

# Advocating for Business Interests

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When it comes to monitoring policy and advocating on behalf of business interests, your local Chamber of Commerce should be your go-to resource.

## ***Why does advocacy matter?***

When talking to business owners about the hurdles they face operating a successful business in today's environment, they almost always cite government regulation of some form. Policies that hinder growth and the difficulty navigating established regulations are the top frustrations for businesses as they build, expand, provide benefits for employees, pay taxes and adhere to a myriad of industry related regulations.

Policies, laws, and regulations made each day by governmental entities have a direct impact on how you conduct business. Whether it is industry specific regulation, taxation, workplace policy, insurance or healthcare mandates, the potential for laws to be passed that negatively impact your bottom line, product or employees is ever present. Our elected officials are given the responsibility to represent constituents – you – in their rule making process. We must therefore effectively communicate to lawmakers the concerns or support for issues pertaining to business so they fully understand the impact of the decisions they make.

## ***Why is advocacy the Chamber's role?***

By being a member of your local chamber of commerce you join numerous other businesses that are committed to the economic growth of your area. Collectively, chamber members represent a significant percentage of the local workforce creating a powerful voice when it comes to advocacy!

The direct access to industry experts gives the chamber of commerce a unique opportunity as collaborators to identify and vet issues important to the community. Because of this, elected and government officials recognize chambers across the nation as resources on issues affecting businesses and the citizens of their respective regions.

The broad range of business related topics requires chambers of commerce to follow a large scope of issues that are not necessarily industry specific. You will find your chamber at the table on your behalf discussing the issues that directly impact your day-to-day operations. Issues such as unemployment insurance, workers compensation, property rights, labor regulation, taxation, and workforce to name a few. Simultaneously, chambers communicate back to their members on those same issues to keep them informed and up-to-date on the legislative process.

Another important aspect of chamber advocacy efforts are the opportunities created for business leaders and community members to meet with candidates and hear from elected and government officials. Essentially, the goal of government is to create a safe and secure society that supports the

fundamental need of its citizens while also creating opportunities for people to grow and flourish. In this manner, the goals of government are similar to the goals of the chamber of commerce. By facilitating open and respectful dialogue we can help ensure policies enacted meet these goals in a responsible and transparent manner.

By partnering with businesses, non-profits and other organizations that work to develop the community, local chambers have access to a widespread grassroots network. The chamber uses this reach and influence to promote a strong business climate creating economic opportunity for people of the community.

***How can you help?***

**JOIN.** First and foremost, by joining the chamber of commerce you strengthen the voice of business for your area. The influence and credibility held by the Chamber goes both ways. By becoming a member you strengthen the overall voice and impact. Conversely, by being a chamber member, your peers and customers know you are committed to the betterment of your community.

**INFORM.** Inform your chamber representative of the specific issues facing your business. The chamber of commerce relies heavily on business and industry leaders as issue experts to help understand the importance and impact of potential legislation. It is through the partnership with members that the chamber's advocacy efforts can be the most effective.

**VOLUNTEER.** By volunteering with the Chamber Governmental Affairs Committee or policy development group you help ensure positions taken by the organization are relevant, well throughout and communicated.

As the saying goes, "Just because you don't take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you." We know that as business professionals your focus is on operating your business, which is why the chamber of commerce is a valuable partner in advocating for business friendly policy and regulation on your behalf.