

2016 Capital Region Business Advocacy Resource Guide





VISION

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

MISSION

To be a unifying force 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:

With the recent completion of our chamber integration, the Capital Region Chamber is providing you with a stronger voice in the halls of government. Through our engagement at all levels, we 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 2016 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 2,800 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 2016 Legislative Session, we will encourage pro-business initiatives and work against legislation that could be harmful to our community and economy.

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!



Kevin J. McCoy
Chair, Capital Region Chamber
Managing Director
Marvin & Company CPAs, PC



Richard P. Sleasman
Chair, Gov't Affairs Committee
President & Managing Director
CBRE - Albany

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2016 CAPITAL REGION BUSINESS ADVOCACY AGENDA

Taxes/Regulations

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.**

- Support 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;
- Support the reduction of burdensome, outdated and complex business taxes;
- Support a permanent and broad personal income tax reduction to provide relief and help sustain small businesses;
- Support accelerated estate tax reductions;

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

- Support 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:**
 - Support 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 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

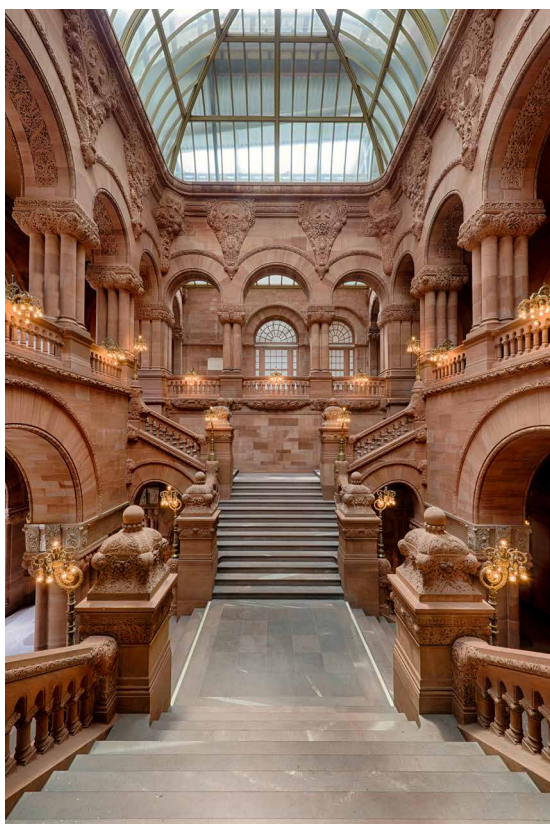
Businesses rely on a qualified workforce to successfully operate. A skilled workforce is therefore critical to regional job growth and prosperity. The Chamber supports education policies and workforce development initiatives that are available to students and workers at all levels so that they are ready 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:**
 - Support efforts to improve science,

technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education;

- Support 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 SUNY 2020** which will elevate SUNY as a catalyst for economic growth;
- **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.

- **Oppose an increase in the minimum wage** to \$15 per hour and the use of Wage Boards to mandate such increases;
- **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:**
 - Support increasing the availability of temporary skilled-worker (H-1B) visas;
 - Support increasing the availability of permanent-resident visas (green cards) for STEM graduates and workers;
 - Create 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 mandates to provide for sick time** and paid family leave;
- **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.

- **Continue to be a leading advocate for the reconstruction of Exit 4**, providing direct access from the Northway/I-87 to the Albany International Airport;
- **Support expansion and permanent extension** of the design-build method of project delivery;

- **Support legislation to allow ride-share**, like Uber and Lyft, and car-share to operate in the Capital Region;
- **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 upstate/downstate parity** in state investments in transportation infrastructure.

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 IDA's 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.

2016 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

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

CONGRESSMAN

CHRIS GIBSON | 19th Congressional District
1708 Longworth HOB | Washington, D.C. 20515
202.225.5614 | www.gibson.house.gov

CONGRESSMAN

ELISE STEFANIK | 21st Congressional District
512 Cannon HOB | Washington, D.C. 20515
202.225.4611 | www.stefanik.house.gov

CONGRESSMAN

PAUL TONKO | 20th Congressional District
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2016 Capital Region Legislative Directory

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SENATOR

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SENATOR

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New York State Legislative Session Calendar



January - June 2016

The New York State Legislative Session Calendar establishes a schedule for the 2016 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
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

February						
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31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29					

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

April						
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					1	2
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May						
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

- January 6** 2016 Legislative Session convenes with Governor's State-of-the State
- January 11** Start of sessions
- January 18** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- January 19** Final Day for Submission of Executive Budget
- February 15** Presidents' Day
- April 1** Beginning of new Fiscal Year
- May 30** Memorial Day observed

Indicates session day



Indicates legislative activity/budget hearing

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.

2016 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair: Richard Sleasman

CBRE - Albany

Richard Antokol

Antokol, Reisman & Coffin

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

Stephen Ferraro

SaxBST

Peter Gannon

Arsenal Business &
Technology Partnership

Neil Levine

Whiteman Osterman &
Hanna

Kirk Lewis

Schenectady ARC

William J. Mather, Sr.

HMS Agency, Inc.

Kevin J. McCoy

Marvin & Company, CPAs, PC

Brian Merriam

Merriam Insurance Agency

David W. Meyers, Esq.

Meyers & Meyers, LLP

John Mucha

Time Warner Cable

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

The Leukemia & Lymphoma
Society

Kevin O'Connor

FirstLight Fiber

Laura Siracuse

Ballston Spa National Bank

David Smingler

Ellis Medicine

Phillip D. Tiberio

EOS Technologies

Michael B. Whalen

M&T Bank

Marcia White

Saratoga Performing Arts
Center

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CDPHP® and the **Capital Region Chamber** share a goal of serving the community we're so proud to be a part of.

CDPHP cares about local businesses and residents and strives to fulfill their current and future needs.

We take pride in our history and reputation for providing award-winning products, programs, and services designed to keep our members healthy.

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