

The Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber's  
**2025-2026 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA**

At the start of each Ohio legislative session, the Regional Chamber sets public policy priorities reflecting Mahoning Valley employers' needs. These member-driven priorities align with the Chamber's mission to promote member and Valley growth. The Chamber advocates for its members by reducing business costs, improving business climate, fostering regional collaboration and creating opportunities for success. Additionally, the Chamber advises policymakers on how laws and regulations affect the Valley's global competitiveness.

Each section of this Public Policy Agenda focuses on the Chamber's priorities, which work to condition the landscape for economic development.

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## HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

Recent announcements of planned new developments from companies like Kimberly-Clark and Foxconn have aggravated talent shortages. To address this, the Regional Chamber will enhance its JobsNow program and collaborate with P-20 institutions and career tech schools, Youngstown State University, Lake to River Regional Workforce Coalition and other stakeholders to advocate for:

- **Childcare & Transportation:** Support and encourage policies that positively impact and remove barriers to employment.
- **Enhanced Marketing:** Improve the Valley's image to retain and attract talent.
- **Supportive Policies:** Secure state and federal funding for higher education and workforce training to meet industry needs.
- **Badge-to-Degree Programs:** Enable employers to upskill workers through cost-effective certifications and degrees.
- **Workforce Entry Programs:** Train post-high school and GED students to enter high-demand fields.
- **Empowerment Initiatives:** Train underutilized individuals, including those most affected, to prepare them for productive roles.
- **Soft Skills Development:** Promote programs for soft skills, financial literacy and general literacy.
- **Transportation Solutions:** Partner with the Western Reserve Transit Authority to connect workers to job hubs and training.
- **Recruitment Strategies:** Attract and retain graduates to live and work in northeast Ohio.
- **P-20 Education Approach:** Engage students early, guiding them from middle school through advanced degrees while earning a livable wage.
- **Workforce Innovation:** Develop a workforce skilled in current industries while educating future leaders and innovators to stay ahead in technology.

## ENERGY

Since the Valley is uniquely situated in the Appalachian Basin's abundant supply of safe, affordable and reliable oil and natural gas, the Regional Chamber will continue to advocate for:

- **Competitive Strategies:** Promote policies beneficial to an all-of-the-above energy strategy, including natural gas-fired power plants.
- **Local Investment:** Support clear regulatory frameworks that promote local investments in energy infrastructure.
- **Energy Independence:** Unleash American energy to become more independent.
- **Appalachian Hub:** Support Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub (ARCH2) using the nation's lowest-cost natural gas as primary feedstock to enable and sustain a regional H2 economy across multiple end-use Appalachian region sectors.
- **Lake to River Pipeline:** Utilize a four-county shale strategy, including the development of a lake-to-river energy pipeline along state Route 11.
- **EV Industry:** Partner with auto and other related industries on R&D, re: EVs and EV batteries.
- **Clean Energy:** Support BRITE Energy Innovators advancing clean energy technologies.



## MILITARY AFFAIRS

The 910th Airlift Wing at Youngstown Air Reserve Station (YARS), Trumbull County's second-largest employer, and Camp James A. Garfield Joint Military Training Center (C-JAG) pump more than \$150 million annually into our economy. The Regional Chamber will partner with the Eastern Ohio Military Affairs Commission (EOMAC) and JobsOhio's Military and Federal Installations sector to promote:

- **Growth:** Pursue opportunities to grow both installations, including maintaining, improving and expanding YARS, building on the December 2022 announcement by the Secretary of the Air Force naming YARS as the preferred basing location of eight new C-130J-30 Super Hercules aircraft. These new aircraft, replacing the 910th's existing, aging C-130H fleet, represent a nearly \$1 billion investment to YARS and the Mahoning Valley.
- **Infrastructure:** Work with our federal legislators on other facility enhancement opportunities, which include designing, planning and constructing a dirt assault strip at C-JAG for expanded training for C-130s from YARS and across the Midwestern United States, also allowing for enhanced ground combat training exercises; constructing a state-of-the-art YARS fire station included in the President's FY25 budget at \$25 million; and working with Western Reserve Port Authority partners to resurface all of the Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport's (YNG) runways.
- **YARS/YNG:** Educate legislators on the importance of funding and the symbiotic relationship between YARS and the Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport, including continued state funding for EOMAC in the state operating budget and federal authorizations and funding through the NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act) and MILCON (Military Construction) to support YARS and C-JAG missions.
- NO AIRPORT = NO BASE | NO BASE = NO AIRPORT

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The Valley is uniquely situated to capitalize on revolutionary advancements to attain a sustainable, competitive advantage to grow the economy. Technological innovation is critical to maintaining the Valley's competitive edge in a rapidly evolving economy. To support this, the Chamber will advocate for:

- **Ohio BOLD:** Urge Ohio Governor and General Assembly to follow recommendations of Ohio BOLD, a study promoting public-private work around additive manufacturing conducted at America Makes and the Youngstown Business Incubator.
- **Youngstown Hub:** Urge state support of an additive manufacturing Innovation Hub in the City of Youngstown.
- **Ohio's Third Frontier:** Development and adoption of legislation to provide sustainable, longterm support for innovation by extending, replacing or adding to Ohio's Third Frontier.
- **Valley Hub:** Positioning the Mahoning Valley as a hub for technological advancement and talent development.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

Working with local governments, Eastgate Regional Council of Governments, Lake to River Economic Development and Western Reserve Port Authority, the Chamber will advocate for:

- **Digital Literacy:** Support digital literacy initiatives that close the region's existing digital divide via innovative solutions for training, access, adoption and affordability to the internet.
- **Critical Projects:** Identify and advocate for critical infrastructure project funding to support the Valley's economic development.
- **Site Readiness:** Support site readiness programs to meet demand for development locations and mitigate compliance and regulations costs like stormwater management and wetland compliance.
- **Water and Wastewater:** Ensure legislators understand that safe, clean and efficient water and wastewater delivery infrastructure is a top priority.
- **Broadband Access:** Encourage Ohio to take necessary steps to provide Valley-wide access to quality, high-speed broadband through last-mile infrastructure and use of low Earth orbit satellite systems; and, urge state-level funding to ease high costs for end users.
- **River Revitalization:** Advance ongoing efforts to create policies and funds to revitalize the Mahoning River.

## EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

Effective government champions leaders, systems and policies that foster efficiency, collaboration and excellence in governance. To support that, the Chamber will advocate for:

- **Improved Permitting:** Work with legislators to improve permitting processes at all levels.
- **Set Criteria:** Implementing pre-established criteria for local incentives such as tax abatements.
- **Uniformity:** Establishing uniformity around water, wastewater and other services for new and expanding businesses.
- **Modern Processes:** Modernizing zoning codes and development processes to enable commercial and residential development across the region.
- **Economic Support:** Tax reform and regulatory relief to support home ownership, small businesses and economic growth.
- **Constitution Safeguards:** Safeguarding Ohio's Constitution from anti-business special interest groups.
- **Inclusivity:** Inclusive policies that spur business growth, reduce operational costs and complexities, attract and retain talent, support startups and drive job creation in our region.
- **Housing Support:** Bipartisan policies that enhance access to tax incentives, grants and other funding to accelerate housing development.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Significant equity gaps in educational attainment, household income and health outcomes exist among local zip codes and census tracts. The Regional Chamber is committed to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion to foster an equitable and prosperous community. To achieve this goal, the Regional Chamber remains committed to diversifying its staff, board and committees, while working with disadvantaged businesses and talented individuals by advocating for:

- **Minority Businesses:** Collaboration with the Minority Business Assistance Center to promote minority business development and investment.
- **Job Creation:** Supporting programs and policies that incentivize job-creating investment in marginalized neighborhoods.
- **Diversity:** Advocating that Ohio remains an attractive destination for diverse talent, investment and business growth.
- **Investment:** Encouraging economic and socio-economic growth around diverse and foreign investment to help provide a community support system.



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