



CAPITAL REGION CHAMBER



2017 Legislative Agenda & Advocacy Resource Guide



VISION

At the Center of New York's Tech Valley is the Capital Region, which works across geographic and political boundaries, and is known for its thriving economy and vibrant quality of life.

MISSION

The Capital Region Chamber is a unifying force for change to provide greater influence and opportunities for our members and Capital Region communities.

LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

Regional Advancement: Be an impetus and resource to foster a regional perspective for the Capital Region community to realize its full potential.

Public Policy: Be an advocate for policies and projects that will improve the business climate and enhance the economic vitality of the region.

Dear Valued Stakeholder:

Without question, the 2016 Legislative Session took a heavy toll on the state's business community and many opportunities to improve New York's business climate were missed by lawmakers in Albany. However, the Capital Region Chamber will use the 2017 Legislative Session to renew and redouble our efforts to promote policies and projects that will improve the business climate and enhance the economic vitality of our Capital Region communities.

We are pleased to present our 2017 Business Advocacy Resource Guide. It includes our advocacy agenda, a directory of elected officials, a legislative session calendar, along with helpful suggestions when communicating with public officials.

Our advocacy agenda reflects the diversity of our Chamber's 2,600 members from throughout the Capital Region who employ more than 150,000 area citizens, as well as the broad public policy issues confronting the Capital Region and New York State. Throughout the 2017 Legislative Session, we will encourage pro-business initiatives and work against legislation that could be harmful to our community and economy.

With your support, your Chamber will continue to be a strong and trusted voice in the halls of government. To help advocate or to discuss any public policy issues, large or small, please contact Tom O'Connor, Director of Government Relations, at 518-431-1413 or at toconnor@capitalregionchamber.com.

Thank you for working with us to secure a vibrant future for the Capital Region!

Sincerely,



Denise Gonick
*Chair, Capital Region Chamber
CEO, MVP Health Care*



Richard Sleasman
*Chair, Government Affairs Committee
President & Managing Director
CBRE - Albany*

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2017 CAPITAL REGION BUSINESS ADVOCACY AGENDA

TOP THREE PRIORITIES

- 1. Ridesharing:** The Chamber will be a vocal advocate to enable ride-sharing, like Uber and Lyft;
- 2. School Funding:** The Chamber will push for equitable state school funding for urban districts that is aimed at improving student outcomes and lowering the tax levy imposed by school districts. The school districts in the cities of Albany, Schenectady, and Troy are vital to the economic well-being of the Capital Region. Stronger schools and a more competitive tax rate will lead to reinvestment in neighborhoods and business districts and a growing tax base;
- 3. Business Climate Change:** The Chamber will advocate for regulatory reforms that will improve the state's current business climate, particular in light of the several anti-business mandates that were approved last year. Unless meaningful action is taken, New York State's business climate will not improve.

KEY ISSUE AREAS

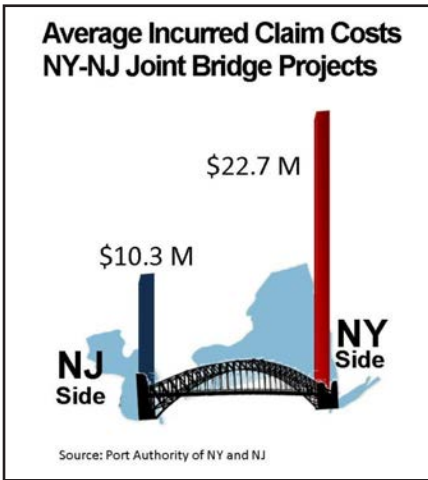
Taxes/Regulations/Government Operations

Continue the emphasis on making New York State and the Capital Region more competitive through mandate relief, responsible stewardship of local finances, and reducing significant state and local regulatory and tax burdens.

- **Support broad-based tax reform:**
 - A permanent property tax cap that is coupled with meaningful mandate relief. It is an absolute necessity to provide municipal government with appropriate state aid and mandate relief;
 - The reduction of burdensome, outdated and complex business taxes;
 - A permanent and broad personal income tax reduction to provide relief and help sustain small businesses;
 - Accelerated estate tax reductions;
- **Support policies that promote the sharing economy and ensure New York State's competitiveness in this innovative marketplace;**

■ **Support business-backed tort reform legislation:**

- Reforms to the Scaffold Law, which imposes absolute liability on employers and property owners when construction workers are injured in elevation-related accidents, regardless of whether the worker refused to use safety equipment or was impaired by drugs or alcohol. Any reform must adopt a comparative negligence standard thereby leveling the playing field and reducing costs for small businesses, farms, municipalities, school districts, and ultimately taxpayers;



- Support further reforms and improvements of the workers' compensation system such as modernizing the rating system through which schedule loss-of-use awards are determined by updating applicable medical treatment guidelines and eliminating or modifying the indexing of maximum weekly benefits to control growing program costs;
- Oppose legislation to impose significant new procedural requirements on economic development assistance provided by state and local public authorities;

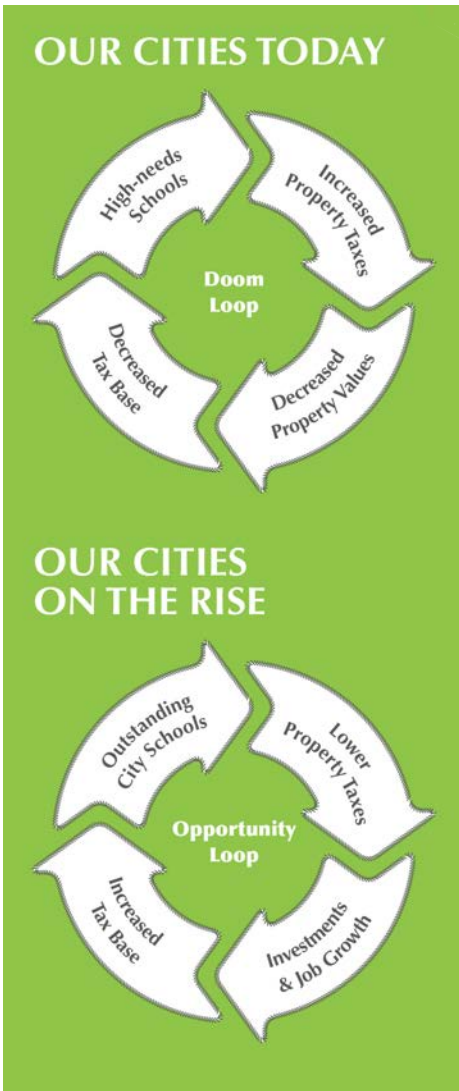
- **Oppose unfunded state mandates on local governments:**
 - The repeal of Wicks Law, which subject school districts and other local governments to separate plumbing, heating/ventilation/air conditioning and electrical contracts, significantly increasing project expenses from 8% to 30%;
- **Support legislation to reprivatize NYRA;**
- **Oppose the use of Messages of Necessity for Budget Bills. The public must have time to review and comment on these important bills;**
- **Support Taylor Law reforms to encourage public employers and employees to work together to achieve labor contracts that are equitable;**
- **Oppose efforts at the state level to regulate toxic substances. This issue must be addressed at the federal level by Congress through updates to the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA).**



Education/Workforce Development

Businesses rely on a qualified workforce to successfully operate. A skilled workforce is therefore critical to regional job growth and prosperity. The Chamber supports education policies and workforce development initiatives that are available to students and workers at all levels so that they are ready to enter and re-enter the job market.

- Support fair and equitable state funding among all school districts. Today, some school districts receive more than 100% of the State aid that the school aid formula suggests, while other districts receive less than 60%. This inequitable distribution of school aid has negatively impacted the Albany, Schenectady and Troy city school districts;



- Support policies that expand access to high-quality workforce training programs and early learning programs;
- Support education models to better prepare students for entry into career and/or college:
 - Efforts to improve science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education;
 - Expanded access to innovative education models and multiple pathways to graduation;
- Continue to support higher standards for education and assessments;
- Support efforts to address teacher quality and retention concerns;
- Support evaluating the government employment and training system to better align resources for employers and job seekers;
- Support increasing funding for community colleges toward customized industry training and equipment.

Employment

Growing private sector jobs is key to the Capital Region's economic future. Regulations and mandates have a significant impact on a company's competitive position in attracting and retaining high-quality personnel. The Chamber believes employers are best suited for determining the terms and conditions of employment based on their financial condition and competitive position. We must encourage state and federal governments to pursue pro-employment policies.

- Support efforts to strengthen the Capital Region's ties to the advanced materials, bio/life sciences, clean-tech/energy, homeland security/defense, information technology and nanotechnology/semiconductor industries;
- Support efforts that effectively and equitably encourage the growth of Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE);
- Support programs that assist veterans and disabled veterans with business ownership and employment opportunities;
- Support legislation authorizing non-CPAs to be minority owners of CPA firms;

- **Support federal immigration reform:**
 - Increasing the availability of temporary skilled-worker (H-1B) visas;
 - Increasing the availability of permanent-resident visas (green cards) for STEM graduates and workers;
 - Creation of new-startup visas for immigrant entrepreneurs who launch businesses in the U.S. and meet certain employment and financing goals;
- **Support the growth of the tourism sector to expand economic opportunities;**
- **Oppose prevailing wage mandates on private projects that receive public funds or financial assistance;**
- **Oppose efforts to prohibit employers from using consumer credit reports in hiring and employment decisions;**
- **Support measures that would bring the unemployment insurance trust fund into solvency by achieving timely and affordable repayments. Avoid shifting additional tax burdens to stable employers.**

Healthcare

As healthcare costs and confusion rise, many employers and working families continue to experience difficulties finding coverage. The Chamber remains a trusted source for health insurance, meeting the needs of our membership and seeking reforms for individuals and small businesses.

- **Support affordable and comprehensive access to health insurance and a robust healthcare system without imposing new mandates and/or taxes on businesses or individuals;**
- **Support reforming the medical tort system to make costs more affordable and predictable;**
- **Oppose any additional health insurance tax as a means to sustain New York State's Health Exchange;**
- **Oppose efforts to mandate health care staffing ratios.**

Transportation/Infrastructure

Infrastructure is an important asset for all businesses and residents. Without the proper investment, our economic stability, potential for job growth and competitiveness are threatened.

- Support legislation to allow ride-share, like Uber and Lyft, to operate in Upstate New York;
- Support investment in our aging water and sewer infrastructure;
- Support expansion and permanent extension of the design-build method of project delivery;
- Remain a leading advocate for increased flight service and competitive pricing to/from the Albany International Airport;
- Support increased funding for continued improvements at the Port of Albany. As shippers look to increase their use of East Coast ports, it is critical that improvements be made at the port in order to further attract the shipping industry;
- Support expansion of CDTA's Bus Plus (Bus Rapid Transit) and green initiatives in the Capital Region;
- Support funding to reduce congestion within the Capital Region's passenger rail system, as well as the creation of express trains from Albany to New York City;
- Support Amtrak routes in New York to provide roll-on services for bicycles or allow unboxed bikes to be checked as baggage;
- Support continued upstate/downstate parity in state investments in transportation infrastructure.

We Need Your Help!

Please help the Capital Region Chamber bring Ridesharing to Upstate New York. If you want Uber and Lyft, tell the Legislature and the Governor that you support the Senate's Ridesharing Bill!



Want
Uber
&
Lyft?



Contact
Your
Legislator
and the
Governor



Tell Them
Upstate
Needs
Ridesharing!

Energy

New York State consumers pay some of the highest energy prices in the nation. Physical limitations in bringing electricity to the Capital Region from power producers outside of our region are creating congestion that is driving up costs significantly.

- Support upgrading the state's high-voltage electric transmission system in a manner consistent with competitive wholesale energy markets to make pricing more competitive in upstate communities;
- Given EPA's recent study, encourage the reconsideration of DEC's temporary ban on hydraulic fracturing in New York State.

Downtown Revitalization

Thriving downtowns and urban business districts are essential to the long-term economic health of the Capital Region.

- Support enhanced historic rehabilitation tax credits;
- Support an asbestos remediation tax credit to promote the redevelopment and reuse of existing underutilized properties;
- Support reforms to the brownfield program to include certain superfund and RCRA sites, and to expedite review and approval of remediation projects;
- Support integrated policies that support urban redevelopment, including transit and mobility options that include bike and pedestrian enhancements;
- Support efforts to improve the availability of capital from both conventional and unconventional sources to attract investment for housing, retail, business expansion, mixed-use and other downtown projects;
- Support legislation that would allow IDAs to make loans.

Tips for Communicating with Elected Officials

- **Be brief.** A legislator's time is limited. So is yours.
- **Be appreciative.** Acknowledge previous support and current action.
- **Be specific.** Don't be general.
- **Be informative and factual.** Give reasons and provide the supporting materials.
- **Be courteous and polite.** Treat them as you would want to be treated. Ask for a specific action without being demanding or threatening.
- **Be reasonable.** Remember it's all right to have a difference of opinion.
- **Be realistic.** Issues may need to be resolved through compromise.
- **Be understanding.** Put yourself in the legislator's position to try and understand his/her concerns and goals.
- **Be knowledgeable and evaluate issues.**
The introduction of a legislative bill doesn't mean that it will become law. Don't get too excited about it until you've learned the who, what and why of it.

Ways to Communicate to Your Elected Officials

Letters

Letters are still the primary means to communicate with public officials. They represent voters, are read and elicit responses. Letters can be informal or formal, typewritten or handwritten. Due to security issues, letters to federal officials, in particular, may take a longer period of time to reach the officials.

Office Visits

Call in advance to set up an appointment and explain the nature of your visit. Do your homework and make sure you understand the official's position on a particular issue. You may consider inviting other individuals from like companies with similar concerns, and don't be bashful about inviting the official to your place of business. Elected officials rely heavily on their staff for guidance, information, research and more, so it is important to get to know their staff.

Telephone Calls

Always be concise, and discuss only one issue per telephone call. If the issue is in regard to a particular bill, provide the bill number and state your position. Explain how the bill impacts your business and why you support or oppose it. Make phone calls sparingly.

Email

Depending on the legislator, email can be an effective way to communicate when issues are time sensitive and the need for action is critical. Keep your message short and to one screen, so the official doesn't have to scroll his/her way through the text. Always provide complete contact information in your email, including address, phone and fax numbers and email addresses.

2017 Capital Region Legislative Directory

FEDERAL OFFICIALS

U.S. SENATOR

KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

478 Russell Senate Bldg. | Washington, D.C. 20510
202.224.4451 | www.gillibrand.senate.gov

U.S. SENATOR

CHARLES SCHUMER

322 Hart Senate Bldg. | Washington, D.C. 20510
202.224.6542 | www.schumer.senate.gov

CONGRESSMAN

JOHN FASO | 19th Congressional District

1616 Longworth HOB | Washington, D.C. 20515
202.225.5614 | www.faso.house.gov

CONGRESSWOMAN

ELISE STEFANIK | 21st Congressional District

318 Cannon HOB | Washington, D.C. 20515
202.225.4611 | www.stefanik.house.gov

CONGRESSMAN

PAUL TONKO | 20th Congressional District

2463 Rayburn | Washington, D.C. 20515
202.225.5076 | www.tonko.house.gov

NEW YORK STATE OFFICIALS

GOVERNOR

ANDREW M. CUOMO

State Capitol | Albany, NY 12224
518.474.8390 | www.governor.ny.gov

ATTORNEY GENERAL

ERIC T. SCHNEIDERMAN

State Capitol | Albany, NY 12224
518.474.7330 | www.oag.state.ny.us

COMPTROLLER

THOMAS P. DINAPOLI

110 State Street | Albany, NY 12236
518.474.4044 | www.osc.state.ny.us

2017 Capital Region Legislative Directory

NEW YORK STATE SENATE

SENATOR

GEORGE AMEDORE | 46th Senate District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 802 | Albany, NY 12247
518.455.2350 | amedore@nysenate.gov

SENATOR

NEIL BRESLIN | 44th Senate District
Albany Office | Capitol Rm. 414 | Albany, NY 12247
518.455.2225 | breslin@nysenate.gov

SENATOR

KATHLEEN A. MARCHIONE | 43rd Senate District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 918 | Albany, NY 12247
518.455.2381 | marchione@nysenate.gov

SENATOR

JAMES TEDISCO | 49th Senate District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 711 | Albany, NY 12247
518.455.2181 | tedisco@nysenate.gov

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

PATRICIA FAHY | 109th Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 452 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.4178 | fahyp@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

PETER LOPEZ | 102nd Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 402 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5363 | lopezp@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

JOHN T. MCDONALD, III | 108th Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 417 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.4474 | mcdonaldj@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

STEVEN F. MCLAUGHLIN | 107th Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 533 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5777 | mclaughlins@nyassembly.gov

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ASSEMBLYMEMBER

ANGELO SANTABARBARA | 111th Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 654 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5197 | santabarbaraa@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

DANIEL STEC | 114th Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 940 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5565 | stecd@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

PHIL STECK | 110th Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 819 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5931 | steckp@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

MARY BETH WALSH | 112th Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 404 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5772 | walsh@nyassembly.gov

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

CARRIE WOERNER | 113th Assembly District
Albany Office | LOB Rm. 323 | Albany, NY 12248
518.455.5404 | woernerc@nyassembly.gov





New York State Legislative Session Calendar



January - June 2017

The New York State Legislative Session Calendar establishes a schedule for the 2017 Legislative Session and provides dates important to the legislative process. The Session Calendar is intended to afford Members flexibility in conducting legislative business in Albany and planning activities within their home districts. The Session Calendar will foster orderly and timely consideration of legislation. Unforeseen events may require modification of the Session Calendar.

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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29	30	31				

FEBRUARY						
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MARCH						
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APRIL						
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30						

MAY						
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28	29	30	31			

JUNE						
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

- January 4** 2017 Legislative Session convenes with Governor's State-of the State
- January 9** Start of sessions
- January 16** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- January 17** Final Day for Submission of Executive Budget
- February 20** Presidents' Day
- April 1** Beginning of new Fiscal Year
- May 29** Memorial Day observed

Indicates session day

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Government Affairs Committee works with the Chamber's professional staff to help identify and analyze issues, define objectives and make policy recommendations to the Board of Directors.

2017 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Richard Sleasman, Chair

CBRE - Albany

Dawn Abbuhl

Repeat Business Systems

Richard Antokol

Antokol, Reisman & Coffin

Raimundo Archibold

Schwartz Heslin Group

Richard Barlette

NYISO

John Calareso

The Calareso Law Firm, PLLC

Nancy Carey Cassidy

Picotte Companies

Robert Davey

TD Bank

Lawrence DeAngelus

Higgins, Roberts &
Suprunowicz, PC

Kevin Egan

Charter Communications, Inc.

Michael Esposito

Auto/Mate Dealership
Systems

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SaxBST

Peter Gannon

Arsenal Business &
Technology Partnership

Clifford Lawrence, Jr.

Verizon

Neil Levine

Whiteman Osterman &
Hanna

Kirk M. Lewis

Schenectady ARC

Kevin J. McCoy

Marvin & Company, CPAs, PC

Peter Melewski, PE

McLaren Engineering
Group

William J. Mather, Sr.

HMS Agency, Inc.

Brian Merriam

Merriam Insurance Agency

David W. Meyers, Esq.

Meyers & Meyers, LLP

Edward Neary

Colonie Senior Service
Centers, Inc.

**Maureen J. O'Brien-
Thornton**

The Leukemia &
Lymphoma Society

Kevin O'Connor

FirstLight Fiber

Laura Siracuse

M&T Bank

David Smingler

Ellis Medicine

Phillip D. Tiberio

EOS Technologies

Michael B. Whalen, Jr.

M&T Bank