

# 2017 LEGISLATIVE AND REGIONAL AGENDA

Dear Chamber Members:



The 2017 legislative session brings the difficult task of creating the state's next two-year budget, at a time when Connecticut faces an ongoing, and significant, fiscal crisis. The Chamber nonetheless remains determined to help shape public policy that addresses the needs of our local community and creates a positive climate in which employees, cities and towns, as well as business and industry, may flourish. We present our 2017 Public Policy Agenda, which reflects several key points in achieving these goals. Your involvement, along with the work of the Public Policy Committee, our lobbyist Armando Paolino III of Paolino Public Affairs Corp., and our regional delegation, contributes to a unified and powerful voice advocating for the business interests of our members. A complete list of the region's legislators and Public Policy Committee members is available on the Chamber's website:  
[www.waterburychamber.com](http://www.waterburychamber.com).



Best Regards,  
Donald C. McPartland  
*Vice Chairman, Public Policy*  
*Waterbury Regional Chamber*  
*Moore, O'Brien & Foti*

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ADVOCACY IN 2016

- **Public Act 15-1, Sect. 25:** Creates a Spending Cap Commission to create definitions that will make the constitutional spending cap enforceable.
- **Public Act 16-114:** Establishes a committee, a manufacturing program catalog and partnerships between the Commissioner of Education and the manufacturing industry to encourage students to consider careers in manufacturing; also lowers barriers for qualified technical professionals to enter teaching with fair compensation.
- Defeated legislation proposing the nation's first paid family medical leave and a \$15/hour minimum wage.

## TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2017

### ***Improve the Business Climate in Connecticut End the Cycle of Crisis***

Connecticut has faced one budget crisis after another in the past several years, prompting the Malloy Administration to admit the state is "in a permanent state of fiscal crisis" and resulting in the two largest tax increases in state history. Current estimates project a \$5 billion shortfall in revenue over the next 4 years. The continuing fiscal instability has caused businesses to move out of the state in search of a more stable and predictable business climate. It is time to end this cycle of crisis by enacting measures toward budgetary and fiscal stability, while reducing the cost of government and of doing business here.

- Pass an enforceable Spending Cap by approving definitions for increase in inflation and personal income that look back over 5 years to smooth out volatility, and include all state spending other than debt service under the cap.

### ***In addition, state government should:***

- Establish a public-private partnership to address the cost of state government;
- Develop a long-term, comprehensive economic development strategy for the state;
- Convene a bi-annual statewide dialogue on the State of the State with the intention of developing a multi-year plan to strengthen the state economy and business climate;
- Reject proposals to bond operating expenses, and cap bonding at the 2016 level for six years;
- Focus on increasing productivity in service delivery and improve efficiencies, and
- Move from a defined-benefit retirement plan to defined contribution programs for state workers, increase the worker contribution rate to 5%, and make part-time state workers ineligible for retirement benefits;
- Require the House and Senate to vote on all state employee contracts.

## **SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES FOR 2017**

### ***Manufacturing: Investing in a key segment of the economy***

Connecticut still has regained only 80 percent of the jobs it lost during the recession, and the jobs it has gained pay lower wages than the ones they replace. Manufacturers pay significantly higher wages, provide benefits, and offer opportunities for career advancement. Every manufacturing job also spawns three to five new service-sector jobs. Legislative policy should recognize the leading role precision manufacturing can play in economic revitalization and invest in creating these jobs.

#### ***This should include:***

- Maintaining funding for vocational-technical schools and advanced manufacturing programs at Naugatuck Valley Community College and other community colleges;
- Maintaining funding for on-site apprentice training and development, and reviewing and updating apprenticeship supervisory work-site ratios for on-site apprentice training and development;
- Creating tax incentives for engineering and science students at Connecticut colleges and universities to accept employment in Connecticut upon graduation;
- Renewing the STEP Up and Small Business Express programs;
- Returning administration of Incumbent Worker Training Funds to regional workforce investment boards;
- Supporting tax policies that broadly encourage businesses and entrepreneurs to invest in job creation and apprenticeship, and
- Supporting initiatives of the Legislature's Manufacturing Caucus.

### ***Healthcare Issues***

- Convene a group of stakeholders to work with the state to produce a comprehensive plan to address the challenge of exponential growth in the Medicaid program;
- Establish a date to sunset the hospital provider tax and provide for full funding of Medicaid reimbursement obligations to ensure financial viability of our hospitals;
- Use the City of Waterbury's model for healthcare spending reform to save on state retiree healthcare costs;
- Place a two-year moratorium on creating new insurance mandates.

### ***General Labor Issues***

- Oppose expansion of workers' compensation benefits;
- Oppose new increases to the state's minimum wage, and
- Propose and approve legislation requiring companies that receive state contracts to hire Connecticut residents first.

## ***Regional Needs Requiring State & Federal Support***

- Support the expedited schedule for the Interstate 84 widening project through Waterbury, and support returning the widening of the I-84 Corridor to Danbury to federal priority status;
- Support a two-year suspension of costly unfunded state mandates;
- Support downtown Waterbury revitalization efforts, including the Waterbury Next initiative, repurposing bus stops to be more efficient and moving the system's pulse point from the Green;
- Maintain funding for evening bus service in the City of Waterbury, and approve matching funds needed to support bus service on Lakewood Road;
- Support UConn's efforts to increase its economic development presence in downtown Waterbury;
- Support adequate funding for public institutions of higher education, including NVCC & UConn Waterbury;
- Support streamlining program development and approval for all private colleges and universities in the state in order to expedite new program development, increase enrollments, and increase employment by leveraging online learning by all Connecticut-based, private higher-education institutions. This will support growth of this economic driver in Connecticut;
- Support Main Street Waterbury's efforts to revitalize the downtown central business district that include promoting mixed-use and transit-oriented development and market-rate housing, and the creation of an incubator space for young entrepreneurs; also support Connecticut Main Street Center and its efforts to revitalize downtown districts statewide;
- Support continued state investment in Brownfields remediation programs, including approving legislation to establish Brownfield Land Banks, and work with our federal delegation to ensure federal funding is available;
- Support Naugatuck's efforts to revitalize its downtown, including remediating and developing Parcels A, B and C and the relocated railroad station;
- Support Watertown economic development efforts to revitalize its downtown areas in Watertown and Oakville;
- Support the following initiatives, which can have a significant impact in improving the region's economic development:
  - The Waterbury Naugatuck River Greenway project;
  - A Multi-Modal Transportation Center and the Waterbury Rail Branch Line;
  - The Arts and Culture Collaborative of the Waterbury Region, and
  - The Mattatuck Museum's request for bonding to renovate and expand its historic building on the Waterbury Green.