

PACP Column: July 2025

To Compete and Win, Pennsylvania Must Choose Growth

At the Pennsylvania Press Club luncheon on June 23, PA Chamber President and CEO Luke Bernstein delivered a speech with a clear message: for Pennsylvania to continue to grow and prosper, we need to become more competitive.

Competitiveness is not just a buzzword. It's a call to action rooted in the Keystone Initiative, the PA Chamber Foundation's long-term economic blueprint. The Keystone Initiative outlines a bold vision rooted in data and best practices from other states for reversing Pennsylvania's downward trends in population, congressional representation, and business investment. We know that if we want to stop losing out to other states—and instead become a magnet for investment, talent, and opportunity—we must act decisively.

The Keystone Initiative identifies approximately 100 actionable steps Pennsylvania can take to compete in the 21st-century economy. The plan focuses on these priority areas:

1. Tax Reform That Attracts Investment

Pennsylvania has made progress, but we must go further. The phased reduction of the Corporate Net Income (CNI) Tax is a good start—but why wait until 2031 to reach 4.99 percent? Accelerating this timeline would send a powerful signal to employers that Pennsylvania is open for business.

We also need to build on the progress we made last year in improving how we treat Net Operating Losses (NOLs) to align with other states. And for small businesses, reforms like eliminating the accelerated sales tax prepayment and improving the vendor discount would ease burdens and encourage growth.

2. Permitting and Regulatory Reform

Pennsylvania's energy sector is a powerhouse. The PA Chamber's work with legislators and the Shapiro Administration has helped to modernize outdated permitting processes and reduce regulatory red tape has helped to unleash our energy potential.

Recently, the PA Department of Environmental Protection announced the launch of the [SPEED program](#), the result of bipartisan, PA Chamber-supported legislation advanced during last year's budget process. We must continue down this path and fully streamline our permitting systems to harness our natural resources and diversify our energy portfolio for future generations.

As we continue to unleash Pennsylvania energy dominance, we are positioning Pennsylvania to attract new business and earn our title as the AI and innovation capital of the world.

3. Workforce Development for Today and Tomorrow

A competitive economy needs a competitive workforce. That means addressing the childcare crisis (and the PA Chamber has developed [a comprehensive plan](#) to do so), continuing to enact commonsense criminal justice reform, and investing in training programs that prepare Pennsylvanians for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

This is a bipartisan lift—and one that chambers across the state are uniquely positioned to support. From apprenticeships to upskilling, we must build pathways to prosperity that are inclusive, flexible, and future-focused.

The Role of Local Chambers

Local chambers are the heartbeat of Pennsylvania's business community. Your advocacy, partnerships, and leadership are essential to making this vision a reality. As Luke emphasized at the PA Press Club, we must not settle for slow decline. We must choose growth.

We've fallen behind – but our past doesn't mean we're destined for an unexceptional future. Together, and backed by our dynamic state assets and vision for growth, we can make Pennsylvania not just competitive—but exceptional.

You can watch Luke's full Press Club speech [here](#).