

2023 – 2024

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS &
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

MISSION AND PURPOSE

The mission of the Roseburg Area Chamber of Commerce through its government affairs activities and political advocacy is to represent and protect the interests of the Douglas County business community. To this end, the chamber monitors issues and activities of local, state and federal government and, when appropriate, takes positions of support or opposition on behalf of business. In further pursuit of the most business-friendly environment possible, the chamber will, solicit pro-business, chamber-friendly candidates to serve on commissions and run for public office. The RACC board of directors will endorse candidates for public office when it determines the mission of the chamber will be best served by said candidate's election to office.

The chamber weighs in on a number of business issues. Our members should review RACC's *Business Perspectives* e-newsletter and "Chamber News" emails for positions and "Calls to Action" on specific bills and legislation. The chamber has an "Advocacy" section on its website dedicated to political action on behalf of businesses. Following are the general public affairs and legislative initiatives of highest importance to the Roseburg Area Chamber in 2023-2024:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC AFFAIRS ISSUES

General

- Foster a business-friendly, collaborative environment and open communications among and between RACC, its members and the business community and local government entities.
- Monitor, advocate and communicate about tax, license and fiscal policy issues that affect the RACC membership and the general business community.

County/City Specifics

- *Transportation Infrastructure*
Transportation infrastructure funding is critical to economic development in our community, and as such is a major priority of the RACC. We will research local transportation infrastructure proposals and projects and actively support those deemed beneficial to local business and commerce.
- *Economic Development*
RACC will support local initiatives that facilitate economic growth and development for Douglas County. RACC will work cooperatively with community partners, local governments and other institutions and organizations to improve Roseburg and Douglas County's competitiveness in attracting new jobs and growing community investment. We will support local initiatives that reduce the costs of job creation. It is also our commitment to ensure home-grown businesses have no reason to look elsewhere when considering expansion and that prospective businesses will find Douglas County an unquestionable first choice.
- *Budget Priorities/Fiscal Responsibility/Government Efficiency*
RACC believes each local government entity should maintain a general objective that expenditures not increase at rates greater than population and inflation. Exceptions would be made conditionally for capital improvement projects needed for infrastructure. Taxes should be used equitably to provide services and programs that benefit economic growth and the health and welfare of citizens. All levels of local government must be prepared to prioritize their needs to prepare for a future that holds the potential for less state/federal financial support. Decision-making processes and policies should consider impact on private-sector job creation or private-sector job elimination.

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- *Local Transient Lodge Tax*

The RACC will continue to monitor use of transient lodging tax dollars (TLT) to ensure compliance with Oregon law and best use of funds for the promotion of tourism and support of the hotel and hospitality industry. The RACC will monitor (advocating for its business members) proposals to increase or change existing city and/or state TLT or creation of a new countywide tax.

City Specifics

- *Transportation System Development Charges (SDCs)*

The RACC will monitor the city's transportation SDCs, advocating past reductions remain in effect and/or support business-friendly negotiated options.

- *Other System Development Charges (SDCs)*

The RACC will monitor and potentially weigh-in on the city's sewer, water, storm water and parks system development charges.

- *Urban Growth Boundary Expansion (UGB)*

The RACC will continue to support UGB expansion as it relates to business, commercial and industrial growth and development.

STATE LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS ISSUES

By and through its professional staff, with the support of an active Government Affairs Team, RACC will promote and enhance mutually beneficial relations among its members, the business community and the Douglas County legislative delegation in order to address the following:

- *Natural Resources/Forest Management and Timber Harvest*

RACC will advocate for and support increased timber production on state-held lands. As federal payments diminish and ultimately cease, the need for proper forest management that allows for harvest and reforestation is imperative to the economic growth and sustainability of our community. RACC will work with local, state and federal officials and entities, business and timber- industry leaders to seek implementation of an active management plan by the BLM.

- *Employment*

RACC would support legislation to remove the 10-hour daily overtime statute for manufacturers; RACC supports a flexible weekly overtime standard, mandating overtime payment for hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week. RACC opposes inflexible daily overtime requirements and BOLI rule revision mandates potentially resulting in double overtime pay for the same hour(s) worked. Monitor impacts, weighing in as needed, of Ag Overtime Law passed in 2022, which RACC opposed.

RACC supports permanent statewide preemption of local employment regulations, supports legislation allowing employers and employees flexibility in scheduling work hours, meals and rest break periods. RACC opposes predictive scheduling mandates.

RACC continues to oppose legislation increasing Oregon OSHA penalties and potential legislation mandating a blanket ergonomic standard for Oregon employers.

RACC will support legislation reforming key elements of Oregon's family leave law so it is in alignment with federal regulations. RACC opposes any attempts to expand mandated paid or unpaid leave and mandated paid family-leave legislation, paid for either by employee or employer. RACC will monitor Oregon's new paid leave insurance program, particularly once distribution of benefits begins in September of 2023.

RACC continues to support legislation that would strengthen provisions for denial of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits for workplace misconduct. RACC opposes any legislation expanding the use of UI benefits beyond intended use, including legislative "sweeps" of UI funds or UI funds for striking workers, employees on family or medical leave and/or for job training purposes.

RACC supports the right of employers to require blanket post-accident/injury drug testing. RACC continues to back legislation that would support an employer's right to apply and enforce zero-tolerance workplace drug and alcohol policies. RACC has long-standing opposition to any legislation that would weaken or undermine the Oregon Supreme Court's decision in *Emerald Steel v. BOLI* or any attempt to circumvent federal marijuana laws burdening employers and/or putting Oregon employees at greater risk.

RACC opposes any legislation that would expand employer liability through new and/or expanded protected classes, including but not limited to family caregivers, RACC would support legislation protecting confidential investigation materials in personnel files from inspection by employee.

RACC would oppose any new proposed state minimum wage increases. The previous increase passed in Oregon's 2016 legislative session continues to be burdensome to rural Oregon employers and adverse to job creation. RACC will continue to advocate for remedies, especially for rural Oregon communities. RACC continues to support creation of a youth employment plan for 16-18 year olds or a "training stipend," among other potential proposals.

RACC opposes legislation that would expand prevailing wage law, especially to private construction, because of potential damage to the economy and job creation.

- *Transportation Infrastructure Funding*

RACC will consider and support proposals that increase state funding allocations for road infrastructure, as there is a significant funding gap for road infrastructure needs across the state. RACC will support and aggressively advocate for funding for current and future transportation and related infrastructure projects deemed important to business and commerce. Support for transportation package funding is contingent upon sunset of low carbon fuel standards. RACC would support legislation reforming ODOT's permitting procedures for access to state highways.

- *Workforce Development*

RACC will support initiatives that positively influence the quality of our workforce. These include initiatives to retrain dislocated and existing workers to improve job skills; fund local business and industry seeking to expand workforce through training; programs focused on preparing youth for the workforce with marketable skills that employers find desirable (including "soft skills"); identifying current and future needs of local business community and supporting a state and local workforce development system (including K-12 and higher ed) that meets those needs. RACC supports legislation targeted workforce investments in high-demand areas that generate high-wage career opportunities vital to economic development such as manufacturing.

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- *Environment/Energy*
RACC would oppose legislation creating new layers of approvals/permitting with state EIS program and any legislation increasing maximum penalties imposed by Oregon DEQ. RACC would oppose legislation authorizing DEQ's further adoption of severe carbon intensity standards and/or legislation linking the state's procurement of goods and services to greenhouse gas production of materials, transportation and manufacturing. RACC would oppose any unnecessary air emission mandates and oppose any proposed emissions-free legislation.
- *Transient Lodging Tax Law*
RACC will oppose any attempt to repeal the state of Oregon's 2003 Transient Lodging Tax law, or legislation that would lessen percentages of TLT funds dedicated to visitor services and tourism promotion.
- *Tax Reform/State Budget Priorities/Fiscal Responsibility/Government Efficiency*
RACC supports comprehensive tax reform. Any tax reform proposal must promote private-sector job creation.

The chamber continues to oppose any legislation proposing taxes and fees that unfairly targets Oregon business, specifically but, not limited to further taxing on GROSS sales. RACC supports legislation reducing personal income tax rates applied to capital gains; business tax credits that promote economic development and job creation.

RACC supports PERS reform legislation that is fair, equitable and sustainable for all Oregonians, and that reduces costs to public employers.

The use of taxes should be fair and equitable in providing services and programs that benefit economic growth and the health and welfare of citizens. The RACC will support incentives to encourage government mergers and consolidations at all levels; eliminating duplication of services and performance audits to determine the effectiveness of programs. Spending decisions must be prioritized in order for sustainable tax relief. Key assets for economic growth, such as funding for roads and workforce education and training should be maintained and even enhanced where private sector economic activity will be bolstered. Decision-making processes and policies should consider impact on private-sector job creation or private-sector job elimination.

RACC supports maintenance of existing business tax credits. RACC continues to oppose gross receipts tax on Oregon corporations. RACC would oppose corporate tax disclosure mandates. RACC supports the three-fifths (3/5) supermajority voting requirement for revenue raising legislation.

- *Education Funding*
RACC will continue to support educational programs and proposals (K-12 and higher education) that will train the workforce to meet the current and future needs of our area's private sector. RACC will continue to advocate for stable and secure funding of Oregon's education system, believing PERS reform and/or efficient management of PERS is imperative to the future stabilization of adequate funding. RACC supports reinstatement and expansion of high school career tech education and "trades" programs.

- *Health Care*

The chamber would oppose legislation that would increase cost shift from public programs to private payers in order to cover any potential budget shortfall for the state of Oregon's Medicaid programs; legislation that would in any way change the way public employee health benefits are provided if it leads to additional cost shifting; or, any legislation proposing additional health care mandates not based on medical necessity.

- *Retail Business*

The RACC will support and advocate for legislation that supports retail businesses relating to retail crime. Retail crime has skyrocketing in recent years, increasing public safety concerns in addition to increased cost to businesses and consumers. Retail crime includes, but is not limited to, shoplifting, burglary, abuse of retail workers (employees), vandalism/property damage, online scams, and money, checkout and refund fraud.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS ISSUES

By and through its professional staff with the support of its Government Affairs Team, the RACC will promote and enhance mutually beneficial relations among its members, the business community and the Oregon Congressional Delegation in order to successfully advocate on behalf of the following:

- *Natural Resources/Forest Management and Timber Harvest*

RACC will continue to advocate for effective forest management to include timber harvest on federal land. RACC will work with local, state and federal officials and entities, business and timber-industry leaders, as federal payments will diminish and ultimately cease, the need for proper forest management that allows for harvest is imperative to the economic growth and sustainability of our community. RACC will join community partners, local government and state officials in support of effective forest management to ensure increased harvest for economic health.

Additionally, RACC will continue to support local efforts to effect changes in federal administrative rules to require prompt assessment, fuels reduction and restoration of forests on federal lands after a fire or other catastrophic event. The RACC will oppose proposed federal legislation or administrative rules adversely affecting the development and growth potential of a biomass energy industry.

- *Transportation Infrastructure / Highway Trust Fund*

To facilitate the development and funding of critical transportation infrastructure priorities, RACC will promote partnerships among its members and the business community, local governments and ODOT. RACC will join chambers and business organizations across the country with the US Chamber of Commerce in support of long-term funding for the Highway Trust Fund and much needed funding investments in a variety of infrastructure projects and programs.

RACC asserts that our nation and state's transportation system is still in need of significant and long-term investment. RACC would support passage of small, phased-in increases of the federal gas tax, during a time when gas prices are relatively low. It is a good investment for business and citizens. However, RACC expects any increase would come with guarantees that the dollars would be invested wisely, for the intended purposes and on genuine transportation projects. RACC also supports permit streamlining of transportation projects for more timely and cost-effective projects.

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- *Card Check (proposed as “The Employee Free Choice Act”)*
RACC previously opposed the Employee Free Choice Act as it would eliminate the secret ballot used to determine if unions will represent employees in the workplace and could expose employees to coercion and intimidation. One-sided increases conflict with any sense of fairness or balance. The RACC has no position on whether unions are of benefit to employees or not; that decision is up to employees. RACC continues to support “right to work” legislation. While it is not an anticipated issue for 2023-24, the chamber’s position remains.
- *Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im)*
RACC has long-standing support for long-term reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank. The reauthorization of Ex-Im Bank was signed into law by President Obama in December 2015 and President Trump in 2019. The bank is reauthorized until December 31, 2026. RACC will support future reauthorization.
- *Immigration Reform*
RACC would support sensible, comprehensive federal immigration reform that 1) reforms the visa system for low and high-skilled workers, 2) creates a mandatory national worker verification system, 3) creates a path to legalization for the over 11 million undocumented workers currently in the U.S. and 4) secures the borders. RACC believes passage of such legislation is necessary to give the United States and U.S. businesses an immigration system necessary to remain competitive in the global economy. Our current immigration system is not serving the interests of our economy, our businesses, our workers or our security.
- *Health Care*
As we continue to face the challenge of rising health care costs, RACC promotes effective private sector solutions and would support reforms needed to achieve lower costs, high-quality care and better health for our citizens.
- *Taxes*
RACC would support comprehensive tax reform that would result in attracting investment, encourage innovation, foster economic growth and job creation and increase private-sector competitiveness in both national and international markets.
- *Legal & Regulatory Reform / Permit Streamlining*
RACC will continue long-time advocating for permit streamlining from transportation projects to domestic manufacturing.

Legal reform should include raising public awareness of the impact of lawsuit abuse on our economy; reform of the medical malpractice tort system to keep health care costs down; frivolous environmental litigation and, class action tort reform to lessen Class Action Fairness Act.

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