

2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT



We are your voice at the state capitol

This year, more than 600 bills were introduced during the state legislative session, many affecting your bottom line and how you run your business. The Chamber & EDC advocates on your behalf, engaging with lawmakers and partners across the state to seek a positive business climate that allows Pikes Peak region businesses to grow and thrive, and secure a strong state economy. Together, we are a strong collective voice.

Every fall, we craft our legislative agenda based on input from member businesses, the Chamber & EDC Board of Directors, Board of Governors, and Government Affairs Council members. You can join these discussions by attending our Legislative Round Table, town hall meetings, legislative updates, and other programs we host throughout the year.

2021 Legislative Priorities



COVID RECOVERY

Our goal: Support policies to help recover jobs and revenue lost due to the pandemic, especially in the hospitality industry.



BUSINESS CLIMATE

Our goal: Promote business-friendly fiscal, labor, and regulatory policies, mitigate the effects of anti-business legislation, and reduce the number of laws creating new costs and regulations to businesses.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Our goal: Support policies and funding that provide local governments and housing developers the tools they need to increase our stock of affordable housing, and remove obstacles to affordable housing development.



TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Our goal: Dedicated annual funding from the state's general fund budget to roads, bridges, and transit on regional transportation corridors of statewide significance, as well as new revenue to help the state address our \$9 billion capacity and maintenance backlog.



Covid Recovery

- Advocated to extend authorization for cocktails to-go, providing much needed revenue to our restaurant industry.
- Supported numerous bills in the Governor's stimulus package, including funds to upskill displaced workers, allow retailers to retain sales tax they collected, increase childcare capacity for workers, and fund a small business accelerated growth program.
- We opposed a bill to ban single-use plastics such as to-go boxes and cutlery that restaurants rely on for

takeout business, an important source of revenue for restaurants still recovering from pandemic closures. The bill was amended to address restaurant owner concerns and reduce their costs, including granting restaurants an exemption to the takeout-bag ban.



Helped to pass \$10 million in meetings and events incentives, aiding the hospitality industry, which lost \$5.7 billion and thousands of jobs in 2020.

Business Climate

- Our advocacy helped kill SB 21-176, which would have significantly increased cost and liability to businesses by changing the definition of who is an employee, making you liable for independent contractors and subcontractors, changing the definition of harassment and discrimination, creating new, poorly-defined protected classes, and fining you if you did not do state-sanctioned training on time.
- We opposed HB 21-1286, which required owners of large buildings to benchmark their energy use against similar buildings and reduce energy use to a standard to be determined by the state, or face onerous and punitive fines. The proposal would have been difficult and costly for businesses to implement, and conflicted with federal laws. The bill was amended to reduce fines, create waivers for financial hardship and other extenuating circumstances, and activated a task force that includes building owners and businesses to provide input on future program rules.

- We met with legislators early in the session to discuss two major tax bills, HB 21-1311 and HB 21-1312, to understand their goals and help them understand how proposed changes would affect businesses. Thanks in part to our advocacy – this year and over the past two years – we were able to protect an important local tax credit that legislators wanted to eliminate. Instead of cutting it, it was reconfigured.
- We opposed the public healthcare option, which capped prices for healthcare services without addressing the actual drivers of the costs, leading to cost-shifting to private employer insurance plans and healthcare-sector job losses. The bill passed with numerous amendments that partially addressed employer concerns.



Through our advocacy on SB 176, we saved El Paso County employers \$10.5 – \$130.5 million annually in legal fees.

Affordable Housing

- We supported the creation of a single internet portal for all new business regulations and rule-making hearings, making it easier for employers to find, understand, and shape regulations pertaining to your businesses.
- Supported bills to promote the conversion of unused state-owned properties and privately-owned motels to affordable housing.



Advocated for \$46 million in state funding to local governments to help them plan and implement best practices that lead to affordable housing development.

Transportation Funding

- We raised concerns about new costly and confusing environmental regulations that are layered on top of existing state and federal regulations. We were able to amend the bill to grant an exemption to projects that already completed the federal environmental process.
- We supported formation of the Front Range Passenger Rail District to advance planning of a future commuter rail line from Pueblo to Ft. Collins.



Working with statewide business partners, we helped to negotiate more general fund dollars for transportation in SB 21-260, a massive transportation and environment bill.