

# LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS 2010

## NATIONAL AFFAIRS SUB-COMMITTEE:

### Health Care Reform

The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County believes there is a need for meaningful Health Care Reform. However, we are opposed to the bills currently being debated in Congress. One struggles to see how meaningful reform can come from a Bill that contains over 2,000 pages.

Our membership believes meaningful reform would surround three key priorities:

#### 1) Cost Control using the strategies outlined below:

- Medical Liability Reform
- Health Information Technology
- Wellness & prevention programs
- Pay-for-performance reform
- Living wills and end-of-life issues
- Consumer-driven health options
- Administrative simplification
- FDA Pathway for biosimilars
- Comparative effective research
- Coordination of care
- Combating fraud & abuse
- Reinsurance
- Small business pooling of insurance
- Long-term care reform
- Tax parity – allowing individuals & small businesses to deduct the full cost of insurance

#### 2) Reforming the Insurance System

- Elimination of the use of pre-existing conditions or health status
- Guaranteed issue of a policy for individuals or entities
- Guaranteeing that policies will not be revoked
- Place reasonable limits on rating differences
- Subsidies for those who cannot afford coverage
- Individual obligations to obtain insurance

#### 3) Create a vibrant market place

- Create a national all-inclusive connector / exchange that removes fragmentation
- Should allow individuals and businesses from anywhere in the Country to enroll
- Should facilitate improved pooling mechanisms, choice & competition

## LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS 2010

Health Care Reform should not contain the following:

- Employer Mandates
- A Government Run Plan
- Increased Taxes on any class of Taxpayer
- Increasing the Federal Deficit

The Chamber is also concerned with the “sweeping” nature of the proposed changes. Reform should be implemented incrementally. Each change should be measured for its effectiveness.

### Employee Free Choice Act

Chambers of Commerce across America value our workforce. We acknowledge the economy is changing and our workforce must adapt to those changes in order to keep the American economy competitive. Our skilled workforce is what makes the American economy strong. Because we so greatly value our workforce, we take the following positions in regard to the Employee Free Choice Act:

- We oppose the “Card Check” provisions of the law. The right of a secret ballot for all American workers is one that should never be set aside. The American worker should not be disenfranchised by a ballot process that does not necessarily reflect their views.
- The Mediation provisions of the Act are onerous. They do not reflect the longstanding American principal that parties are obligated to bargain in good faith and are not compelled to agree to terms they believe will put them in jeopardy. Compulsory arbitration is the antithesis of free collective bargaining and would put the Government in the position of determining what is best for workers and businesses alike.
- The Act significantly increases penalties on employers for certain violation of labor laws. The lack of due process in the mandatory reinstatement provision and the conversion of the National Labor Relations Board from a remedial statute to a punitive one are troubling. The fact the new penalties are imposed only for employer violations {not Union} is telling of the lack of balance in the Bill.

These three provisions alone in the EFCA are enough to reject this Bill and start again with all interested parties at the table.

# LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS 2010

## Energy Policy

We support alternative energy and energy independence for America. We believe the policies must acknowledge the increase in demand for energy. It is projected that America's need for electricity alone will increase by 27% by the year 2030. The industry must be able to begin building the Infrastructure now to meet that demand.

Domestic Energy Policy must contain the following:

- Balance of environmental objectives with the need for job creation & economic Growth
- Promote technological growth and development that aid in the deployment of alternative resources [i.e., clean coal, nuclear, etc.]
- Reduce the barriers to alternative energy sources
- Promote energy efficiency
- Implement the appropriate steps to ensure that domestic energy policy does not put America at a competitive disadvantage with other countries.

## **STATE AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE:**

### Government Reform

The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County supports efforts to reform local government. To that end, we support the recommendations contained in the December 2007 Indiana Commission of Local Government Reform document – Streamlining Local Government [commonly known as the Kernan-Shepard Report]. We strongly support introduction of these measures by the legislature as a means to provide a more efficient delivery of government services.

### Property Tax Caps in the Indiana Constitution

SJR-1 is the bill to permanently place the 1-2-3 Circuit Breaker in the Indiana Constitution. We believe in the importance of permanently fixing the property tax system in Indiana. The legislature should have adopted a uniform tax rate for the Circuit Breaker such that classes of properties are not treated differently. Efforts to amend SJR-1 should be implemented such that the resolution continues to be debated. Additionally, the assessment system for Indiana continues to create problems for property owners. Significant reform is needed to meet the goal of simplifying the assessment system.

# LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS 2010

## Unemployment Trust Fund

The State of Indiana should delay any tax increases &/or attempts to resolve the financial stability of the Unemployment Trust Fund. Many States across the Country have funds that are in worse shape than Indiana's. Thus, it is believed that the Federal Government will have to help fix the problem. Efforts by the Indiana legislature may be counter-productive to those of the Federal Government and create additional tax burdens on businesses.

## **LOCAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT REFORM:**

### Government Reforms

- 1) The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County believes strongly in recommendation 1 of the Kernan-Shepard report. St. Joseph County residents and businesses alike should be served by a single County Executive. The 3 Commissioner system – where each serves a District – serves only to create parochialism and confusion.
- 2) The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County believes taxpayers should not pay for the same government services to multiple government entities. As an example, taxpayers should not have to pay for Parks to the County, City, and Township. To that end, we believe the Park systems should be combined in our community and one tax rate be set for all property tax payers.
- 3) The Chamber supports efforts to eliminate the Township level of Government.

### Tax Abatement

The Chamber supports the use of Tax Abatement as a tool for Economic Development. We believe a uniform ordinance should be drafted for all governmental bodies in the County so that confusion and intra-County competition is eliminated. The Ordinance should be one that promotes our community and its businesses and workers. It should promote completion in construction and development, and should reward behaviors embraced as vital to our community.

## **COLLECTIVE ACTION OF ALL COMMITTEES**

We believe High Speed Rail is vital to our community. As such the route chosen should include a stop in St. Joseph County. The rail should strive to reach the most populous centers along the Chicago to Cleveland Route. Thus, we believe it is not acceptable to place Ft. Wayne & South Bend in competition for stops. The Hybrid route proposed to INDOT is embraced as the best option for our community and Northern Indiana as a whole.

## LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS 2010

In the event South Bend is bypassed, significant investment to the South Shore is critical. The Western route to the airport must become a top priority for the State. Additionally, addressing the congestion along the line [including Michigan City] is vital to creating an acceptable alternate to the Chicago to Cleveland Route should South Bend be bypassed.