable housing, home ownership programs & foreclosure and eviction prevention programs.
- Supports Rental assistance for post-eviction moratorium.

## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE:**

*The Chamber supports legislation that promotes increased trade, partnerships, and infrastructure investment to facilitate implementation of the USMCA and to reduce any barriers to trade.*

- Supports reducing tariffs that are a barrier to trade.

- Supports seeking to rejoin Multilateral Agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- Supports the nomination and confirmation of all members to all vacancies of the Ex-Im Bank Board of Directors.
- Supports increased border and trade infrastructure to facilitate implementation of the USMCA.
- Supports practical business immigration procedures and options that promote increased trade and investment.

### **MILITARY:**

*The Chamber supports legislation that sustains military missions, enhances military value and resiliency, as well as supports Quality of Life efforts for Service Members and Families, such as: extending the term of Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSA) between military installations and surrounding communities to 20 years; allowing military lands under a long-term leases to receive important funding through the Defense Community and Infrastructure Program; supporting the Army's Secretarial Designee (SECDES) Program and streamlining billing and collection for civilian trauma provided under SECDES; as well as fully funding projects that are prioritized by our Joint Base San Antonio Commander through funding Military Construction (MILCON), Operations and Maintenance (O&M) and Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (FSRM). Such legislation reduces the cost of doing business for the military, provides important partnership opportunities, and ensures our community remains attractive for mission retention and growth.*

- Supports extending term of Intergovernmental Support Agreements between DoD installations and communities to 20 years.
- Supports amending eligibility of projects for awarding of Defense Community Infrastructure Program dollars in 2021 NDAA to include military lands under a long-term lease, when the infrastructure located on that lease provides support to the installation thereby enabling local/state public entities to support quality of life improvements including transportation, utilities, schools, and public building space on an installation.
- Supports the inclusion of language to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2021 Sec 703 to streamline billing/collection for civilian trauma patients treated at military treatment facilities (MTF) – specifically related to the Army's Secretarial Designee Program at Brooke Army Medical Center. The SECDES program gives BAMC the ability to treat critically injured patients who would not otherwise be eligible to receive care at a military treatment facility.

- Supports continued and increased funding of Impact Aid, which makes up a significant part of the total budgets for Lackland Independent School District (ISD), Ft. Sam Houston ISD, and Randolph Field ISD.
- Supports fully funding Joint Base San Antonio Military Construction (MILCON) program, as well as Operations and Maintenance (O&M) and Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (FSRM) funding in accordance with the recommendations and priorities determined by the Joint Base San Antonio Commander.
- Supports continuing advocacy efforts to grow future missions related to Space Force and United States Space Command.
- Support efforts for Federal-Recognized Sentinel Landscape Designation, a partnership between DoD, DOI, and USDA at the Federal level, that focuses on addressing land use compatibility, natural resource, and agricultural issues in large-scale landscapes around military training ranges.
- Supports holding Department of Defense 2022 Warrior Games in the City of San Antonio and work with Army Leadership to ensure support and collaboration of public and private business support.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

*The Chamber supports robust and sustainable funding levels for both highways and transit, as well as a correction to Texas's donor state status. With regard to transit, we support increases in various grant and formula programs for capital and operational costs, as well as additional assistance in addressing the challenges of the pandemic. In aviation, we support assistance related to COVID-19, increases in various grant programs, an increase in the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC), and legislation to secure direct, non-stop service to Reagan National Airport to/from San Antonio.*

### **Highways and Transit – Surface Transportation**

- Supports a federal transportation (infrastructure) initiative and/or the next federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill.
- Supports increased funding opportunities for operations and capital expenses in collaboration with local partners to advance multimodal transportation options as identified and supported by locally driven processes.
- Supports an increase in Capital Investment Grant funding and program limits, specifically within Small Starts.
- Supports extension of the Alternative Fuels Tax Credit.

- Supports increased funding for Bus and Bus Facilities within federal transit funding.
- Supports legislative language for the usage of alternative fuels as a transition toward a higher usage of electric vehicles as technology demonstrates usable range and capability.
- Supports continued supplemental support for public transit as COVID-19 recovery occurs.
- Supports monitoring and opposing actions and measures which would negatively impact the ability of VIA and the Advanced Transportation District to provide service to our customers and communities.

### Aviation

- Supports additional federal assistance for the entire aviation sector - to include airports - in response to the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the aviation industry.
- Supports promoting an aviation component to comprehensive infrastructure legislation that will provide supplemental funding sources to improve our nation's airport infrastructure and passenger experience.
- Supports an increase in Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding and greater flexibility for the use of AIP funds. Support raising or eliminating the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) cap of \$4.50.
- Supports Congressional changes to the Perimeter Rule and/or Slot Rule in order to secure a nonstop flight from San Antonio International Airport to Washington Reagan National Airport (SAT-DCA)."

### **TOURISM & HOSPITALITY:**

*The Chamber supports long-term investment in promoting and revitalizing the hospitality and tourism industry to create jobs and boost economic activity. More specifically, we support federal assistance for travel and tourism businesses to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, funding for U.S. Interstate Highway System, funding for maintenance of the national park system, and the protection of tourism and travel interests.*

- Supports federal assistance programs/funding for travel and tourism businesses to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and grow their businesses post-pandemic.
- Supports Travel Security & International Travel through:
  - Adequate funding and streamlining of the Customs and Entry Process

- Full adoption and implementation of the Real I.D. (specific type of DL that states need to have, was supposed to go into effect in October, but has been sidelined due to COVID-19)
  - Expansion of the Trusted Traveler Program
  - Efficient Visa Reforms and accessible Visa Waivers
  - Securing additional Open Skies agreements to provide additional access to international travelers
- Supports Brand USA.
  - Supports necessary funding for the U.S. Interstate Highway System, public transportation systems, and specifically the airline industry and airport system.
  - Supports sufficient funding for maintenance, construction, and staffing for the national park system.
  - Supports strong relationships and economic programs to support and increase travel between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.
  - Supports protection of Travel and Tourism Interests.

**WATER:**

*The Chamber of Commerce supports water resource policies that help improve resiliency, including restoring the ecosystem of urban creeks, which provides greenspace in the urban core. Additionally, we support legislation to assist with economic recovery from the pandemic, including financial assistance for low-income utility customers, incentives for water conservation, and federal investments in water infrastructure are critical to support our economic recovery from the pandemic.*

- Supports Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project.
- Supports assistance for Low-Income Utility Customers impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Supports Tax Exemption for Water Conservation Rebates Similar to the Electric Utilities Rebates.
- Supports continued funding for Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Projects.