



Legislative Report 2016

The Regional Business Alliance is the premier advocate for the Colorado Springs business community at the Colorado State Capitol. Through a well-vetted, inclusive process, Regional Business Alliance members, staff and contract lobbyists sift through the vast number of bills introduced—685 in the 2016 session—and key in on those that would have a significant impact on business or our regional economy.

As the working group for the Regional Business Alliance, the Governmental Affairs Council and staff met during session on a weekly basis to ensure timely evaluation of legislation.

The Regional Business Alliance realized success in that 15 of the 16 bills that we opposed were killed. The remaining bill was amended in such a manner to mitigate any significant negative impact to business. In addition, we supported 25 pieces of legislation, 18 of which were sent to the Governor for his signature.

Overview of the Session

Despite the legislative success achieved during the 2016 Session, the Colorado Springs business community also dealt with some frustrations arising from the political make-up of the General Assembly. With a split legislature—Senate Majority GOP



Regional Business Alliance President Dirk Draper testifies in support of HB16-1197

2016 Regional Business Alliance Legislative Process



17 MEETINGS Between January 13 and May 11, the Government Affairs Council (GAC) met weekly by phone and monthly in person

The Council discussed **~100 BILLS** related to our five priorities and took positions on 41 of those bills

16 OPPOSED
(15 of these died)

25 SUPPORTED
(18 of these passed)

and House Majority DEM—most of the “political messaging” bills that would have significant negative impacts on business failed to move very far through the process. However, working in a truly bi-partisan legislature such as Colorado had this session also creates significant challenges, especially in an election year. Each party, and its leadership, bring to the Legislature strong, fundamental principles that are difficult to put aside in a political process.

The inability of elected officials to move far from these core party beliefs contributed greatly to a dynamic in which the business community was unable to secure passage of a strong construction defects bill to assist in providing affordable housing. This polarized environment also meant the failure of a bill to move the Hospital Provider Fee into an enterprise zone to enhance state revenue available for transportation, education, and other worthy legislative priorities.

Representatives testified on four bills in Committee hearings:

- Support HB16-1061
- Support HB16-1119
- Support HB16-1197
- Oppose HB16-1303

2016 Legislative Session Five Priorities



Economic Development

The Regional Business Alliance was instrumental in the passage of the following legislation:

HB16-1453: Secured an eight million dollar General Fund allocation to establish a secure environment for research and development, provide the Governor with the needed expertise on cyber security and expand higher education programs in cyber security in the Colorado Springs region.

SB16-177: Ensures equitable financial contribution for public bodies in connection with urban redevelopment projects in the allocation of tax revenues to ensure continued use of TIFs for economic development.

SB16-155: Expands the sales and use tax exemption for aircraft, which will encourage development around the Colorado Springs airport.

HB16-1301: Creates a study to identify the barriers to the use of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs by Colorado businesses.

SB16-124: Extends of the current sales tax exemption to include machine tools for businesses processing recovered materials.

HB16-1014: Clarifies the operation of escrow accounts and allowable depository institutions for crowd-funding of small businesses.

HB16-1119: Expands the sales and use tax exemptions for aircraft that are in the state for a specified time.

Labor & Employment

Many bills were introduced that ultimately would have added additional regulatory burdens or costs on employers. The Regional Business Alliance’s participation helped secure the defeat of the following unfriendly bills that would have significantly eroded our State’s business climate:

HB16-1166: Would have prohibited employers from seeking salary history about an applicant for employment.

HB16-1202: Would have required all employers with 10 or more employees to enroll and participate in the Federal E-Verify program to verify work eligibility status of all newly hired employees.

HB16-1388: Would have prohibited employers from inquiring about an applicant’s criminal history on employment applications.

HB16-1453: A bill that would have mandated a fee on employers that don’t provide health insurance to low-wage workers through creation of a state enterprise fund.

The Regional Business Alliance also supported this bill and worked for its passage:

SB16-179: Directs the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment to revise current rules to provide clarity to employers as to how they should classify workers as independent contractors.

Military

HB16-1197: Creates an expedited process to ensure that military veteran occupational credentials can easily transition to occupations regulated by the State of Colorado to facilitate quicker transition of the military workforce into licensed and regulated civilian occupations.

HB16-1061: A bill that ensures that military installations are given consideration in the comprehensive statewide transportation plan.

Transportation

In a difficult budget year, the we enjoyed multiple successes in transportation, ensuring our region funding and a seat at the table in the future. We were successful in the passage of the following bills:

HB16-1018: A bill that will increase efficiency in communication between the Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee and the Transportation Commission.

HB16-1031: A bill that creates a study of transportation commission districts to determine if they should be modified.

Business Climate

HB16-1275: Would have required a company’s combined tax return to include any foreign affiliates that are incorporated in tax haven jurisdictions for the purposes of determining tax avoidance, placing onerous requirements on Colorado corporations.

HB16-1403: Would have mandated an employee-funded, state-administered retirement plan for workers at companies lacking a retirement plan.

Regional Cooperation

The Regional Business Alliance strongly opposed HB16-1303, titled “Regional Transportation Authority Annexed Vacant Land Sales Tax” which would prohibit a regional transportation authority from levying sales tax on vacant land annexed by a nonmember jurisdiction. Had this bill passed, it would have had a significant financial impact on PPRTA. The Regional Business Alliance and our member investors played a key role in establishing this regional approach to transportation funding and led the capital program reauthorization campaign in 2012, which passed by approximately 80 percent. If passed, this bill would have reduced regional transportation projects funded through PPRTA by approximately \$15 to \$25 million over the next ten years. We received feedback that without testimony from the Regional Business Alliance and the strong work of our lobbyists, this bill might have passed.

State Lobbying Team

The Regional Business Alliance is represented by a bi-partisan team made up of Joan Green Turner and Saskia Young who each bring a diverse set of skills to the table. A former member of the state House of Representatives, Joan has worked on the biggest issues that have arisen



Joan Green Turner

over the last 25 years. Saskia, a licensed attorney, has over 10 years of government relations experience, and most recently served as the legislative liaison for the Colorado Department of Revenue.



Saskia Young

Together, Joan and Saskia have used their relationships on both sides of the aisle, the Governor’s office and the Executive Agencies, and their colleagues in the lobby corps to advocate successfully on behalf of the Regional Business Alliance.

Local Legislation

In addition to our efforts at the State Capitol, the Regional Business Alliance engages regularly at the local level. We work closely with the Mayor’s Office, City Council, the Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Colorado Springs Utilities. This year we have engaged on issues such as Pedestrian Access, Marijuana Consumption Clubs, the Broadmoor/ Strawberry Fields Land Exchange, future governance of the utilities board, construction defects, along with multiple business climate issues.

Federal Representation

The Regional Business Alliance is a member of the Federal Coalition, a group of local organizations working together to promote our interests at the national level.

What’s Next... The Regional Business Alliance anticipates a very full November ballot. We will be researching and reporting on the many ballot initiatives, taking positions on those we believe have the biggest impact on the business community. Some of the topics include Amendment 69, which would create a universal health insurance program in Colorado, a constitutional amendment to increase minimum wage, initiatives making it more difficult to change the state constitution, proposed changes to TABOR funding, and a potential statewide sales tax increase to fund transportation.

For more information on Regional Business Alliance Government Affairs programs, or for a full list of bill positions, please contact:

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