

The following statements are joint policies of the Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, and Missoula Chambers of Commerce.

TAXES

Accommodations

The Chambers oppose any bill, which attempts to de-earmark or diminish the tourism promotion fund.

The Chambers support the additional 3% accommodation tax levied in 2003 being dedicated to tourism promotion through a formula agreed upon by the Department of Commerce Promotion Division, CVB's, Tourism Regions and Tourism partners as proposed as a revenue-neutral impact on the general fund.

Business Equipment

The Chambers support restoration of the trigger to further reduction and eventual elimination of the business equipment (personal property) tax, as necessary to create a competitive economic environment.

Sales

The Chambers support a statewide sales tax with the current constitutional cap of 4%, only as a replacement tax.

Income

The Chambers believe Montana's income tax should be based on federal taxable income, rather than federal adjusted gross income, but should maintain a rate competitive with other states. Additionally, the Chambers support the extension of the Montana Endowment Tax Credit.

Corporate Tax Records:

The Chambers strongly believe that corporate and individual income taxes should only be viewed by employees of the Department of Revenue.

Capital Gains

The Chambers support legislative efforts to reduce the Montana tax rate on capital gains.

Coal Trust

The Chambers support continued use of Coal Tax Trust Funds for economic development of our state. One example is to fund revolving loan funds for expansion and growth of established businesses.

Inheritance

The Chambers support elimination/reduction of the federal "death taxes." If they are not eliminated, we expect to retain the federal (pick up) credit.

Tobacco Tax

The Chambers support use of tobacco tax revenues for health insurance tax credits and want the Health Insurance tax credits expanded to businesses with 10 or more employees.

Big Box Tax

The Chambers are opposed to a progressive receipts tax (Big Box Tax) and are also opposed to a gross receipts tax.

Realty Transfer Tax

The Chambers oppose the creation of a realty transfer tax.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Minimum Wage

The Chambers oppose mandated increases in the state minimum wage level higher than the federal level. We do not support an annual raise based on a CPI (Cost Price Index) based outside of Montana. We do support including a tip credit.

Living Wage

The Chambers believe in the ability of market forces to set wages and benefit levels. We oppose mandated increases in the minimum wage level or the creation of livable wage legislation.

Workers Compensation

The Chambers support the exclusive remedy doctrine for workplace injuries with the inherent trade off of legislative benefits for the injured worker without having to prove negligence.

Incumbent Worker Training:

The Chambers support incumbent worker training funding for up to \$2000/worker for businesses with less than 20 employees.

Termination/References

The Chambers support legislation that clearly defines proper and improper terminations, the function of probation in employment, and the legal liability for an employer or employee who breaks these rules. We believe that employers should be able to exchange previous work experience without risk of liability, doing so in good faith and reasonable, with either the potential employer or the previous employer.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Chambers support responsible development of natural resources for economic growth, including logging, mining and coal bed methane, to grow and enhance Montana's economy.

K-12 EDUCATION

The Chambers support business involvement in all aspects of public education, and partnering with public education at all levels, specifically in support expansion of vocational training opportunities. Further, the Chambers support equalized funding for this education system at about the present level by establishing a uniform statewide mandatory revenue source distributed back to the individual school districts on an equal dollars-per-student basis. The Chambers also support local control of the expenditure of funds and curriculum content.

The Chambers support appropriate funding for a basic system of quality education including innovation and improvement efforts. We encourage business involvement in all aspects of public education, including business partnering with public education at all levels. The business community is a stakeholder in the quality of public education. Public education should prepare well-educated graduates who are ready to continue their education and enter the workforce.

The Chambers support local school districts working across district boundaries to fund operations and debt for vocational training programs.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Chambers support development of an adequate and predictable funding formula that will enable the higher education system to deliver an affordable & quality education to all students. This support includes continuation of a formal long-range capital building plan and funding for the higher education system. And, support expanded incentive programs allowing units to retain monies generated from research efforts and administrative savings. Finally, we support adequate funding of faculty salaries, research and development efforts, and capital improvements. The Chambers support efforts to keep tuition affordable for Montana residents.

GOVERNMENT COMPETITION/ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

The Chambers support using the most efficient and effective means of providing government services. The Chambers support streamlining governmental services, privatizing services when beneficial and consolidation of government units whenever effective. The Chambers support bidder preference to be allowed under reciprocity only.

Government shall not have an unfair advantage when providing the same service as a for-profit corporation.

TRANSPORTATION

The Chambers support continued investment in strong transportation infrastructure including the complete utilization of the state's allotment available through the federal highway bill. The Chambers also support the continuation of the EAS subsidies. The 1978 Airline Deregulation Act promoted the continuation of the EAS, stating "The maintenance of a comprehensive and convenient

system of continuous airline service for small communities and for isolated areas, with direct federal assistance where appropriate and necessary.