

## Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce

### Policy Positions 2008

The Central Vermont Chamber believes...

- State funds should invest in development programs that will sustain a strong economy – and state revenues – in the future.
- Transportation, communications, energy and waste treatment infrastructure require and demand substantial, ongoing state investment.
- The lack of housing is a critical social and economic issue that must be addressed.
- Additional procedural permit reforms are vital. Environmental protection and state regulations can be achieved without sapping inordinate time, money and human energy from businesses engaged in a highly competitive, global market.
- Regional organizations play a key role in state policy by identifying issues and implementing programs that cross town boundaries while reflecting the unique character and concerns of their service areas.
- Vermont residents and businesses are best served by heavy reliance on market competition and private sector expertise, including private sector non-profits.
- Important local projects make a difference not only in their own towns, but also in their regions and Vermont as a whole.

These beliefs are the foundation for the following specific positions:

### ***STATE POLICY ISSUES & PROGRAMS***

#### **Economic Development Investments**

- Continue and strengthen the Vermont Employment Growth Incentives.
- Support businesss based in emerging energy, communications, and medical technologies.
- Increase tourism funding to return immediate dollars.
- Adopt a funding formula for VDTM to provide long-term growth and predictability.
- Enhance GIS capability: regional and VT Center for Geographic Information capacity.
- Continue to pursue brownfields cleanup funding, and implement hold-harmless certification.
- Support energy audits and conservation loans to help businesses and residents reduce energy use.
- Provide incentives for downtown development and reuse of buildings.
  - Implement brownfields-like assistance for asbestos and lead removal.
- Aggressively pursue quality, affordable, statewide communications infrastructure:
  - Quality, statewide wireless connectivity and broadband access are urgent.
- Increase road, bridge and transportation system improvements.
- Ensure timely, supportive processing of multi-sector general permits.
- Invest in welfare to work support systems, i.e., daycare, transportation, etc.
- Prevent diversion of the Unemployment Fund to other uses.
- Fully fund PILOT to relieve undue tax burdens on host municipalities.
- Provide additional infrastructure assistance in employment and housing centers.
- Support Commission on the Future of Economic Development in its long-range planning effort.
- Approve legislation that will remove obstacles and provide incentives for housing construction in municipalities with municipal sewer.
- Monitor the impacts of Vermont's Streamlined Sales Tax Agreement.

#### **Regional Service Delivery System**

- Refocus Agency of Commerce on regional expertise and cooperative efforts.
- Adequately fund regional planning, economic development & marketing.
  - Fully disperse regional & municipal planning's dedicated funds as per statute.
  - Assist regional marketing of businesses, communities, and quality of life.
  - Provide funding for long-term economic planning and consistent state policies.
  - Support regional innovation in planning, development and marketing programs.
- Expand growth centers bill to recognize *locally identified, regionally approved* growth centers.
- Produce sound state data - *including town housing inventory* - for planning and assessment.

### **Market Competition & Private Sector Reliance**

- Enable consumer purchasing of electrical energy from the supplier of their choice.
- Expand school choice.
- Continue reliance on engineer certification for septic system installations and maintenance.
- Rely on private sector for scoping, design and construction of highway projects.
- Encourage health savings accounts and competition among medical insurers.
- Fully fund state-sponsored health care programs to halt shifting costs to private sector.

### **Policy and Procedural Reforms**

- Ensure the state's long-term energy needs are met through reliably priced sources.
- Energy (green) policy
- Improve interstate and highway visitor signage and rest/information areas.  
Allowable interstate signs must be increased to 140 square feet or more.
- Enact tort reform to limit medical, professional and product liability, and injury awards
- Increase incentives for school consolidations and the flexibility accorded local boards.
- Resist pressure to increase per-pupil education block grants above the rate of inflation.
- Adopt flexibility in VTrans design standards that consider local scale and suggestions.
- Remove conservation mandates that apply only to interstate exchanges.
- Stop worker compensation abuses to contain insurance costs.
  - Enact legislation insulating co-workers from lawsuits for on-the-job injuries.
- Ensure that water quality and discharge regulations do not impair quality development.
- Award local, regional, and ANR determinations on Act 250 compliance with presumptions that can be reversed only by a "clear and convincing" evidence.
- Eliminate ag soil and wildlife habitat mitigation in areas zoned for higher density development.

### ***IMPORTANT LOCAL ISSUES***

- Elimination of existing local option taxes still in place (machinery and equipment), and avoiding the lure of imposing new ones, including local division of grand list.
- Facilitation of, and support for, housing development in all price ranges, and reduction of obstacles preventing housing development.
- Support implementation of the 2007 draft Regional Housing Element and allocation planning.
- Support and expand the Central Vermont Economic Collaborative and Housing Partnership.
- Seek timely completion of Barre Main Street reconstruction project.
- Completion of Central Vermont regional recreation path.
- Increase the number of "designated" downtowns and village centers.
- Increase the number of regionally recognized growth centers.
- Town funding for sound planning, economic development and marketing.
- Town funding for local economic development and downtown groups.
- Intermunicipal cooperation among towns.
- Completion of the Vermont Granite Museum of Barre.
- Completion of the cancer center at Central Vermont Medical Center.
- Continuation of Montpelier Riverfront projects, including the "Carr lot."
- Encouraging pursuit of Berlin "downtown strategies" and postal service addressing.
- Planning for the region's six interstate exchanges.
- Revisions in local zoning to encourage more dense development, especially housing.
- Municipal identification and rezoning of prime areas for dense housing development.
- Regionalization of services and education for improvement and/or cost savings.
- Merging of municipalities and schools to improve efficiency and/or flexibility.