



2012 GUIDELINES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Background

1. The creation of jobs and wealth through expansions of existing companies and the attraction of new business activity to develop a diverse business environment are central to Colorado's long-term prosperity, protection against economic downturns, and maintaining a high quality of life. Quality of life begins with a well paying job.
2. An essential function of all levels of government is to foster a positive business climate throughout the state wherein business can thrive, and to assist with local and regional economic activities.
3. Various economic development partners and the business community have come together to create a county economic development plan.
4. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce believes that economic development occurs best in a highly cooperative and supportive partnership between the public sector and the business community.
5. Business needs the following to grow: an excellent infrastructure (including transportation infrastructure), a superior educational system and workforce training, reasonable taxes and fees, and entrepreneurial opportunity and success.
6. Business needs a consistent and stable regulatory environment to continue to invest and create jobs.
7. Grand Junction is an important regional hub for multiple products and services which are major economic drivers in the local economy.
8. The Chamber recognized that existing businesses form the state's present economic base. These businesses provide the existing jobs and tax base for local and state entities. They are also a source of new jobs-approximately 80 percent of future job growth comes from the expansion of existing businesses.
9. The Chamber is in a unique position to provide support for policies that encourage quality job opportunities and increased income in Mesa County.

10. Tourism provides a positive stimulus to the local economy.
11. Energy and mineral development are strong economic drivers in the regional economy.
12. Mesa County and the Western Slope are significant contributors to the State's overall economic well being and budget.

Guideline Statement

The Chamber's Economic Development policy is also reflected in other specific Chamber policies: We support quality education, work force development efforts; encourage a predictable and rational tax structure; the removal of tax policy that discourages business investment; infrastructure improvements; and support for other laws, ordinances, and regulations that encourage private initiative, individual incentive, competitive enterprise, and which make our community competitive.

The Chamber Supports

1. A well-funded, cohesive, and aggressive economic development effort.
2. A regulatory climate that is balanced, consistent, and predictable, making it easier for business to grow and thrive in the state.
3. Meaningful programs, initiatives, tax incentives, and the elimination of disincentives in order to reduce the cost of doing business.
4. Meaningful initiatives and efforts that assist in creating a skilled labor force, including allocation of adequate training dollars to enable local post-secondary educational institutions to meet the needs of business.
5. An expedited delivery mechanism for workforce training including the needs of a non English speaking workforce.
6. Provisions for appropriate assistance to local businesses in their retention and expansion efforts.
7. Efforts to promote Colorado as a tourism destination, as well as the provision of funding for tourism promotion.
8. Making venture capital funds available to new or expanding businesses.
9. Right-to-Work legislation.



2012 GUIDELINES ON ENERGY

Background:

1. Meeting the increased demand for energy by wisely developing resources is critical to the continued growth of the economy, fiscal health of our community, and our overall national security. Western Colorado contains a significant portion of the nation's future energy resources and stands to greatly benefit from its utilization through the intricate balance of energy development and environmental impact mitigation.
2. Colorado and Western Colorado can help our nation meet its growing demand for energy while reducing our dependency on foreign oil through an enhanced strategic balance of energy options derived from coal, natural gas, petroleum products, nuclear power and renewable resources such as wind, solar and biomass technology. With an abundant supply of coal, natural gas, uranium, oil reserves, oil shale reserves, solar energy and biomass in the region, Western Colorado has the potential to be a sustainable long term energy hub. This lowers the country's dependence on foreign energy sources. As such, the energy industry is a primary driver of economic growth and sustainability for Mesa County.
3. Federal mineral lease payments and severance tax were created to mitigate local impact of energy development on communities and pay for regulatory agencies.

The Chamber Supports:

1. The development and delivery of technical training and workforce readiness programs through Western Colorado Community College and other post secondary training programs in the community for the energy industry.
2. The continued funding and development of educational and research and development efforts of state supported institutions to create energy technologies and efficiencies.
3. Public education about the energy industry and its impact on our local economy.
4. Energy industry activities that protect our environment and promote good corporate citizenship.
5. The responsible development of Colorado's energy resources, including natural and renewable energy, using the best available technology.

6. A policy of distributing severance taxes and mineral lease payments that gives priority to communities impacted by energy development.
7. Recognizing the rights of both surface and subsurface owners in the regulatory and legislative environments.
8. Research and development of local energy research facilities.
9. Local participation in the development of state and federal energy policies and activities.
10. Market based incentives and educational efforts that motivate businesses to utilize conservation practices that reduce the use of conventional energy resources in their businesses.
11. A market based approach that encourages utilization of all traditional and non-traditional energy sources to meet our increased demand for energy while helping us strive toward energy independence as a nation.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Energy policies that are not based on sound science and economic principles.
2. The used of energy impact funds for the purposes other than energy related mitigation measures.
3. Regulatory interference and oversight that does not have a statutory basis thereby dictating policy rather than enforcing it.
4. Cap and trade which will drastically increase energy costs that will not only result in higher utility bills for citizens but will also be reflected in higher costs for every manufactured item produced in this country. Such a measure will put businesses in the United States at a competitive disadvantage in a global economy.



2012 GUIDELINES ON GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Background

Mesa County citizens participated in the development of master use plans that encompass growth for the area of Grand Junction and Mesa County. The Mesa County Commissioners and the Grand Junction City Council accepted the principles of those plans. Among other things, these principles incorporate a respect for private property rights and local decision-making.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Planned, quality and sustainable growth that complements the development of local infrastructure.
2. Local control and decision-making on issues related to growth.
3. The strengthening of tools that allows local governments and private entities to work together to address regional growth issues.
4. The representative form of government that relies on elected officials to make decisions on complex issues related to growth and development.
5. Infill redevelopment efforts, including Brownfield redevelopment and urban renewal projects.
6. Strategies to improve the local development review process by resolving impediments to reasonably priced and orderly development, including:
 - Clear and objective standards (predictability)
 - Assuring internal consistency
 - Providing quality customer service
 - Landscaping requirements that reflect Western Colorado's dry climate.
7. Efforts to provide affordable housing for residents of Mesa County, including the use of private sector incentives (i.e. sales tax rebates on building materials for housing, bonuses for increased housing density, deferring payment of development and tap fees, or land donations by municipalities).
8. Use of voluntary incentive-based land conservation tools to maintain Mesa County's high quality-of-life and attractiveness as a business location.
9. Ongoing review of the master use plans and involvement in and review of various other county and city policies (i.e. TCP, storm water drainage, etc.).

10. Expanding the Urban Growth Boundaries to accommodate future growth.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Any efforts to ask voters to overturn zoning decisions made by local elected boards.



2012 GUIDELINES ON HEALTH CARE

Background

1. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes that the health care system in the United States is a unique combination of employer-based plans, individually purchased plans, and a government-sponsored system.
2. The rapidly rising cost of health care and health insurance represents a significant burden to Colorado businesses currently providing health coverage to employees, and a significant deterrent to businesses looking to provide health coverage to employees.
3. Health insurance premium increases are driven by a number of different factors, including but not limited to: financial incentives that encourage excessive utilization of health care, overuse of emergency room services, lack of preventative care, inadequate funding for government health care programs (i.e., Medicaid, Medicare, CHP+), increasing prescription drug prices, a high level of defensive medicine, the medical needs and demands of an aging population, costly new medical advances, inefficient government regulation, increases in administrative costs, benefit design, and rapid increase in medical inflation.
4. The private sector is incurring an increasingly disproportionate share of the costs of health care – in particular because of insufficient government reimbursement for health care services. This “cost shift” has a tremendous impact on the business community and the provision of health insurance.
5. Approximately 16.7 percent of Americans (50.7 million people) are uninsured¹, and 800,000 Coloradoans are uninsured². The increasing number of uninsured and underinsured persons is a complex and urgent problem on a state and local level.
6. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes the highly regulated nature of health care and the impacts that adverse regulation has on the cost of health care.

¹ US Census Bureau: http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb11-157.html

² Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation:
<http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?cmprgn=1&cat=3&rgn=7&ind=125&sub=39>

7. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce emphasizes the need to structure appropriate access to health care – especially preventive care – and to optimize the provision of high quality, cost effective health care services.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Health care reform legislation and regulation that promotes greater affordability, community collaboration, a higher level of stability and which is compliant with all other policy positions.
2. The implementation of the Colorado Health Benefit Exchange that will increase access, affordability and choice.
3. Efforts and initiatives that emphasize healthy lifestyles including personal responsibility for lifestyle choices and encourage preventive medical care, health education awareness, early screening and detection, and disease management.
4. Partnerships with the local health care community to address local health care needs.
5. Programs and initiatives aimed at educating health care consumers and businesses with meaningful information on the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care procedures, providers and plans; and initiatives encouraging cost-effective and efficient utilization of the health care system.
6. Increased access to and improved transparency of health care results and costs.
7. Addressing the cost shift from the public sector to the private sector, with government providing adequate funding for governmental health insurance programs (i.e. Medicaid, Medicare, and CHP+).
8. Addressing the cost shift within the private sector due to uncompensated care, by requiring all individuals who can afford it to have health coverage.
9. A comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of the uninsured and underinsured, including collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors.
10. Programs and initiatives intended to ensure appropriate access to health care and health coverage for greater numbers of individuals, especially children.
11. Legislation and/or a coordinated effort to address the shortage of healthcare providers, particularly on the Western Slope and in Mesa County. With this, the Chamber supports implementation of a clinical branch of the University of Colorado's Medical School in Mesa County.

12. Expanding and implementing measures aimed at maximizing effectiveness of the State's Medicaid program, including: aggressive disease and case management protocols, additional long-term care options, and pharmaceutical cost management.
13. The employer's ability to select health benefits which best meet the needs of the business and its employees.
14. Reinstitution of the state's no-fault auto insurance with appropriate Personal Injury Protection limits.
15. More competition and fair competition in health insurance, including market expansion across state lines, so long as there is a level playing field for competitors, whether implementing state or federal standards.
16. Reevaluation of the appropriate role of the judicial process in the health care system and reform of the medical malpractice and medical liability system. Reform may include limiting non-economic damage awards in medical malpractice cases.
17. Initiatives and programs aimed at giving consumers more control and responsibility over the dollars spent on their care – i.e. tax-advantaged health savings accounts (HSAs), which are coupled with high deductibles and allow the balance of such accounts to carry over to future years.
18. Efforts that address administrative inefficiencies; including the simplification and standardization of claims forms and administrative procedures as well as the more widespread use of efficiency increasing technology.
19. Tax credits or incentives for individuals and small businesses to help offset the cost of health insurance.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Shifting health care costs from the public to private sector. As such, the Chamber opposes the public healthcare option that would compete with the private health insurance market.
2. The establishment of a single-payer, government-run system.
3. "Any Willing Provider" legislation which would interfere with private contracts.

4. Any mandate applied to the private sector that would exempt the State of Colorado, the Federal Government or their employees.
5. Any mandate requiring employers to offer insurance or pay an assessment.
6. Legislative interventions on health care issues that would be more appropriately addressed within the health care system (e.g., mandates staffing ratios or minimum lengths of stay).
7. Eliminating geographic rating areas for the purpose of setting health insurance rates.



2012 GUIDELINES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Background

1. Colorado Mesa University and Western Colorado Community College have a significant impact on the economy, quality-of-life, and quality and availability of the workforce in Mesa County and the region. Colorado Mesa University and Western Colorado Community College have paid special attention in recent years to the needs of the business community, creating a symbiotic relationship focused on preparing the workforce for the jobs that exist in the marketplace. In recent years, higher education has taken a disproportionate share of budget cuts in comparison to other state agencies.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Colorado Mesa University receiving a proportionate share of state funding made available to state institutions of higher education in Colorado.
2. The continued expansion of graduate level programming at Colorado Mesa University designed to meet market demands and enhance the quality of the local workforce.
3. Colorado Mesa University continuing to act as a regional institution for both four year and graduate education, advancing the role of Western Colorado Community College in partnership with School District 51 and the community, and remaining responsive and connected to the needs of the business community and other sectors.
4. Continued expansion of Colorado Mesa University through the acquisition of property for future facility development, the closure of streets to gain the physical integrity of the campus, and the development of new and remodeled facilities to facilitate quality instruction and to accommodate student and academic program growth.
5. Measures that promote enhanced technological means for delivery of education to rural areas.
6. Measures that ensure that higher education is affordable and accessible to Colorado residents, particularly residents of Western Colorado.
7. Ensuring that students enrolled throughout Western Colorado have comparable state financial support as they pursue postsecondary degrees.

8. Strengthening local governing boards at each institution (rather than centralizing power in an all-inclusive system) in order to maintain a degree of autonomy and develop market driven education programs to meet the needs of our members and our region.
9. Measures designed to provide maximum flexibility and reduced bureaucratic regulations and unnecessary oversight for institutions like Mesa State College (i.e. lengthy review and approval of academic programs, multiple financial reporting systems, multiple personnel systems, procurement processes, etc).

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Defunding the public higher education system in Colorado or singling out higher education for disproportionate cuts in comparison to other state agencies.
2. Efforts to politicize higher education funding, governance and delivery.
3. Transforming the Colorado Commission on Higher Education from a statewide coordinating board in to a regulatory board with authority that supersedes that delegated to local governing boards.
4. State mandated efforts to merge institutions or consolidate local governing boards.



2012 GUIDELINES ON HOUSING

Background

1. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce is a proponent of the free enterprise system and opposes undue intervention by the government.
2. The Chamber sees the need to balance the rights of private property owners and ability of the community to provide low and moderate income housing in order to spur economic growth and maintain a healthy environment.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Housing opportunities available to community residents and workers.
2. Collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors to address attainable housing.
3. A fair and equitable system for incentivizing private sector activity to diversify housing options available in the community.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Public sector competition with the private sector.



2012 GUIDELINES ON IMMIGRATION

Background

1. The United States is faced with a large and growing population of unauthorized aliens entering the country illegally, often in search of employment.
2. Some proposed legislation would require businesses to assume more responsibility for ensuring that those in the country illegally are not employed.
3. The issue of illegal immigrants and how to address those currently in the country is a national problem with social and economic implications for all involved.
4. Mesa County has a long tradition of employing seasonal laborers in our orchards and other agricultural endeavors.
5. Most employers are small in Mesa County and do not employ full time human resource managers.
6. Because of inaction at the Federal level, States are now trying to address what is a national issue.

Guideline Statement

The United States is a nation born of immigrants. There is a unique and strong bond between the strength of this nation and its history as a “melting pot” for those seeking a new life from all over the globe.

The role of the Chamber is to represent business and while there are multiple facets to the issue of illegal immigration, our organization is focused on how employers can and will be affected in this ongoing national debate.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Federal legislation to address immigration.
2. Measures that will ensure the Nation’s borders are secure.
3. Expansion and streamlining of the guest worker program.
4. Uniform and complete enforcement of existing immigration laws by all governmental entities.

5. A reliable user friendly method whereby employers can easily verify immigration status of employees.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Legislation that puts the primary burden of enforcing immigration laws on employers.



2012 GUIDELINES ON INITIATIVES

Background:

1. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes that the representative form of democracy is important in protecting the interests of rural communities in Colorado.
2. The initiative and popular referendum are available in 24 of 50 states. The average number of signatures required for an initiative to reach the ballot in the U.S. is 7.23% of the votes cast in the previous election for statutes, and 9.17% for constitutional amendments.
3. The Chamber recognizes that few states have signature requirements that are less than Colorado's 5%.
4. The Chamber further recognizes that Colorado's liberal ballot initiative process is one of only two states (Nevada being the other) that does not differentiate between the required percentage of signatures for referring a constitutional or statutory measures to voters.
5. Colorado does not require any geographic distribution in terms of the signatures collected. 90% of the population in a small geographic area can dictate public and economic policy that negatively impacts the 10% of Colorado's population that resides in the majority of the state's land mass.
6. Framers of the Colorado Constitution didn't envision the initiative process being utilized as it has been the last 20 years — resulting in abuse, distortion, and high costs.
7. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes that the percentages listed below may need to be modified to some extent. However, the basic principle of equity and fairness remains.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Efforts to find a more equitable process for placing an Initiative/Referendum on the ballot.
2. Exploring reform of the initiative/referendum process, including but not limited to the following options:
 - Increasing the required number of signatures from 5% to 8% on proposed revisions to the Colorado State Constitution.
 - Requiring 60% approval among voters in Colorado to amend the Colorado constitution, except for the amendment of provisions enacted prior to January 1, 2011.

- Prohibiting the legislature from changing a voter-initiated statute for a period of five years after passage, unless the entire legislature reaches a 67% supermajority.
- Some geographic distribution for gathering the number of required signatures for placing an initiative/referendum on the ballot.
- Prohibiting the filing of an initiative that is substantially the same as one that failed on the ballot within the preceding three years.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. The practice of local issues being decided by statewide vote (examples include gambling, water issues and save the orchard farmland).
2. A countywide or citywide initiative process.



2012 GUIDELINES ON K-12 EDUCATION

Background

The business community recognizes the importance of K-12 education as an essential building block in a strong and vibrant community. Partnerships between business and education are essential to ensuring a quality education for children in Mesa County.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Direct business involvement in education and the active involvement of Chamber members in education.
2. Efforts to address the financial needs of education in Mesa County, and ensure local school districts receive full federal and state funding for mandated programs.
3. Local school district goals aimed at providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary for the future, for the purpose of providing career paths for skilled employees.
4. New and updated facilities to keep pace with growth and advancement.
5. Local control of our school districts.
6. An evaluation system for educators that will advance and reward quality teachers and administrators, thus leading to increased student learning.
7. Efforts to correct the inequities found in the School Finance Act.



2012 GUIDELINES ON MANDATES

Background

1. The Colorado legislature, the executive branch of government, the federal government and local government continue to impose unneeded and/or unnecessary laws, resolutions, ordinances, rules and regulations on the business community. This takes from their ability to be responsive and govern according to the philosophy of local control.
2. These mandates create financial and regulatory burdens on the business community, which ultimately translate to increased costs of doing business.
3. Businesses of all sizes are impacted by these mandates.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Efforts by the Colorado legislature, executive branch of government, federal government, and local government to thoroughly analyze proposed laws and regulations to determine potential financial, administrative or regulatory burdens.
2. Efforts by the local levels of government to identify and address local solutions for local problems.
3. Efforts to increase local control of state and federally funded work and training programs that will enhance local welfare reform initiatives.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Legislation and mandates that place unnecessary administrative and financial burdens on businesses.
2. Legislation and mandates that would erode local control and the authority of local governments.



2012 GUIDELINES ON TAXATION

Background

1. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce believes that a balanced tax policy is vital to the economic health of Colorado in general and Mesa County in particular.
2. In 1982, Colorado voters passed a constitutional amendment regarding property taxes referred to as the Gallagher Amendment. This created a gross inequity in the Colorado property tax system caused by the disparity between the tax rates for commercial, industrial, non-agriculture property and residential properties.
3. In 1991, legislators passed spending limits legislation referred to as the Arveschoug-Bird Legislation. However, this bill was weakened in 2009 via Senate Bill 228, which repealed the Arveschoug-Bird Legislation's provisions that limit the growth of the State's General Fund to 6% over the past year's expenditures. In 2010, this Legislation was repealed.
4. In 1992, Colorado voters passed a constitutional Amendment limiting revenue and expenditures referred to as the TABOR Amendment. In 2007, SB 199 froze the mill levy for K-12 funding which conflicts with the intent of TABOR.
5. In 2000 Colorado voters passed a constitutional amendment referred to as Amendment 23 to increase spending for K-12 education.
6. In 2005 Colorado voters passed Referendum C, which created a five-year time-out on TABOR requirements.
7. In 2008, the Supreme Court opined that fee increases without a vote do not conflict with the intent of TABOR.
8. In 2009, the federal government started greatly expanding spending, thus enormously increasing the federal debt. This will have an impact on state and local government's ability to meet their own needs.
9. Together these major pieces of legislation and judicial actions combined with over forty years of other uncoordinated tax changes have had major implications on the way taxes are assessed in the State of Colorado as well as on state and local government budgeting processes.

The Chamber Supports:

1. A long-term goal of a complete overhaul of the state's tax system, including but not limited to action to simplify, clarify, and hopefully restore citizen's understanding of and confidence in Colorado's taxing structure.
2. Efforts to resolve the Constitutional conflicts created by the interaction of the TABOR Amendment, the Gallagher Amendment and Amendment 23.
3. Changes to property taxes that will establish fair, logical and equitable property taxes throughout Colorado.
4. Individual tax policies that have a beneficial outcome on Colorado's economic stability and development and make Colorado, and thus Mesa County, more competitive in the global marketplace, encourage economic development, and enhance the local business climate.
5. The repeal of the Gallagher Amendment.
6. Achieving a balanced federal budget.
7. The legislative repeal of the mill levy freeze included in SB07-199 and the reintroduction of the Arveschoug-Bird provision.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. New taxes without voter approval.
2. Tax policies that have a negative impact on the state and local governments' credit ratings.
3. Any legislation or regulation imposing a tax or fee on service businesses including any shift of tax burden to the local level.
4. Any bonded indebtedness that allows revenues to be used for general fund appropriations or to pay the cost of any governments' day to day operations.
5. Any effort to redirect severance tax revenue away from communities impacted by energy development.
6. Tax increases disguised as "fees."
7. User fees that are not directly allocated to the operating body charging the fee.
8. Reductions in tax credits and incentives for economic development purposes.

The Chamber Will:

1. Continue to monitor and study developments in the taxation of “e-commerce” and work to ensure that whatever solution is accepted will not negatively impact state and local businesses.
2. Take an active role in developing potential solutions to the Constitutional conflicts created by the interaction of the TABOR Amendment, the Gallagher Amendment and Amendment 23.
3. Closely monitor any proposal for new funding mechanisms for meeting our highway maintenance and construction needs to determine their impact on business and the State’s economy.



2012 GUIDELINES ON TRANSPORTATION

Background

1. Transportation by definition is the movement of people, goods and services in, around and through our region. The development and maintenance of an efficient transportation infrastructure is an important part of a healthy local economic climate.
2. Grand Junction, as the regional hub for Western Colorado and Eastern Utah, needs transportation to continue to play a key role in the continued viability of the area's businesses and the well being of its citizens.

The Chamber Supports:

1. A statewide approach to highway funding, recognizing the importance of all Colorado roads to all citizens.
2. Efforts to develop an increased and sustainable source of funding for transportation infrastructure at the local, state and federal levels, including the development of a plan by the City of Grand Junction that identifies specific projects for funding at the completion of debt repayment of Riverside Parkway bonds and the accompanying TABOR override.
3. Placing transportation and transportation infrastructure as first priority for local and government funding.
4. A planned local transportation infrastructure, including continued development and improvement of a system that complements growth and development, including public transit.
5. Efforts to expand and retain general and commercial air service into Grand Junction.
6. Efforts and initiatives to address mobility issues along the I-70 transportation corridor through the state with particular focus on access for western slope citizens.
7. Streamlining of federal, state and local regulations for the construction of local roads and highways so as to minimize the cost to taxpayers in terms of time, resources and money (i.e. the 1601 process).
8. Continued dialog with citizens and businesses during all phases of transportation infrastructure improvement.

9. Completion of the Riverside Parkway loop, which includes the 29 Road connection to I-70.
10. The use of local contractors and subcontractors in line with local government guidelines for all projects.
11. Development of bicycle and pedestrian trails in coordination with other roadway improvements.
12. Efforts to increase access to rail for local businesses.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Any use of highway funds for non-highway purposes, including funds raised from any taxes on vehicles, motor fuels or on auto parts and accessories.
2. Altering the State's current Resource Allocation Formula (RAF) so as to reduce either real or proportional funding for Western Colorado Roads.
3. Efforts to change the composition of Colorado's Transportation Commission.
4. Tolls on existing roadways.



2012 GUIDELINES ON WATER

Background

1. The Grand Valley is unique and magnificent, yet delicate. On the average, the Valley receives about eight inches of moisture each year. Cycles of drought are common throughout Colorado and western Colorado's history. As Mesa County's population continues to grow, ever-increasing demands on available water resources will occur.
2. Water resources represent a vital asset to the citizens of Mesa County, western Colorado and the state of Colorado. Water is an essential component of the economic, social and environmental quality of life we enjoy.
3. The preservation and protection of private ownership and the right to use water, its conservation, and its wise use are necessary to preserve the public health, safety and welfare of the citizens of western Colorado and the entire state.
4. Seventy percent of the state's water supply is found in western Colorado. As western Colorado continues to grow, maintaining sufficient water supplies for current and future use is of crucial importance. Furthermore, industries in western Colorado such as agriculture, small businesses, tourism and natural resource development require steady, reliable, and high quality water supplies.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Local water conservation efforts, such as:
 - Promotion and application of low water consumption landscaping.
 - Reducing water use to the reasonable extent possible without adversely affecting the aesthetic and social qualities that a well-landscaped environment provides to the local community.
 - Structuring water rates that incorporate block rates (the more water used, the more money paid) per unit.
 - To the extent possible, putting water to use in the most efficient manner, without removing water from the use to which it was originally appropriated.
2. The concept of comprehensive watershed management as well as realistic and cost-effective programs designed to control further pollution or contamination of Colorado water supported by water quality standards that are based on factual information and supportive data.

3. Local and State planning processes that incorporate the concerns, comments and needs of irrigation and domestic water providers when responding to the Agency Review Process.
4. Projects and initiatives, including adequate local, state, federal and private sector funding needed to manage and/or eradicate the tamarisk.
5. Programs and educational information promoting conservation, use and storage of water for Colorado's current and future needs.
6. Monitoring the "Colorado Water For The 21st Century Act," which calls for negotiation of Interbasin Compacts and equitable division of the state's water. This includes but is not limited to:
 1. The repair and improvement of existing water storage and transmission facilities/infrastructure as needed statewide.
 2. Water storage projects strategically located throughout the state as well as enlarging existing reservoirs when the water levels are low and opportunities are presented.
 3. The principle of "no material injury" to existing water rights by projects that remove water from its basin of origin.
 4. Mitigation in the form of compensatory storage and a financial commitment to address the economic impacts of removing water from its basin of origin to the satisfaction of the water users of that basin.
 5. Using statewide resources that incorporate cooperation, collaboration and partnerships when addressing statewide water issue.
 6. The expanded and effective use of the Colorado Water Conservation Board resources along with that of the Colorado Water and Power Development Authority.
7. Preservation of Colorado's water entitlements under interstate compacts and the protection of the state's prior appropriation doctrine.
8. Having the State of Colorado and appropriate entities' participate to provide necessary water and financial support for the endangered fish recovery programs.
9. The concept that no local entity should be forced to relinquish water sources for endangered species without adequate mitigation and compensation.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Increasing dependence on potable water supplies for outdoor use and irrigation when untreated water could be used for such purposes.
2. Mandatory requirements by public or private entities for high water consumption turf culture.
3. The continued depletion of western Colorado's water resources without mitigation, unless it is determined to be satisfactory to the water users in the donor basin of origin.

4. Any water policy actions that would diminish local government planning powers (e.g. 1041 powers).
5. Any federal action that would impair, diminish or divest any water right determined under the Constitution and laws of the state of Colorado.
6. Any federal actions contrary to Colorado Water Law.
7. Any water projects incorporating transfers of western Colorado water that diminish the quality of water in western Colorado.
8. Federal Wild and Scenic River designations or Suitability findings for Wild and Scenic River designations that are not the result of a local consensus of Mesa County based water stakeholders.



2012 GUIDELINES ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Background

1. Workers' Compensation Insurance is a major expense for the Chamber's business members.
2. Mesa County businesses continue to express concern with the local administrative law judge and the decision making process.

The Chamber Supports:

1. The major provisions of SB91-218, including maintenance of a specific benefits schedule and the use of impairment ratings that are based upon medical standards. SB91-218 has been shown to be fair to injured workers as well as effective in reducing costs.
2. Efforts to limit fraudulent utilization of the system by employers and/or employees.
3. Legislative efforts to bring about reform and changes to the current system of administrative law judges (ALJs). Study of the current system of administrative law judges is necessary in order to determine whether oversight of their decisions is necessary in order to increase effectiveness. Responsibilities must be more clearly defined and a system should be implemented that ensures accountability for decisions.
4. Having a worker's compensation insurance entity that is an insurer of last resort and ensures policy holder's premiums are protected.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Efforts to increase the flexibility of awards through enhanced opportunities for litigation or medical interpretation.
2. Efforts to reduce reserves that would negatively impact carriers' ability to pay out claims during a catastrophic loss.