



Media Release

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Chamber Alliance Sets “Right-Sized” 2017 Legislative Goals

CHARLEVOIX – Northern Michigan is a special part of the Great Lakes State with unique challenges and opportunities in its business community.

That’s why the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance will focus its 2017 legislative priorities on state and federal policies and programs that are specific to its region, to help businesses in rural areas continue contributing to Michigan’s robust economic comeback.

“Partners in the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance understand that communities outside Michigan’s major metropolitan areas have their own conditions where ‘one size does not fit all’ in terms of incentives and policies to help grow business in our region,” said Kent Wood, Director of Government Relations for the Alliance and the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce. “We will focus our efforts on right-sized solutions that take good ideas being used, or create new ideas, and shape them to work in our region.”

The major goal includes modifying or creating rural development and housing incentives that are compatible with Northern Michigan communities, including:

- Advocating for downtown development authorities and tax increment financing.
- Enhanced Brownfield redevelopment tools.
- Region specific job growth incentives.
- Regional workforce and “Missing Middle” housing incentives.
- Training and talent attraction programs and incentives.

- Less cumbersome Access to Capital programs.

Because sustained growth requires both private and public investment, the Alliance is also advocating for action on state infrastructure and education investment that helps northern Michigan compete in a global economy. Those include:

- Supporting outcomes of the 21st Century Infrastructure Commission that benefit northern Michigan or target rural communities, such as increasing infrastructure and access to high-speed broadband and fiber internet, and urging Congress to fund a new Soo Lock in Sault Ste. Marie.
- Defending northern Michigan communities from changes to Public Act 51 – the transportation funding formula that provides transportation revenue to local governments.
- Narrowing the gap in K-12 state education per pupil funding.
- Investing in our region's higher education institutions, including our community colleges.

Other topics important to improving Northern Michigan's overall business climate include state policies that:

- Protect state and federal funding for rural hospitals.
- Advocate for safe, reliable and affordable energy policy.
- Promote investment in tourism and agri-tourism industries.

The Alliance partners will emphasize to lawmakers that challenges to northern Michigan's business sector - and opportunities for growth and success – will need to be regional in nature so they can be equally effective in promoting business growth in rural areas of the state.

About the Alliance

The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance spans 14 counties and represents nearly 8,000 members of Northern Michigan's business community. It's composed of the Chambers of Commerce in Traverse City, Alpena, Benzie County, Cadillac, Charlevoix, Gaylord, Manistee and Petoskey and the Lake Superior Community

Partnership in Marquette County. Associate members include the chambers in Elk Rapids, Harbor Springs, Boyne Area, Cheboygan and East Jordan.