



Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Policy

VISION STATEMENT: *Our Chamber... the business force and foundation connecting the community through integrity, leadership, value, growth, and service.*

MISSION STATEMENT: *The mission of the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce is to create value and opportunity for our members with the belief that a positive business climate is an integral part of a healthy community.*

Introduction

The Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce recognizes that the legislative and regulatory actions of government at all levels - local, county, state and national - have a significant impact on the business community's ability to do business in the Crystal Lake area, and to compete regionally and globally.

The first goal in our Strategic Plan is "to create a vibrant business environment in the Crystal Lake area through advocacy and collaboration with local, state, and national agencies, organizations and units of government." Creating a vibrant business environment requires our participation in the legislative process. We must be an advocate for those issues that will benefit our membership and, we must keep our membership informed of legislation that will impact their business interests.

Issues, and resulting legislation, do not always wait for organizations to form opinions. Therefore, it is advantageous for the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce to have "position statements" prepared in advance for general areas of governing. These statements can serve as guidelines for our timely involvement in the legislative process and the timely and efficient communication of our position with the public.

This document is not meant to be an all-inclusive positional statement on all issues, present or future, nor should a blanket assumption be made that all Crystal Lake area businesses agree with every position taken in this document. It is meant to be the official positional statements of the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, and as such, a general representation of the positions of the membership of the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce on general areas of governing.

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Basic Infrastructure

A vibrant business environment requires adequate infrastructure for use by the business community. Likewise the ability to attract new business and new residents is dependent upon the community's basic infrastructure. The Chamber believes that:

- The Crystal Lake area will continue to grow and that government should plan for adequate infrastructure maintenance and growth.

- Maintaining the community infrastructure is the responsibility of all residents equally and therefore should be a priority item in the government's operating budget.
- Basic infrastructure includes streets, public transportation, sewers, storm water controls, police and fire protection, parks and recreational facilities, medical facilities and services, libraries and educational facilities, waste disposal, recycling as well as technology infrastructure.

Economic Development

Economic Development is the process by which a community may increase its ability to produce jobs, goods and services. The process utilizes the financial, human and natural resources available to, and within, the Crystal Lake area for the greater benefit of the Crystal Lake area. The Chamber is committed to the retention and expansion of existing business, the relocation of new businesses to the Crystal Lake area, and the start-up of new businesses in the Crystal Lake area. The Chamber believes that:

- All levels of government and private industry should be encouraged to enhance and/or create programs that stimulate the retention and expansion of existing businesses, the relocation of new businesses to the Crystal Lake area, and the start-up of new businesses in the Crystal Lake area.
- These programs should be available to businesses regardless of the size.
- Economic development programs may include infrastructure investments, tax credits, tax abatements, training grants and lowered interest loan programs.
- Activities that impede private capital investment in the Crystal Lake area should be reduced, or removed altogether.
- The greatest chance for Economic Development success will occur when there is active involvement and cooperative and collaborative effort by the City of Crystal Lake, the Crystal Lake business community, the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce, local and regional Economic Development organizations, the County of McHenry, the State of Illinois, and any federal organizations that might be applicable.

Education

The Chamber believes that:

- The vibrancy of the business environment is directly proportionate to the quality of the local educational system.
- The quality of the local educational system is a primary factor when families choose a new community.
- A goal of education in the Crystal Lake area should be to produce citizens with varied and marketable skills to become productive members of society.

Employee Relations

The Chamber is an active supporter of private enterprise as a tool for creating economic stability. The Chamber believes a fair and rewarding employment environment is best created by the voluntary actions of the employer, as opposed to government intervention, legislation and regulation.

The Chamber believes that:

- Every person should be treated fairly and with dignity in the workplace.
- Employers have a responsibility to comply with federal and state laws that protect individual rights.
- Drugs and alcohol have no place in the workplace and that employers should have the right to conduct drug tests on applicants and employees in a reasonable manner.
- Legislation should allow the ability of the employer and employee to negotiate the terms of employment and individuals should remain free to join or not join or pay or not pay money to labor organizations.
- The State of Illinois must protect the integrity and viability of the unemployment fund by maintaining strict requirements on the availability of unemployment compensation.

The Chamber supports:

- Legislation that supports the rights and responsibilities of management to effectively direct the operations of an enterprise, particularly in the area of employer / employee relations.
- The Equal Employment Opportunities Act.
- Legislation that does not mandate quota hiring by employers.
- Legislation that supports the “employment-at-will” doctrine beyond current fair labor laws.
- Employee benefit programs such as seniority, leaves of absence, parental leave, vacation, insurance, retirement pension, and believes that such programs are best determined by the business owners and managers, without the need for legislation.
- The protection of workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own.
- The administration of worker’s compensation programs with speed, fairness and maximum efficiency.

Environment

The Chamber believes that

- A strong and healthy economy can protect and conserve natural resources, thereby improving a community’s quality of life.
- It is the responsibility of all citizens, including corporate citizens, to be good stewards of the environment.

The Chamber supports:

- Legislation and regulation that provides a balanced approach between environmental protection and economic progress.
- Reduction or elimination of needless regulation and duplication in regulatory agencies and arbitrary or inflexible standards
- Legislation and regulation that streamline the building and environmental permitting process.

- The public or private purchase of undeveloped land, easements and development rights as laudable means of conserving natural places; and that the acquisition should be done with full landowner cooperation with the government's limited use of eminent domain.
- The principle that economic impact statements should accompany any new environmental legislation and regulation.

Finance and Taxation

The Chamber believes that:

- The fees and taxes exacted by the Crystal Lake area and McHenry County governments should be competitive with surrounding communities and representative of services provided.
- The fees and taxes exacted by the State of Illinois should be competitive with surrounding states and representative of the services provided.

The Chamber supports:

- Alternative funding sources to reduce local government's dependency on fees and taxes.
- Providing a framework for mitigation of, abatement of, and credit for taxes and fees in order to attract new business.

Good Government

The Chamber believes the following are general expectations of good government:

- Policies are stable and equitable, and sensitive to the realities of a market-driven economy, so that businesses can deal constructively with a reasonable volume of taxes, fees, laws and regulations.
- Government services are delivered with effectiveness and efficiency and with a high level of accountability to the taxpayer.
- A reasonable analysis of the cost and benefit has been presented to the public when considering the imposition of any tax, fee, law or regulation.
- There is reasonable access to government officials and staff, and that there is a reasonable effort to cooperate on matters of mutual benefit.
- Information about issues and decisions affecting Crystal Lake businesses and residents is delivered and explained in an accurate and timely fashion.
- The opportunity to participate in the government process is open and fair, and that representation on boards and commissions is reasonably balanced.
- Use of partnerships between the public and private sectors to accomplish public goals.
- A representative form of governing, and the right of free people to elect their representatives.
- Citizens have the right to petition their government representatives. However, the Chamber believes that citizen initiatives should be used sparingly to protect the viability of a representative form of government.
- The day-to-day operations and management of local governments should be entrusted to qualified professionals.
- The best and most effective regulator of business is the consumer. Government regulation of, and interference with, the free-enterprise system should be kept to a minimum.

Growth Management

The Chamber believes that:

- Regular, periodic assessments and adjustments of long term and short term strategic plans, comprehensive plans, and conceptual plans are necessary to better reflect the ever-changing needs of the community for the future, and to ensure high-quality economic growth in the future.
- All citizens should have access to safe and adequate housing opportunities.
- Formalized short-range and long-range plans are important growth management tools for the local governments.
- A market-driven approach to fulfilling the housing needs of the community is the best approach.

Quality of Life

The Crystal Lake area has a number of assets that contribute to a vibrant business environment. "Quality of Life" events are among those assets, and we assume a leadership role, collaborating with others to maintain and improve upon the existing events. The Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce believes that:

- Quality of life events and opportunities in the Crystal Lake area are an important part of our identity and the local economy.
- Quality of life events and opportunities are an asset that people seek out when considering relocating their families, employees and businesses to the Crystal Lake area.
- A variety of diverse artistic and cultural experiences within the Crystal Lake area improves the quality of life for the residents, and forms a more complete foundation for the future growth of the community.

Tourism

The Chamber believes that:

- A successful tourism program requires adequate funding, a variety of lodging and meeting facilities, a broad range of attractions and events, and a professionally managed program.
- Local hotel-motel taxes collected by the City of Crystal Lake should be used to promote tourism opportunities in Crystal Lake.
- The promotion of tourism in the Crystal Lake area is best accomplished by a collaborative effort between the City of Crystal Lake staff and representatives of the business community.

Transportation

The Chamber believes that:

- The transportation infrastructure (roadways, signals, mass transit services, air transport access, pedestrian, bicycle, and rail service) is one of the key factors in determining the economic health of a community.
- A vibrant business environment requires the development of transportation infrastructure that includes the highest level of safety, efficiency, and convenience.
- The transportation infrastructure should be planned to accommodate future growth of the community.
- Local businesses and local government should be involved in a collaborative and cooperative regional approach to transportation planning and development.

Work Force Development

The Chamber believes that:

- A vibrant business environment is directly related to the quantity and quality of the labor force.
- Programs and training that enhance the skills of the local work force are essential to preserving and improving our quality of life.

