Chamber Policy Coalition

Priorities from Summer Task Forces

**These priorities have not been voted for acceptance from the Western St. Charles County Chamber, O'Fallon Chamber or St. Charles Regional Chamber's Board of Directors. This is used for notes and following along at the Summit by attendees.*

Economic Development / Infrastructure

- Continue support of incentives that are essential tools to drive economic growth, encourage private investment, and create high-quality jobs in St. Charles County. The evaluation, modernization, and simplification of incentives is important for Missouri and St. Charles County to remain competitive, attract new businesses, and allow companies to expand and innovate.
- Modernize Missouri's Certified Site Program to better compete for major business investments by:
  - Creating a Missouri Site Readiness Fund to support grading, utility extensions, and other site/existing building improvements before a business commits to a location.
  - Establishing certification tiers, such as Gold, Platinum, and Megasite, to distinguish sites with exceptional acreage, utility capacity, and development readiness.
  - Providing expedited state and local permitting for projects locating on certified sites.
- Extend the energy efficiency, non-loan, incentives for residential and commercial properties, from a 1-year to a 3-year program, to help businesses and energy providers manage energy demand and system costs, while considering the reinstatement of eligible lighting improvements.
- Accelerate broadband expansion to all remaining underserved and unserved areas of St. Charles County to ensure businesses and residents have reliable, high-speed internet access needed to compete and grow.
- Invest in energy, water, and multimodal freight infrastructure to ensure Missouri communities have the capacity to support future business growth, new development, and job creation.

Small Business

- Encourage state and local governments to provide a reasonable preference for Missouri and local small businesses when bids are substantially equal in price and quality, while maintaining fair and competitive procurement practices. Potential strategies could include:
  - Allow a qualified local business to match the lowest bid when its bid is within 2-5% of the lowest qualified bidder.
  - Establish voluntary targets for the percentage of state and local government contracts awarded to qualified small businesses.
  - Create a certified local vendor database that government purchasing departments can use to identify qualified Missouri businesses before seeking outside vendors.
- Maintain funding of the Missouri Historic Preservation Tax Credit so businesses can continue to occupy, rehabilitate, and modernize historic buildings while meeting current building, safety, and accessibility requirements. This program helps preserve Missouri's historic commercial districts while making older buildings viable for today's businesses.
- Continue support of incentives as an essential tool to drive economic growth, encourage private investment, and create jobs in our region. The evaluation and modernization of incentives is important for Missouri and St. Charles County to remain competitive, attract new businesses, and allow companies to expand and innovate.
- Strengthen the MOBUCK$ program to help support local small businesses and start ups across the State. Potential strategies could include:
  - Increase the program cap when demand continues to exceed cap.
  - Create a microloan tier for startups and businesses with fewer than 10 employees.
  - Reserve a portion of the program capacity for entrepreneurs and first-time business owners.
  - Publish annual performance metrics, including the number and size of loans, businesses demographics served, repeat recipients, and geographic distribution.

Funding Reform

- Sustainable replacement revenue sources must be identified before eliminating taxes, providing greater certainty and stability for Missouri businesses, communities, and essential services.
- Increase Missouri's sports betting tax rate from 10% to the national average of 23%, and eliminate all deductions from the taxable amount.
  - Because sports betting was authorized through a constitutional amendment, changing the constitutional tax structure would require the General Assembly to refer a new constitutional amendment to Missouri voters for approval.
- Establish a 10% excise tax on alternative nicotine and vaping products to generate additional state revenue dedicated to supporting essential services throughout Missouri.
  - This would require the General Assembly to refer to Missouri voters for approval.
- Establish additional visitor-generated revenue sources, including lodging taxes, tourism districts, and destination fees, so visitors contribute toward the infrastructure and public services they use while visiting Missouri.
- Direct the state to evaluate Missouri's critical mineral and rare earth mineral deposits, economic potential, and revenue opportunities, with the goal of creating a long-term state revenue stream while encouraging responsible development, investment, and job creation. Potential strategies could include:
  - Critical Minerals Severance Tax: Establish a tax or royalty on critical minerals extracted in Missouri, with revenue supporting the State General Fund or other identified priorities.
  - Missouri Critical Minerals Trust Fund: Deposit a portion of mineral revenues into a long-term investment fund, allowing investment earnings to support future state priorities.
  - Mineral Processing License or Production Fee: Establish reasonable fees for companies that extract, process, or refine critical minerals in Missouri.
  - Community Impact Contribution: Require large-scale mining operations to provide annual contributions toward infrastructure, public safety, environmental monitoring, workforce development, and other community needs resulting from mineral development.
  - Competitive Processing Incentives: Establish tax credits that could be used for businesses that both mine and process minerals within the State of Missouri.

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Priorities from Summer Task Forces

Transportation / Infrastructure

- Support coordinated planning and funding for MoDOT to:
  - Maintain and improve Missouri's roads, highways, bridges, and interstates.
  - Prioritize long-term funding for the development of the Highway N corridor
  - Bridge maintenance, new overpasses to improve safety, and
  - Improvements to Highway K, Highway 79, Highway 61 to Troy, and Route 364.
  - Reliable transportation infrastructure supports business growth, workforce mobility, freight movement, and Missouri's competitiveness.
- Encourage state funding and legislation that expands affordable and accessible public transportation in St. Charles County. Expanding transportation options strengthens workforce mobility and helps businesses connect with available workers.
- Support continued state investment in Great Rivers Greenway as a regional public agency that develops connected greenways, trails, and parks across the St. Louis region. These investments improve quality of life while creating alternative transportation options through walking and biking connections that link neighborhoods, businesses, and communities.
- Explore flexibility to federal CMS guidelines that allow Missouri to become a "ride of choice" state, giving Medicaid recipients greater flexibility to choose transportation providers and helping connect individuals with medical care, employment, education, and other essential services.
- Create a comprehensive statewide study of public transportation that:
  - Evaluates existing services, identifies gaps and unmet needs & examines funding challenges.
  - and recommends opportunities for new or expanded transportation services.
  - Missouri needs reliable data to understand where transportation investments can best support workers, employers, older adults, individuals with disabilities, and growing communities.

Workforce / Education

- Oppose any Open Enrollment policy that would allocate only the State Adequacy Target ($6,750 per student - FY2027) to receiving districts while the average per-student cost in St. Charles County is approximately $15,400, creating a shortfall of over $8,000 per student. Such a funding gap would shift significant educational costs onto local school districts and taxpayers, resulting in an unfunded mandate that undermines fiscal stability.
- Support childcare tax credits to reduce out-of-pocket childcare costs for Missouri families. These measures not only ease financial burdens on working parents but also help address the workforce shortage by allowing more people to reenter or stay in the workforce.
- Expand Missouri's A+ Scholarship Program to include students pursuing industry-recognized certifications that are non-associate degree bearing. Aligning the program with industry certifications will empower students with career-ready skills, help fill critical workforce gaps, and enhance Missouri's economic prosperity.
- Repeal SB 1002 to restore local control to St. Charles County over the timing of school board elections and ballot measures, allowing school districts to respond more quickly to facility, safety, and educational needs while giving local communities greater flexibility to address their priorities.