



**Greater Susquehanna Valley  
Chamber of Commerce  
Governmental Affairs Committee**



Mission Statement:

The Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce advances the prosperity of communities, commerce, culture, fellow citizens and their businesses in its region through the leadership of its members.



# 2018 Legislative Agenda





**Modern, Safe, Efficient  
and Reliable  
Infrastructure Systems**

**Responsible State  
Spending and Budgeting**

**Quality Educational  
Opportunities**

**Census and Redistricting**

**Conservation, Flooding  
and Quality of the  
Susquehanna River**

**Access to and  
Affordability of  
Health Care**

**Local-Police  
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Education**

**Community  
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**Addressing  
Addiction  
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**Penn Valley Airport**

**Highway Safety,  
Regulation and Hours  
of Service Laws**

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## **2018 Legislative Agenda**

### **Modern, Safe, Efficient and Reliable Infrastructure Systems**

The long-awaited Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway is under construction and gas is now flowing through the newly-constructed Sunbury Pipeline. These are but two examples of how adequately-funded, safe and reliable transportation and utility systems are shaping our valley's future. However, here in the Greater Susquehanna Valley, there is an on-going, yet urgent need to build, expand and connect affordable broadband/high speed internet technology to each part of our region. The Chamber supports the development of a public broadband/high speed internet map for the region which shows the current state of broadband capability in the region. In addition to this technology expansion, the Chamber will continue to advocate for additional pipelines to ensure that all areas that desire to be serviced by natural gas have access to this locally-produced energy resource. The Chamber will continue to be a "go-to" resource for businesses and agencies as they look for energy efficiencies in their operations and for utility and road construction policy makers and contractors as they renew and replace aging infrastructure in our valley. Chamber members applaud the recent merger of the various transit systems in our valley to a single operator and look forward to learning more about increased service levels that can be provided at reduced costs thanks to these mergers.

### **Responsible State Spending and Budgeting**

It is the core business of the Governor and our Legislators to pass a programmatically-responsible, fiscally-restrained, on-time state budget. With the significant pressure on available state finances, delaying the passage of such a budget would be detrimental to our members, to our area and to the state as a whole. The single-largest and ever increasing cost increase driver for our state budget is pension payments for state employees and for public school teachers. Given that these costs have risen to crisis proportions, they therefore must be dealt with first in the budget framing process by the Legislature and by the Governor. We strongly believe that any and all opportunities for cost-savings and other reforms should be exhausted, before new or higher taxes are considered. Chamber members reject the notion of choosing winners and losers in terms of increasing state taxes and fees on particular industries or economic sectors simply because there's a perception among some people that these industries/sectors aren't paying enough taxes. In particular, the Chamber strongly encourages budget framers not to unduly raise

taxes or fees on small businesses or on our budding energy sector. The Chamber would support the consideration of placing state sales tax on products and services that are purchased via the internet and a possible transmission fee on exported natural gas for potential new state revenues.

### **Conservation, Flooding and Quality of the Susquehanna River**

Our beloved Susquehanna River, the foundation of our very name, is one of our region's largest and most-precious resources. Many communities in our valley pull their drinking water from the river, and its recreational, sport and esthetic value is inestimable. The Susquehanna River is a true destination for many people to enjoy the river and nature. The Chamber supports science-based efforts that will preserve and improve the river and maintain its value for the residents of our valley for generations to come. Chamber members are closely monitoring proposed changes to the official flood area designations in our valley and encourage government officials at all levels to work cooperatively on the mitigation of potential flood hazards. The Chamber also advocates for discussion at all levels to include reforms which might influence the affordability and accessibility of flood insurance, while allowing for sensible expansion of business in the region.

### **Access to and Affordability of Health Care**

*"Healthcare reform starts here." Dr. David Feinberg, Geisinger Health System-President/CEO*

Healthcare costs continue to rise at unsustainable rates and levels. Many businesses and agencies are struggling to offer appropriate health-care benefits to their employees either through traditional or alternative coverage options. Based on Dr. Feinberg's admonition that healthcare reform can be driven locally, Chamber members will study the various proposals currently under consideration by the U.S. Congress and align with others to work on the repeal of any harmful provisions of Affordable Care Act. In particular, those provisions that are directly leading to unaffordable rates. Chamber members will accomplish this while working to maintain the high level of quality care and accessibility for employees. The Chamber aims to create affordable healthcare and healthcare insurance options particularly for small businesses. Also, the Chamber will work very closely with its medical sector members, including insurers, to advocate for policies and regulations that are fair, sound and helpful to this critically-important sector.

## **Community Development**

The Greater Susquehanna Valley is growing in leaps and bounds thanks to the hard work of its citizens and the remarkable infrastructure investments being made in the region. To correspond with that investment, the Chamber believes that there is a need to support our local government officials as they work to improve and strengthen the communities in our valley. The Chamber encourages its members and the employees of its members to be active in their communities in elected or appointed positions.

In turn, the Chamber invites and encourages municipalities to become Chamber members. The Chamber endorses the use of comprehensive planning at the municipal and county levels, while encouraging regionalization whenever possible and prudent. The Chamber supports efforts on the part of municipalities to build adequate capacity in their water and sewer services to support future growth, to guide land use so as to eliminate sprawl, as outlined in their comprehensive plans. The Chamber desires to present a platform upon which our members and their employees have a voice in local, state and national affairs. To insure that our valley has a large pool of trained and prepared leaders, the Chamber will continue to be a tireless advocate of and generous supporter to Leadership Susquehanna Valley.

## **Addressing Addiction Issues**

America is exceptional in large part due to its fundamental commitment to personal freedom. The freedom to succeed and the freedom to fail are equally protected. Unfortunately, this freedom can lead to destructive decisions that result in local residents becoming addicted to alcohol, legal and illegal drugs or other bad habits. In turn, these addictions result in employee absenteeism, poor performance, failure to pass background checks, and other employee issues that make our valley businesses less competitive. The Chamber supports, in concert with the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way, the work of locally-formed coalitions to educate the community and combat addictions. The Chamber also stands behind efforts to reform of the welfare system that results in this “safety net system” shifting from enabling to more of an encouraging or “hand-up” approach. Alternatives to costly incarceration such as drug courts and rehabilitation are applauded by Chamber members.

## **Quality Educational Opportunities**

The Greater Susquehanna Valley's prosperity depends upon a well-educated workforce. The Chamber supports an educational system that establishes clear accountability and provides every child with the opportunity to receive a quality education that will adequately prepare each of them for gainful employment or further education. The Chamber supports initiatives that help provide families with options to best fit the specific educational needs of the student, including early childhood education services, strong public and private education options, voucher programs, charter schools and Educational Improvement Tax Credit programs. Also, the Chamber recognizes the need for and benefit of vocational education in preparing students for the jobs in our area and will continue to support secondary educational facilities such as the SUN Area Technical Institute and the Northumberland County Career and Technology Center, as well as the McCann School of Business and Technology, Triangle Tech, the proposed new community college and apprenticeships, through the strategic launch of career exploration programs. Lifelong learning can be vital for workers in a constantly evolving economy and the Chamber supports workforce development programs that have clear performance criteria and are targeted to the employment needs of the business community. The Chamber strongly encourages its members and their employees to take advantage of the tuition reduction program offered through the Penn State World Campus.

## **Census and Redistricting**

As we head into the decade of the 2020s, the Chamber encourages the appropriate authorities to actively engage in obtaining an accurate and inclusive decennial census. Based on this census, and given that Pennsylvania will likely lose another Congressional seat, the Chamber further encourages those who will draw-up and propose new Congressional and State Legislative Districts to build upon and not harm the naturally-occurring cohesiveness of our rural area.

## **Local-Police Access to Radar**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that Pennsylvania has the fourth-highest number of speeding related fatalities and the highest percentage of speeding-related fatalities on local roadways in the nation. Despite this, Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation that prohibits municipal police from using radar to enforce speed limits. This prohibition

has great impact here in the Greater Susquehanna Valley, where fatalities due to speeding are on the rise, and these limits to local police force officers to use speed-timing systems which are more cumbersome, less reliable, and less safe than radar. For the safety of our local roadways, the Chamber encourages the State Legislature to enact legislation which will grant municipal leaders the necessary authority to safely and adequately monitor local roadways with radar.

### **The Chamber and Education**

A global and ever-modernizing workforce makes significant demands on today's students and their educators. The Chamber acknowledges that to meet these demands, school districts must be equipped with every available resource, including a strong connection to the business community. The Chamber also accepts the responsibility to engage educators by serving as the key connector between business and education.

The Chamber seeks to offer assistance to local school districts as they recognize students, facilitate workforce education, and as they measure the impact of local and state policy decisions on business and their communities. The Chamber will continue to offer to member school districts the decades-old, collaborative program called the "Young Americans", which recognizes excellence among students. Additionally, the Chamber will assist in promoting the availability of local career opportunities, through the development of its CareerBASICS program.

Finally, the Chamber seeks to connect elected officials and school administrators with member concerns about the potential economic impact of policy decisions, including those which may influence the starting date of the school year.

### **Penn Valley Airport**

Playing a critical role in the economic development and medical community of the Greater Susquehanna Valley, the Penn Valley Airport is strategically placed as the only aviation facility in the region where commercial jets and airplanes can land and take-off. As a "port in the storm" for local jets in a 3400 square mile radius, a conduit for the transportation of transplant organs to Geisinger Medical Center, and as a major connector for executive leadership in companies across the region, the Penn Valley Airport must be fully operational day and night to ensure the Valley's success. The Chamber supports the Penn Valley Airport Authority's requests for

clarification from the Federal Aviation Administration and for an expedited review of applications for the reinstatement of night-time operations on all runways at Penn Valley Airport.

### **Highway Safety, Regulation, and Hours of Service Laws**

The modular housing industry, as well as other small businesses who rely on the speedy and safe delivery across state lines of oversized loads, have faced uncertainty in the face of the federal government's institution of mandated Electronic Logging Devices and strict Hours of Service regulations for commercial drivers. Combined with the 268 sections of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR's) which were changed – either added, amended, suspended or removed in 2017 alone, these regulations constitute a serious and dangerous burden on small businesses who seek to comply with the law, but face consequences over enforcement confusion.

The Chamber of Commerce will work to assist these businesses in articulating their concerns to federal legislators as they seek relief from the burden of excessive federal regulations, while advocating for the safe and efficient travel through the region.