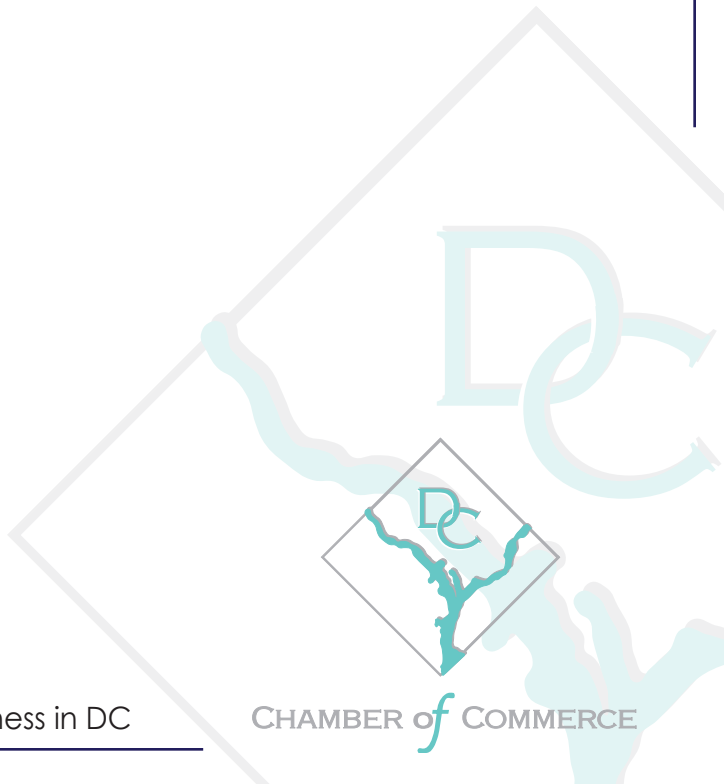


2009 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

*Public Policy
Agenda*



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MESSAGE FROM THE DC CHAMBER'S LEADERSHIP

This past year, the DC Chamber of Commerce celebrated its 70th Anniversary. We have proudly served the Washington, D.C. business community for over 70 years and will continue to serve as the “Voice of Business” in the District of Columbia.

The DC Chamber of Commerce encourages and protects our members’ ability to do business. By championing businesses’ concerns, we provide leadership on a broad spectrum of legislative and policy issues. When government makes policy decisions that adversely affect business and its ability to grow and prosper, the Chamber’s advocacy efforts become even more important. The Chamber protects and defends business interests.

Over the past year, we secured several legislative victories and in the coming year we will continue to work hard to achieve the same success. Our voice has helped to grow our economy, create more jobs, and improve the District’s competitiveness regionally. We have also stopped legislation threatening the vibrancy of the business community.

As a result of the largesse of the business community, elected officials funded numerous city programs and initiatives. Declining city revenue and the national economic slowdown offer the DC government the opportunity to critically review city initiatives, programs and services for waste, efficiencies, and ineffectiveness.

The uncertainty of the national economy paints a sobering picture for 2009 and makes the Chamber’s policy work even more essential. And although dire predictions abound, the Chamber believes that every crisis presents an opportunity. This year presents an opportunity for our members to educate our elected officials and legislators that resident job growth and economic advancement resulted in part from the presence of a large and growing business community. This year, more than most years, we need to encourage our government to take the right steps to encourage the continued strength of local business.

We continue to hope that our members understand the value of our policy work and, as we hoped in 2008, we would like to see more of our members connect with the District’s elected leadership.

Sincerely,



Alex Orfinger, Chair
Publisher
Washington Business Journal



Barbara B. Lang
President & CEO
DC Chamber of Commerce

HISTORY OF THE DC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The concept of an institution uniquely qualified to represent the interests of business has existed since President Howard Taft, and on June 29, 1938, incorporation papers were filed at City Hall to establish a local chamber of commerce in the nation's capital.

The Washington Chamber of Commerce, as it was known then, was originally formed to provide services for African-American businesses. The Washington Chamber of Commerce changed its name to the Negro Chamber of Commerce in August 1946 so that the local chamber name would reflect the unique needs of black businesses at that time.

Ten years later, on October 23, 1956, the name was changed to the District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce. With this new name came a new direction and purpose. Not only would the Chamber stimulate the growth of minority businesses, but it would also work for all businesses located in the District.

Today, the Chamber works aggressively to expand the economy in Washington, D.C. by attracting new jobs and creating economic opportunities for our members and citizens. The Chamber also focuses on issues that impact our future growth and community development including arts and culture, education, energy, international trade and government affairs.

As a result of the active membership campaigns over the past years and the implementation of strategic plans, the Chamber has continued to serve the business community for more than 70 years.

ABOUT THE CHAMBER

The DC Chamber of Commerce is a 501(c)(6) organization dedicated to improving the climate of business in the District of Columbia. Aggressively pursuing and promoting policy issues that are of interest to the entire business community is what makes the DC Chamber of Commerce the premier advocate for business in the District.

Our membership has grown to almost 2,000 members in the last five years and includes businesses that range from small, start-up companies to large, multi-million dollar corporations.

The DC Chamber's growth stems from tireless efforts to lobby in our members' interest, enhanced and increased programming for our membership, and informative e-mail alerts and e-newsletters.

2009 PUBLIC POLICY THEMES

In 2009, the DC Chamber of Commerce's policy and legislative work will focus on the following themes:

- Encouraging fiscally responsible government spending to maintain the city's financial solvency
- Supporting a local economic stimulus package to help businesses survive the economic downturn
- Developing and supporting proven educational and workforce development programs that create a qualified workforce
- Scrutinizing the imposition of new business fees or taxes that would further burden struggling employers

ENCOURAGING FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT SPENDING TO MAINTAIN THE CITY'S FINANCIAL SOLVENCY

The District of Columbia is a city of immense social service needs. One in ten residents is in need of affordable housing. More than 35% of adults between the ages of 18 and 35 years old are functionally illiterate. One in ten residents has been convicted of a felony, and there is a 50% unemployment rate for individuals with a criminal record. More than 25% of the city's children live in poverty. More than 20% of DC residents have a substance abuse problem. Our drug addiction rate is 40 times higher than the national average.

How will the city's elected leadership react when faced with the competing demands of caring for our most vulnerable residents and balancing the District's budget?

Addressing these social ills and other city-wide issues will place a tremendous demand on the city's financial resources. Unfortunately, we are not a city of unlimited wealth or resources. Government cannot and must not spend or borrow without concern for the city's financial well-being.

In October 2008, Dr. Natwar Gandhi, the Chief Financial Officer for the District of Columbia, warned the Mayor and the Council that the District faced an uncertain financial future and urged close monitoring of the city's spending. He echoed his concern in December 2008 when he predicted a steady decline in the city's revenue for the remainder of fiscal year 2009 that will continue through to fiscal year 2010.

The DC Chamber will work to encourage government officials to strictly order their budget priorities to ensure that budget choices are based upon activities, programs, and policies that will yield the greatest return on investment. By prudently

managing its budget, the District will maintain its financial solvency, avoid the debilitating budget deficits that have gripped many jurisdictions across the United States, and provide consistently high quality government services through efficiency.

SUPPORTING A LOCAL ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE TO HELP BUSINESSES SURVIVE THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

The United States economy is struggling. In fact, the nation is in a recession. Many businesses are teetering on the brink of collapse as credit remains unavailable. In times of national economic strain, the District of Columbia has tended to be insulated because of the presence of the federal government but this is no longer the case. The collapse of the financial market directly impacts District businesses. As a result, many of our businesses are struggling as their revenue declines.

There should be a growing interest by the DC government in the importance of maintaining a healthy business community. Small businesses provide an entry point into the city's workforce for a significant number of DC residents, and several large businesses, combined, pay close to \$100 million in corporate franchise tax. Both types of businesses help to bolster and maintain the city.

The DC Chamber of Commerce seeks to preserve the private sector and promote the risk-taking ingenuity of businesses and entrepreneurs. For many businesses the ability to access capital or credit is the difference in their ability to survive and provide a jump start to their operations. For others, tax incentives will allow them to continue business operations that support the local economy. A local stimulus package should include long- and short-term strategies that will protect the viability of the District's business community.

The Chamber supports the need for local government to do all that it can to buoy small, medium, and large businesses that operate in the District of Columbia and generate much of the revenue that supports the city. In the end, the District of Columbia cannot survive without the presence of business, and businesses will not survive without the help of the city.

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING PROVEN EDUCATIONAL AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS THAT CREATE A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

Today, as many as 44% of District residents have less than a high school education. More than 60% of the new jobs in our city require post-high school levels of education. As a result, nearly two-thirds of the District's jobs are held by Maryland and Virginia residents.

The bad news is that District residents who do not possess the education or skills demanded in this labor market encounter greater difficulties than their highly educated counterparts in neighboring jurisdictions in finding employment that pays family-sustaining wages. Further exacerbating the low employment numbers for residents is a public education system that has failed to prepare our young people to enter the labor market or advance their education.

As a result, the District has a largely imported workforce along with crippling education and workforce challenges. With only one in four District jobs being held by District residents, it is imperative that proven educational and workforce development programs be aggressively developed and implemented. Improving academic standards will improve student achievement and should be the primary vehicle by which young people of this city acquire the skills they need to be successful.

The DC Chamber of Commerce fully supports increasing the number of employable DC residents which can only be done when sound policies and programs that improve education and job training are in place. Proven educational and workforce development programs that prepare our children and residents for the available jobs in today's and the future's labor markets will create a qualified workforce and allow all DC residents to participate in the rebound of the region's economy.

SCRUTINIZING THE IMPOSITION OF NEW BUSINESS FEES OR TAXES THAT WOULD FURTHER BURDEN STRUGGLING EMPLOYERS

On March 20, 2008, Mayor Adrian M. Fenty submitted his Fiscal Year 2009 Proposed Budget to the Council of the District of Columbia. His proposed budget contained new basic business licensing categories and associated fees as well as increases in the cost of certain existing business fees. The goal of this proposal regarding business licensing was to generate a sustainable revenue stream for the Department of Consumer Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) that was not derived from the District's general fund. These new business licenses were estimated to generate \$3 million for DCRA.

In an effort to fund an affordable housing program that had been cut to close a \$130 million budget gap, the majority of the Council of the District of Columbia voted in favor of a bill that doubled parking meter fees. This is an example of creative, yet potentially harmful, methods of increasing city revenue. The DC Chamber of Commerce is confident that as the city's revenue collection decreases, elected officials will look for additional sources of revenue. Increasing fees on the business community is a more palatable way to raise additional revenue without increasing taxes. It is, however, economic folly to increase fees or taxes on businesses when we are experiencing one of the toughest economic periods in this country's history.

The DC Chamber is committed to closely scrutinizing any fee or tax that would hurt business' ability to sustain its operations, emerge successfully from the downturn in the economy, grow, and compete in the regional market.

SUMMARY OF 2008 LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Bill 17-0020, "Small Business Commercial Property Tax Relief Act of 2008"

Purpose of the Bill:

To reduce the real property tax rate for Class 2 properties.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on January 29, 2008.

***Bill 17-0078, "Human Rights for Ex-Offenders Amendment Act of 2007"**

Purpose of the Bill:

To make ex-offenders a protected class under the DC Human Rights Act and prohibit employment, housing, and educational discrimination based on their arrest and conviction record.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber strongly opposed this bill.

Status:

This bill was referred to the Committee on Workforce Development and Government Operations.

***Bill 17-0098, "Large Retailer Accountability Act of 2007"**

Purpose of the Bill:

To require large retailers to pay employees a living wage, as determined by the Council and provide employees with specified benefits.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status:

This bill was referred to the Committee on Workforce Development and Governmental Operations.

Bill 17-0197, "Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act of 2008"

Purpose of the Bill:

To require employers in the District of Columbia to provide up to 10 days of paid leave to employees.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber testified in opposition to this bill on July 9, 2007 and strongly opposed this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council with the Chamber prevailing on all seven amendments it supported and became law on March 19, 2008.

Bill 17-0252, “Producer Licensing Amendment Act of 2008”

Purpose of the Bill:

To require applicants for an insurance producer’s license to undergo fingerprinting and background checks.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on March 19, 2008.

Bill 17-0332, “Telecommunications Competition Amendment Act of 2007”

Purpose of the Bill:

To amend the Telecommunications Competition Act to exempt Voice Over Internet Protocol service and Internet protocol-enabled service from regulation as a telecommunications service in the District of Columbia.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber submitted a letter in support of this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on April 14, 2008.

Bill 17-0336, “Excellence in Local Business Contract Grading Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To require the Mayor to establish a comprehensive grading system for all businesses contracting with the D.C. government to determine participation in competing for and winning future government contracts.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber did not take a position on this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on February 5, 2008.

Bill 17-0337, “Minority and Women-Owned Business Assessment Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To establish the Minority and Women owned Business Assessment Program within the Department of Small and Local Business Development to analyze the number of government contracts being awarded to women and minority owned businesses.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on February 5, 2008.

Bill 17-0364, “SafeRX Amendment Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To require a prescriber to make every reasonable effort to provide a patient with information about the off-label use of a medication, to establish a pharmaceutical education program within the Department of

Health, and to limit pharmaceutical company contributions to medication advisory committees.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber submitted a letter in opposition to two key provisions of the bill.

Status:

The two objectionable provisions were removed from the final bill, which was passed by the Council and became law on February 1, 2008.

***Bill 17-0440, "Department of Small Local Business Development Grant Authority Act of 2007"**

Purpose of Bill:

To require the mayor to provide rules of how grants shall be administered by the Department of Small Local Business Development for the benefit of District of Columbia business owners.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Economic Development.

Bill 17-0450, "Public Education Personnel Reform Act of 2007"

Purpose of Bill:

To establish employment without tenure for employees who provide direct services to individual students.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on January 29, 2008.

Bill 17-0477, "Film DC Economic Incentive Amendment Act of 2008"

Purpose of Bill:

To increase the incentives provided to qualified film and television production work in the District of Columbia.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on May 20, 2008.

Bill 17-0492, "Clean and Affordable Energy Act of 2008"

Purpose of Bill:

To establish authority to contract with a private company to administer sustainable energy programs in the District of Columbia, establish a renewable energy incentive program, and establish "green" benchmark requirements for all qualified private and public buildings.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber opposed portions of this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on August 4, 2008

Bill 17-0493, “Loretta Carter Hanes Pesticide Consumer Notification Amendment Act”

Purpose of Bill:

To require pesticide operators to provide information to customers concerning the type of pesticide to be used and require owners of multi-unit properties to notify tenants prior to the use of pesticides in the building.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on April 14, 2008.

Bill 17-0503, “Compliance Unit Establishment Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To establish a compliance unit to audit and report on compliance issues in real estate development projects receiving government funding for the dissolved National Capital Revitalization Corporation or Anacostia Waterfront Corporation.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposed 3 provisions of this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on April 22, 2008.

***Bill 17-0508, “Small Business Commercial Property Tax Relief Act of 2007”**

Purpose of Bill:

To reduce the real property tax rate for Class 2 properties and increase the amount of personal property exempt from the personal property tax.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber strongly supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Finance and Revenue.

Bill 17-0537, “Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To provide that the Office of the State Superintendent of Education shall administer pre-kindergarten education and require the Mayor to submit to the Council for approval a plan to evaluate pre-kindergarten programs.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on May 23, 2008.

***Bill 17-0579, “Fairness in Foreclosure Act of 2008”**

Purpose of Bill:

To enact a new mortgage law that will create a more open foreclosure process, including more exact notice requirements, judicial foreclosure, advertising of a foreclosure sale, conduct of the foreclosure sale, audit of the sale, and disbursement of the sale proceeds.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs.

Bill 17-0631, “District’s Opportunity to Purchase Amendment Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To provide the Mayor with a better opportunity to purchase certain low-income housing accommodations subordinate to the rights of tenants, and maintain affordable rent levels.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on October 27, 2008.

Bill 17-0640, “Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Notification Amendment Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To require an owner to provide via certified mail an offer of sale to both the tenant of a property and the Mayor on the same day and to start the time period when tenants have a right to file a Statement of Interest in purchasing the property when the tenant or Mayor receive the letter, whichever is later.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became low on July 28, 2008.

***Bill 17-0671, “Money Transmitters Disclosure Amendment Act of 2008”**

Purpose of Bill:

To require money transmitters to provide customers with itemized receipts, including fee breakdown.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposes this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs.

***Bill 17-0700, “Healthy DC Act of 2008”**

Purpose of Bill:

To establish the Healthy DC Program; require DC residents 18 and older to maintain health insurance coverage; require HMOs to pay a premium tax; raise the premium tax imposed on health insurers in the District; and require all products on the individual health care market be guaranteed issue and community rated.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee of the Whole.

***Bill 17-0707, “Greenspace Development Advisory Board Act of 2008”**

Purpose of Bill:

To require the Mayor to establish a Greenspace Development Advisory Board to advise the Mayor on how best to maintain greenspace, with the authority to review all proposed economic development plans that need to be approved by the Executive.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposes this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Libraries, Parks and Recreation.

***Bill 17-0798, “Heat Wave Safety Amendment Act of 2008”**

Purpose of Bill:

To prohibit the electric company from disconnecting residential electric service the day preceding and the day of when the temperature is forecasted to be 90 degrees Fahrenheit or above.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs.

***Bill 17-0801, “Health Occupations Revision Act of 1985 Amendment Act of 2008”**

Purpose of Bill:

To define multiple medical terms, including occupational descriptions; establish multiple positions for medical boards; change selected medical licensing requirements; and institute large-scale changes to certain medical practices.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposes this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Health. Councilmember Catania has stated his intention to separate the bill into multiple, smaller, and individual versions of the same bill.

***Bill 17-0910, “Carbon Trading Pilot Program Act of 2008”**

Purpose of Bill:

To require the Mayor to create a pilot project to evaluate utilizing emerging carbon markets at facilities or fleets to advance the District’s energy efficiency goals as well as verify and sell emission credits on a Fractional Carbon Exchange.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber supports this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs.

Bill 17-0914, “Limitation on Borrowing and Establishment of the Operating Cash Reserve Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To establish a limitation on District bond issuance if it would cause the debt service to exceed 12% of the District Fund Expenditures and to increase the amount of sales tax revenue required to be deposited into Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Fund.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber supports this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on January 16, 2009.

Bill 17-0919, “Clean and Affordable Energy Emergency Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To establish authority to contract with a private company to administer sustainable energy programs in the District of Columbia, establish a renewable energy incentive program in the District, and establish “green” benchmark requirements for all qualified private and public buildings.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposed portions of this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council as emergency legislation and was retained by the council. It became law on September 25, 2008 and expired on December 24, 2008.

Bill 17-0934, “Medical Insurance Empowerment Amendment Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To require a medical services corporation to dedicate a determined surplus to a community health reinvestment, to require them to

continue to offer an open enrollment program to current subscribers, and prohibit hospital and medical services corporations from converting to for-profit entities.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber testified in opposition to this bill on October 10, 2008 and strongly opposed this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and will become law following action by the Mayor.

Bill 17-0936, "Lead-Hazard Prevention and Elimination Act of 2008"

Purpose of Bill:

To require owners of pre-1978 properties maintain buildings free of lead-based paint hazards, authorize the Mayor to conduct risk assessments of properties, require disclosure of lead-based paint hazards to potential tenants, and provide a clearance report before turnover of rental properties built before March 1, 1978.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and will become law following action by the Mayor.

Bill 17-0980, "Comprehensive Stormwater Management Enhancement Act of 2008"

Purpose of Bill:

To establish stormwater management programs to reduce the amount of stormwater pollutants and to change the stormwater user fee structure to one based on the amount of impervious surface area of a property, and offer financial assistance to low-income residents who incur a resulting fee increase.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and will become law following action by the Mayor.

Bill 17-0985, "Bud Doggett Way Designation Act of 2008"

Purpose of the Bill:

To symbolically dedicate the 700 block of 10th St. NW, in Ward 2, as Bud Doggett Way.

Chamber's Position:

The Chamber strongly supported this bill.

Status:

The bill was passed by the Council and became law on January 6, 2009.

Bill 17-1037, “Omnibus Tenant Protection Act of 2008”

Purpose of Bill:

To allow a tenant to bring a cause of action in the Landlord and Tenant Branch of Superior Court to enforce provisions of the DC Housing Code and to require inspections by the Mayor of residential properties to ensure habitability.

Chamber’s Position:

The Chamber opposes this bill.

Status:

The bill was referred to the Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs.

**** A bill that has not been finally adopted by the Council before the end of the Council period in which it was introduced lapses without prejudice to its reintroduction in a subsequent Council period.***

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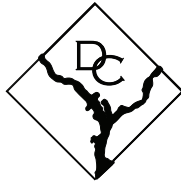
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