

The background image features a large, ornate brick building with classical architectural details, including a prominent cornice with circular medallions. Two flags, the American flag and a Michigan state flag, fly from the roof. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. In the foreground, there are large, semi-transparent teal and light blue geometric shapes that overlap the bottom and right sides of the image. At the bottom, a blurred cityscape with modern buildings and trees is visible.

GRAND RAPIDS CHAMBER
**2023 ADVOCACY
PRIORITIES**

THE GRAND RAPIDS CHAMBER is focused on the issues that matter to our members, the job creators and engines of the economy. Our advocacy supports businesses of all sizes as we work to create a thriving and prosperous West Michigan for all.

INFLUENCERS

Congress, the Michigan Legislature, and local governments all make decisions that impact individual businesses and the regional business climate.

When this happens, your Chamber is at the table working to shape the policies to support a vibrant business climate and promote economic growth.

PROBLEM SOLVERS

We are an extension of your team – solving the issues that impact how you do business and allowing you the time to focus on the work that matters most – running your business.

- If a law or government department is impacting your business, we can help.
- If you are looking for support to address the talent shortage, we can help.
- If just need that “dang” sign permit or liquor license, we have the relationships and influence to cut through the red tape.

IN SHORT, IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO TO CALL, CALL US.

Want to get engaged? Contact katie@grandrapids.org



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COMMITTEES & COUNCILS



Education & Workforce Development Committee



Public Policy Council



Health Care & Human Resources Committee



Municipal Council



Infrastructure & Natural Resources Committee



Tax & Regulatory Affairs Committee

CRITICAL ISSUES FOR A COMPETITIVE WEST MICHIGAN

Our member-driven advocacy is working to improve the West Michigan economy and quality of life. In 2023, our core focus will be:

A VIBRANT BUSINESS CLIMATE

The Grand Rapids area is home to a diverse set of industries. We are focused on the ease of doing business, advocating to minimize burdensome regulations and eliminating barriers to employment while supporting an inclusive workplace for all. Currently we are focused on:

- Health care affordability 
- Infrastructure including a reliable, competitive energy system 
- Unemployment system reform  
- A competitive tax environment 
- Sound budgeting and addressing unfunded liabilities 
- Expansion of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act 
- Sensible regulation and oversight    

A TALENTED MICHIGAN

Our economic success depends on a strong education and talent system – from birth to career – to meet the demands of a future where we are continuing to grow in West Michigan. The Chamber advocates for policies that would boost student outcomes and enhance and grow our talent pool. Currently we are focused on:

- Going Pro Talent Fund expansion 
- Our childcare system  
- K-12 accountability 
- Criminal justice reform  
- Vibrant and welcoming downtown 

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

West Michigan leads the state in population and job growth. Our success has created new challenges, including increasing concerns over housing availability and affordability. We are also focused on strong local government leadership, being a welcoming community to ALL and successfully deploying once-in-a-lifetime federal relief dollars effectively. We're focused on cross-sector solutions to make the Grand Rapids-area a place anyone can call home. Currently we are focused on:

- Housing solutions at the state and local level 
- Connected and mobile communities  
- Business community engagement in local issues 
- Highest and best use of federal relief funds   
- Kent County Welcome Plan implementation   

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

IMPROVING MICHIGAN'S EDUCATION SYSTEMS & OUTCOMES

Advocate for evidence-based policies that develop a strong talent system from a holistic, birth through career approach.

- Encourage high quality public-private partnerships
- Advance equitable funding and practices
- Expand diverse learning options for students (e. g. school of choice, skilled trades, dual enrollment)
- Measure and report data-driven outcomes (e.g. 3rd Third Grade Reading, MSTEP, A-F system)
- Strengthen & grow early childhood education access and affordability
- Improve childcare access, quality and affordability.
- Support policies to recruit, retain, develop and motivate top educational talent.



BUILDING A TALENTED MICHIGAN

Talent is the top issues for West Michigan employers. These policies will build a strong talent pipeline and drive our region's success.

- Expand funding for evidence-based workforce development programs (e.g. Going Pro Talent Fund, Fast Track)
- Support programs that remove barriers to employment (e.g. childcare, ESL, mental health needs, mobility, benefits cliff)
- Encourage collaboration between businesses & education
- Support policies that attract & retain top talent (e.g. veterans, returning citizens, and immigrants)
- Retain Michigan's college graduates in-state



HEALTH CARE & HUMAN RESOURCES PRIORITIES



HEALTH CARE

Make health care more attainable and cost-effective through flexibility, transparency, providing multiple care options, and offering a choice of insurance & provider.

- Advocate to reduce the cost of prescription medications
- Enhance and expand telehealth
- Oppose additional benefit mandates
- Increase access to mental health care
- Promote collaborative care initiatives (e.g. value-based models, population health, quintuple aim)
- Promote education and transparency to empower healthy living and healthcare decision-making

HUMAN RESOURCES

Fair and affordable employment laws that provide the employers the flexibility to manage their workforce and employee's needs—with limited governmental involvement or regulation.

- Oppose government mandates that hinder economic growth (e.g. federal overtime regulation, minimum, living and prevailing wage)
- Defend Adopt & Amend paid sick leave and minimum wage legislation
- Expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity
- Ensure the solvency of the state's unemployment compensation trust fund and reduce fraud
- Protect Michigan's Right to Work Act

INFRASTRUCTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES PRIORITIES



A CONNECTED AND MOBILE GRAND RAPIDS

Advocate for improvements to enhance connectivity and accessibility in West Michigan.

- Advance major road and infrastructure projects
- Ensure development coordination to maximize impact and use of taxpayer dollars
- Support the fair distribution of road funding
- Support innovative mobility/EV implementation

SENSIBLE REGULATION AND OVERSIGHT

Advocate for responsible regulations that protect our natural resources and do not impose unreasonable burdens on business

- Advocate for responsible, streamlined, cost-effective and consistent practices and processes within EGLE (e.g. permitting process)
- Support common sense environmental regulations (air, water, remediation, redevelopment)

PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

Advocate for projects that meet the needs of a growing and prosperous West Michigan.

- Identify and support regional transformational projects (e.g. Grand River restoration)
- Support competitive energy policies (e.g. Line 5)
- Effective and market driven climate change efforts
- Support continued Great Lakes restoration
- Advocate for stormwater, drain and sewer funding and maintenance



TAX & REGULATORY AFFAIRS PRIORITIES

A COMPETITIVE MICHIGAN

Promote a simple, fair and efficient business tax and regulatory system, making Michigan the premier place to locate and grow a business.

- Advocate for smart, responsible and sustainable state & federal budgets
- Support the elimination the Personal Property Tax for all payers
- Support tax provisions that are competitive and allow for the State to attract and retain a broad base of business investment and talented employees
- Oppose the expansion of Sales and Use Tax on services.
- Pursue efficiencies at all levels of government to reduce the costs and tax liability
- Increase government transparency
- Eliminate unnecessary regulations and support reforms that make it easier to start and operate and business.



THE FRIENDS OF WEST MICHIGAN BUSINESS – CHAMBER PAC

The Chamber PAC is an essential tool for building relationships and supporting highly qualified candidates for state and local office. It is funded by voluntary contributions of personal funds from dozens of members, and not supported by member dues, sponsorships, etc. Much like our policy process, we understand the controversial nature of the endorsement process and take it very seriously. The PAC has its own board and bylaws and follows a rigorous process for all endorsements.



All candidates receive an invitation to participate after the filing deadline. The process requires a completed candidate questionnaire based on the priorities established by the issue committees, and an interview with a team of PAC contributors and Board members. The interview teams review questionnaires, background, and interviews all candidates seeking endorsement. They then make recommendations to the PAC Board which considers them before making the final decision that requires a two-thirds majority vote.