



Northwest Michigan Regional Chamber Alliance

BENZIE CADILLAC CHARLEVOIX PETOSKEY TRAVERSE CITY

2010 Legislative Priorities

TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Make it easier for businesses in Northwest Michigan to be profitable.
- Help strong business sectors remain strong in our region.
- Promote investment in our transportation and business infrastructure.
- Make sure we have a workforce prepared for the future needs of Northwest Michigan Businesses.

Supporting Points

- **Enhance profitability for businesses in Northwest Michigan**
 - Northwest Michigan businesses need an understandable, sustainable and simplified tax structure.
- Our members are saying that the current Michigan Business Tax is confusing, cumbersome, and costly. This burden on their businesses promotes out-of-state growth and slows investment in our communities. The continuation of this tax structure does not create incentives for businesses to grow and create jobs in our region. The growth our region requires is the creation of a sustainable and simplified tax structure for our businesses.

- **Enhance profitability for businesses in Northwest Michigan**

- A more efficient and timely permitting process is needed for business, manufacturing and farms in northwest Michigan.
- Where is the incentive to invest when it took a member-business eight years to receive a five-year permit. When does the renewal process start? Reasonable turnaround times for permitting will reduce costs and uncertainty for businesses and create growth in our region. Business and environmental regulations need to fall in line with states that are achieving economic growth while continuing to protect natural resources. Employers will continue to locate outside our region if the permitting process is not simplified.

■ Help Strong Business Sectors Remain Strong

- Consistent and sustainable funding for **tourism** promotion.
- Employers tell us that tourism means jobs for northwest Michigan. Summer, winter, and agricultural tourism continue to be an opportunity for revenue and job growth. The state has made a commitment to fund the creation of hiking, biking and snowmobile trails as well as parks and access to hunting and water resources across northern Michigan. That infrastructure investment creates a need for a permanent and consistent funding source for the promotion of our region through the “Pure Michigan Campaign”.

■ Help Strong Business Sectors Remain Strong

- Retain and strengthen manufacturing production.
- Manufacturing continues to be a major source of good paying jobs for thousands of workers across Northwest Michigan. The region's manufacturing sector can be supported through a reduced regulatory and tax environment coupled with competitive incentives to attract new industries and entrepreneurs to the region. Reducing the burden of personal property taxation and avoiding special fees specific to manufacturers should be supported.

■ Help Strong Business Sectors Remain Strong

- Sustainable funding and expansion for regional farming.
- To remain competitive in Northwest Michigan, it is critical that farmers be allowed to operate their business without the threat of undue and excessive local ordinances or state regulation that restricts their ability to grow and process their crops and get them to market. Agriculture remains one of the largest industries in northwest Michigan. Domestic agricultural production must remain a priority for the long term sustainability of the state. Areas of interest include the expansion of “value-added” agriculture, viticulture, horticulture and agricultural research station funding, greater access to the state’s timber resources when combined with sound harvesting practices, supporting Farm-to-School food sourcing initiatives, and promotion of buy local food programs.

■ Help Strong Business Sectors Remain Strong

- Consistent and sustainable funding for the arts and culture sector.

- Northwest Michigan is privileged to have an abundance of formidable arts and cultural organizations. The arts and cultural sector is an important component of this regions workforce and quality of life that attracts the businesses, professionals, entrepreneurs and visitors we need to be competitive. The state arts appropriation has been reduced from \$25.5 million in 2000 to \$7.9 million in 2009 to \$2.3 million for 2010. This places Michigan 49th in per-capita arts funding, just ahead of California. It is critical that we begin to restore state arts funding.

■ Promote *Business* Infrastructure Investment

- Safe and quality road, rail and air service investment for our region.

- Northwest Michigan needs the ability to move people, products and services in a safe and efficient way. Quality and safe roads create opportunities for growth in business and tourism. Improvement of roads and growth in rail service provides better movement of goods and services from local producers across our region and the state. Air service from Traverse City and Pellston connects our region to business centers across the country and world. This service must be maintained to allow access to northwest Michigan for new businesses. A state-wide transportation plan must be created to support funding and infrastructure improvements for our region.

■ Promote *Business Infrastructure Investment*

- Create a quality electronic infrastructure for all of northwest Michigan.
- The funding for a broadband network as well as expanded 3G and 4G wireless technology is needed for our region. This technology allows for growth at existing businesses. The creation of this system also allows for the expansion of new technology businesses that can connect to the world with the appropriate capacity. An improved electronic infrastructure will create job opportunities for our region and will help retain and attract quality young professionals to our region.

■ A Prepared Workforce for the Future

- Our communities need access to a quality and affordable workforce.
- A quality and affordable workforce is educated for the business opportunities in our region. Access for continued education in trade, technical and new technology fields must be available and funded for our communities. Baccalaureate programs should be encouraged at northern Michigan community colleges to create educational advancement for the workforce to fill the needs of regional businesses. These programs also create opportunities for area students to remain in the community and provide businesses access to them as a resource for jobs.

■ A Prepared Workforce for the Future

- Our region needs quality and affordable education for our children.
- Funding for early childhood education and schools must be provided for a quality education for the children of our region. Schools districts need the ability to problem solve and create educational advancements without mandates tied to funding. Give managers the ability to manage the schools. The state must address the issue of benefit and pension costs for school employees to give our local school districts the ability to spend funding in the classroom. Incentives should be put in place to create and encourage schools to consolidate services to provide for better classroom learning. Growth will occur in our region with a strong funded educational system from early childhood through college.

■ Your Voice is Needed: A Call To Action

- Members need to be contacting legislators with priority examples from our region.

- **Your Voice Can Make a Difference.** State Senate and House legislators have said they need to hear specific examples from community and business leaders on the priorities they should follow. Members need to respond to calls to action by The Regional Chamber Partners. A consistent message does make a difference. When bills in Lansing were introduced to move the school start back before Labor Day the Regional Alliance called on members to contact legislators. They needed to hear from you on why this would hurt our region. Your Voice Made a Difference and protected the Labor Day weekend and the tourism it brings to our region.



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The Northwest Michigan Regional Chamber Alliance Executives, Staff, Board members and Government Relations committees are called to action to support these priorities by educating members to advocate for our region's success.