TOP PRIORITIES

Innovation

We support the location of the Army Futures Command in the Central Texas Region.

Research Investment and Job Growth

We support funding high-level basic research including R&D funding at a steady rate above inflation for NIH, NSF, ARPA, NASA Office of Education, the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Institute for Education Sciences, Small Business Innovation Research, Small Business Technology Transfer, Economic Development Administration and Hollings Manufacturing Extension.

Sustainable Infrastructure

The Austin region’s rapidly growing population relies heavily on sustainable and proactive infrastructure improvements.

- This includes new, long-term sustainable infrastructure funding sources, such as VMT or 0.25 cent/gallon gas tax increase;
- the use of up-to-date population figures to calculate federal transportation disbursements;
- ensuring that Texas can participate in any infrastructure bill that includes use of P3s or CDAs and continued funding for the Capital Investment Grants program and direction to the U.S. Department of Transportation to enter into new full funding grant agreements and Small Start grant agreements; and
- a fully funded BUILD Grant Program.

Strong Trade Agreements & Opposition to Harmful Tariffs

All trade policies including the Trans-Pacific Partnership and North American Free Trade Agreement should protect sensitive IP, investment transparency and due process in government procurement. The Austin Chamber opposes new tariffs and other barriers that threaten the competitiveness of U.S. businesses, endanger American jobs, and increase costs to consumers.

Optimize Talent & Workforce Performance

Austin has 43,400 open positions and a three percent unemployment rate. We support:

- Balanced Immigration Reform. Legalize DACA beneficiaries, increase legal immigration slots for highly skilled STEM graduates and support entrepreneur visas.
- Support H.R. 2184/S. 754 to address our growing cybersecurity workforce needs
Public Policy That Works for Central Texas

Immigration & DACA
Meaningful immigration reform to help Texas businesses access the world’s best talent should include:

- Increase the net number of legal immigration slots
- Legalize Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals beneficiaries;
- Create an Entrepreneur/Start-Up Visa
- Increase legal immigration slots for highly skilled immigrants, H-2A and H-2B temporary workers when a legitimate localized shortage is demonstrated.
- Oppose “Rescission of the International Entrepreneur Rule” by the Administration

Infrastructure
The 85th Texas Legislature failing to continue Comprehensive Development Agreements has left Texas with no short-term ability to conduct private-public partnerships. In addition to policies mentioned on the first page of this document, to keep up with growth and demand we support:

- Use recent census data in federal funding formulas, rather than the 2008 data currently in use to keep up with the rapid growth in population and transportation needs in Central Texas.
- Repeal federal requirements for projects that have less than 20% federal funding. Retain requirements that MPOs update their RTPs every 5 years. This would be problematic especially in regions like Central Texas that are rapidly growing.

Top Priority Road Infrastructure Projects in Austin Region
- 183N, between SH 45 North and MoPac
- Oak Hill Parkway @ Y
- I-35 Central Texas Corridor (not shovel ready)
- MoPac South (not shovel ready)

Air Services
Reauthorize Federal Aviation Administration and protect the Airport & Airway Trust Fund

Finance Airport Infrastructure:
- Enhance the Airport Improvement Program to fund crucial safety, security, and capacity projects at AUS.
- Maximize the flexibility of the Passenger Facility Charge based on local needs.
- Preserve tax-exempt bonds and flexible privatization plans.

Support Airport Growth:
- Reduce regulatory burdens on airports. Expand alternative project delivery methods to accelerate innovation, construction, and job growth.
- Fund TSA and CBP to provide adequate staff levels for AUS to meet its significant growth in domestic and international air service.
Invest in Research that Leads to Jobs, American Economic Growth

FY2019 Strategic Federal Investments

- $71M Defense Innovation Unit Experimental to include Austin site.
- Maintain funding to benefit American workers: Pell Grants, Americorps, Title IV aid allowance for high demand certifications and 21st Century After School Funds.
- Maintain current funding levels for local priorities including public broadcasting, Mass Transit Account, National Infrastructure Investment, Community Development Block Grant Program and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program.
- Fully fund the 2020 Census and oppose inclusion of citizenship question.

Innovation

Policymakers and industry must work together to create flexible policies to ensure the economic and social development necessary for the US to continue to lead the world in innovation.

- Evaluate existing regulations unnecessarily inhibiting technology innovation and encourage the use of industry-developed global standards in regulation.
- Maintain and strengthen STEM education within the NASA budget to support our growing need for highly-skilled workers.
- Support S. 588, Helping Angels Lead Our Startups Act.
- Support the proposed changes to the Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernization Act proposed by the National Venture Capital Association.
- Support the Startup Act, S. 1877
- Cybersecurity – Enhance cyber resiliency, strengthen existing public-private partnerships, and support S.770.
- Broadband – Support pro-investment, competitively neutral tax and public policy reform that removes barriers to infrastructure deployment, encourages private investment and expands all high-speed internet services;
- Data Privacy – Support consistent consumer privacy protections that foster innovation, investment and new services.
- One In, One Out – Support Chair McCaul’s H.R. 674 that requires a federal agency to identify and repeal existing regulation of greater or equal cost before promulgating new regulation.
Smart Policy to Improve Austin Regional Talent

Develop workforce training and development programs and include new dollars to allow for local partnerships in the Infrastructure Bill.

> **Reauthorize the Higher Education Act** – to help reduce college costs and lower student debt.
  - **Pell Grants** – Index max award to inflation, and approve JOBS Act to cover coding and other high demand certificates and apprenticeships.
  - **MSIs, HSIs & HSBCUs** – Protect funds to institutions serving minority populations.
  - **Federal Student Loans** – Allow institutions to set lower borrowing limits based on course, enrollment intensity, and academic preparedness. Protect subsidized loans for undergraduate students and uphold loan repayments and public service loan forgiveness.
  - **FAFSA** – Continue to simplify FAFSA and allow 3rd party electronic submission.
  - **Work-Study** – Extend work-study funding to high-demand apprenticeships and work-based learning programs.
  - **Federal Aid** – Allow higher education institutions – with student consent – to share aid award information with public education, scholarship providers, and community organizations to improve advising, resolve financial aid gaps, and remove financial barriers to college enrollment/completion.

> **Support Return on Investment for Postsecondary Education** – H.R. 2434/.1121.

> **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act** – Support and restore workforce and education grants

> **Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit** – Reauthorize and expand the WOTC to allow employers to provide work-based learning to under-resourced populations.

> **Support H.R. 4219, the Workflex in the 21st Century Act** – Opt-in to preempt local/state paid sick leave ordinances

> **Employer Participation in Repayment Act** – Support S. 796, tax credits for employers who assist employees with student loan repayment.

> **Reauthorize Perkins Act** – Ensure CTE programs prepare students for locally relevant, high-skilled and wage jobs, postsecondary degrees, or certificates. Hold recipients accountable and allow innovative flexibility by local and state government.

**Health Care**

> Continue care-based models that improve health outcomes and reduce cost through Medicare, Medicaid, the private sector, and other federally funded health coverage programs.

> Support the bipartisan Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act. In addition, extend the current GME period from 5 to 10 years to allow cities like Austin who have a significant shortage of physicians, especially subspecialists, more time to build their training programs.

> Support efforts to lower the cost of prescription drugs and provide predictability in pricing for employers, health care providers, and patients.

> Support stability in the health insurance marketplace and provide appropriate options for coverage that are affordable and accessible to patients.