



2017-18 LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Since its inception in 1939 to the present, the Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has advocated for economic development and public policy that enable Hispanic-owned and other minority businesses to grow and thrive. In addition to the public policy priorities herein, the GDHCC is committed to continuing to advocate for economic development and public policy at the state, national and local levels that best serve Hispanic and other minority-owned businesses.

The GDHCC's public policy priorities for 2017-18:

STATE BUDGET

For 2017-18, the state can expect to have increased revenue available for general-purpose spending.

The GDHCC supports legislation and policies that provide:

- Priority funding for public education
- Increased funding levels and accountability for programs focused on addressing needs and challenges of Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) and Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) in contracting

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development legislation and the associated policies and programs should include opportunities for all segments of the Texas economy, including HUBs and MBEs on an equitable basis.

The GDHCC strongly supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Enable Texas and local governmental entities in the North Texas region to remain competitive by increasing and improving initiatives designed to foster the establishment and growth of Hispanic enterprises and small businesses in general
- Bring innovation to current state and local governmental practices and procedures including, but not limited to, funding for capital projects, cluster initiatives and purchasing cooperatives
- Provide disclosure and reporting requirements which enhance transparency, accountability and ethical business practices
- Increase and enhance contracting opportunities for HUBs and MBEs which will lead to growth in the tax base and to a sustainable, healthy state of the economy
- Include oversight and enforcement of achievement in meeting HUB and MBE contracting goals

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Hispanic businesses and the economies of Texas and the North Texas region depend on a well-educated workforce. (Current educational attainment rates among the Hispanic population are troubling. Ample research confirms that parental involvement is a leading factor in student achievement.)

The GDHCC strongly supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Fund full-day, universal Pre-K for all students
- Provide a comprehensive state and regional strategy for preparing students for middle and high school success, and that will assist families and students access to higher education institutions
- Provide creative initiatives to reduce dropout rates of Hispanic youth
- Provide programs that inform, train and equip parents to become actively involved in their children's education and provide choices and options for primary and secondary education in the public schools
- Increase availability of dual credit high school collegiate programs which result in college readiness while lowering student debt
- Implement the Texas Supreme Court's directive to make transformational reforms in public education funding

HIGHER EDUCATION

The GDHCC believes in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's mission to promote access, affordability, quality, success and cost efficiency in the state's institutions of higher education, leading to a globally-competent workforce that positions Texas as an international leader in an increasingly complex world economy.

The GDHCC strongly supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Allow Texas high school graduates to pay in-state college tuition regardless of immigration status
- Facilitate the ability of higher education institutions to reflect the demography of the state in college and university governing bodies, administrators, staff, two-year college faculty, four-year professors and tenure-track professors
- Provide financial incentives and loan forgiveness options for students who obtain bilingual education and ESL-certified degrees and who pledge to work in schools with acute shortages

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Texas must remain constantly aware of the required balance between the need for water and energy to maintain acceptable current levels of quality of life and economic development and sustainability considerations for mid-to-long term.

The GDHCC supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Increase the supply of energy, including traditional sources, emerging renewable resource and energy efficiency and, thus, ameliorates generation costs and reduces electric rates for residential and commercial customers
- Examine the interrelationship of water and energy resources and future needs for these resources

GOVERNANCE

The need for oversight and accountability ensuring equity in access to functions/processes critical to constituents supersedes the issue of the speed for such functions/processes.

The GDHCC supports legislation, policies and initiatives that increase transparency, accountability and efficiency in government.

HEALTH

All Texans deserve access to high quality, affordable healthcare insurance coverage.

The GDHCC strongly supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Examine best practices for increasing the affordability and availability of health insurance in the individual and small group market and supports continued access to affordable prescription drugs
- Promote wellness for all Texas residents and integrated healthcare which addresses need for primary, behavioral, mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Focus on prevention of chronic diseases that impact healthcare costs and workforce availability with the result of negatively impacting the Texas economy

IMMIGRATION

The positive impact of immigrants on Texas' economy is well documented.

The GDHCC supports fiscally sound and humane comprehensive immigration reform that:

- Establishes guest worker programs with the option for citizenship
- Encourages economic development in Texas and, in particular, along the Texas-Mexico border
- Provides border security measures which maintain human rights and discourage divisiveness
- Promotes free trade and travel
- Promotes fair and equitable processes regarding employer hiring practices
- Minimizes the disruption of families

MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

Small businesses significantly impact Texas' economy. They represent 98.7 percent of all employers and employ 46.4 percent of the private-sector workforce. Minority-owned businesses comprise 33.4 percent of the businesses in the state. However, minority businesses continue to be underutilized in procurement of goods and services.

The GDHCC strongly supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Strengthen, increase and improve MBE and HUB participation in all government contracting for goods and services, including funding for special incentive programs such as the Texas Enterprise Fund (should it continue) and the Texas Emerging Technology Fund
- Strengthen, increase and improve the transparency of government contracting processes

TECHNOLOGY AND EMERGING INDUSTRIES

The GDHCC supports legislation, policies and initiatives that enhance both training and contracting opportunities for Hispanics and minority businesses in emerging technologies and industries.

TRANSPORTATION

Efficient and available modes of transportation are critical to both the quality of life of Texans and the economic success of Texas businesses. Per Texas Department of Transportation's 2013 Semi-Annual Report, approximately four percent of TxDOT's total spend in FY 2013 was with minority HUB firms. This is unacceptable as the funds expended are public funds.

The GDHCC strongly supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Provide long-term sustainable funding (state and federal) for highway, rail, public transit and air transportation
- Promote the efficient operation of these modes of transportation
- Provide for increased HUB and MBE participation in transportation projects

VOTING RIGHTS

The right to vote is fundamental to American democracy.

The GDHCC strongly supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Enhance a citizen's ability to register to vote
- Provide access to the opportunity to vote without undue challenges
- Eliminate voter suppression

WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS

The Texas workforce must be well trained to provide the skilled workers needed by business and industry so that Texas can continue to outpace the nation in employment growth and opportunities.

The GDHCC strongly supports legislation, policies and initiatives that:

- Assist in the cost of higher education or technical training to help advance the Hispanic and minority business community and workforce
- Enhance the accessibility and quality of the state's adult education programs
- Connect education to the needs of the workplace through apprenticeship and training programs