The advocacy role of the Columbus Chamber centers around three key components: educating its members, building relationships and creating capital for the Central Ohio business community. To accomplish a successful advocacy program, the Columbus Chamber develops a Public Policy Agenda that focuses on its goals.

The 2012 Columbus Chamber Public Policy Agenda addresses issues that have been identified as needing immediate action. It is important to note that this agenda does not represent all issues pertinent to the business community. The Public Policy Agenda is a “rolling agenda” and serves as a base document that will constantly be monitored for purposes of updating or adding issues important to the Central Ohio business community.

The 2012 Public Policy Agenda is presented in three sections: local, state and federal. The issues in each section represent the issues the Columbus Chamber will advocate for with that respective level of government.

LOCAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: COLLABORATION IN THE COLUMBUS REGION

A goal of the Columbus Chamber is to work with our partners in local government to create the best business environment possible for the Central Ohio business community. The Columbus Region is fortunate to have local officeholders that strive to have good relationships with businesses. However, businesses of all sizes are confronted with regulatory, legislative and community issues that impede their ability to grow and add jobs. Many times there is uncertainty on how to address these issues. The Chamber will lead efforts to bring these issues, which are directly relayed to us by our members, to the attention of local governments and work as a partner in support of economic development.

Local regulatory reforms that the Columbus Chamber will advocate include:

Permitting

Business owners spend excessive time deciphering, completing, finalizing, waiting and potentially resubmitting lengthy permit applications. This is frustrating and time consuming. This is not only a time issue, but causes additional costs in human resources.

Action: The Columbus Chamber will work with local governments to create a clear, timely and rational permitting process that works with business owners and not against them.

Customer Service

Current local government departments operate independently of one another, even when dealing with similar requests and issues. There is a need to create a standardized process that will allow businesses to more efficiently and effectively work with local government departments, which will in return reduce administrative costs for businesses.
Action: The Columbus Chamber will work with local governments to create a partnership between local governments and business communities to determine the impact of any new procedural changes.

Zoning

Zoning issues are among the most frequent complaints of business owners. Currently, zoning can take years and add major expenses to a business trying to re-locate or expand. Local municipalities need to be as competitive as possible when attracting new businesses.

Action: The Columbus Chamber will work with local governments to develop a timelier and cost-effective zoning process for businesses that will allow municipalities to better compete at a global level.

Taxes

Taxes are usually a concern with most business owners. The issue, locally, is not just the tax rate, but the “layers” of taxation businesses that operate in multiple jurisdictions encounter. It is not only a matter of taxes being too high; it is a matter of business owners having to pay excessive administrative costs to calculate their taxes. Local governments can reduce their costs by sharing services, which in return can lead to lower taxes and improved efficiency.

Action: The Columbus Chamber will collaborate with local governments in Central Ohio to determine specific ways to reduce the layers of taxation many businesses currently face.

Reforming Columbus Stormwater Manual

The current Columbus Stormwater Manual causes significant delay and additional cost to business owners, small and large, looking to making improvements to their businesses. The Stormwater Manual does not correspond to regulations set forth by the Ohio EPA and Army Corp of Engineers.

Action: The Columbus Chamber will work with the City of Columbus to reform the Columbus Stormwater Manual so that it corresponds to Ohio EPA and Army Corp of Engineers regulations, as well as reduces exception costs to business owners looking to make improvements to their businesses. These actions will bring Columbus in line with its competitor cities that have a more streamlined process and requirements.

STATE OF OHIO: OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The Columbus Chamber is committed to advocating issues that are of concern to the business community. While many of these reforms were addressed during the 2011 legislative session, and were supported by the Columbus Chamber, more needs to be accomplished to make Ohio and Central Ohio “open for business.” Below are the statewide reforms for which the Columbus Chamber will advocate:
Workers' Compensation Reform

Ohio currently has the second highest workers’ compensation rates in the country, which hurts businesses and severely limits Ohio’s ability to compete on a national and global scale. To change the current conditions, significant administrative and legislative reforms to Ohio’s workers’ compensation system are needed. The most immediate goal is to make reforms that allow business owners to pay smaller premiums. The long-term goal is to fundamentally reform the system so that Ohio regains its competitive balance.

*Action:* The Columbus Chamber will work with the administration of the Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation and the Ohio legislature to advocate for reform.

Economic Development

The Columbus Chamber’s partnership with Columbus2020, which serves as the regional partner for JobsOhio, puts an emphasis on the importance of economic development to the Columbus Region. The Columbus Chamber will advocate to create the best economic environment through public policy and for sufficient support and funding from the State of Ohio.

*Action:* The Columbus Chamber will work with Columbus2020, the administration and legislative leaders to ensure JobsOhio is supported legislatively and through sufficient funding sources.

Workforce Development

The importance of having a trained and skilled workforce has never been more evident than it has in the last two years; many businesses are having problems finding properly trained workers for the thousands of job openings currently available in Central Ohio. Workforce initiatives should not only focus on high school graduates but also the senior and displaced workforces. The Columbus Chamber will advocate for the aligning of the needs of businesses with colleges and training centers to create a properly trained and skilled workforce for businesses in Central Ohio. The Chamber will advocate for revamping the job training landscape to unify the budget with policy-making to ensure flexibility and efficiency.

*Action:* The Columbus Chamber will work with administrative and legislative officials to advocate for reform and strengthen the partnership between businesses and educational institutions to produce a skilled workforce.

Energy

There is great potential for energy development in Ohio, including shale and other energy sources. This is an opportunity to provide thousands of good paying jobs to existing businesses, which will create capital and infrastructure improvements to the region.

*Action:* The Columbus Chamber will work with local and state governments, educational entities and regional economic developers to ensure businesses realize their full benefit.

Infrastructure Investments

Infrastructure investments are vital to the strategy and development of job creation. When the Columbus Chamber evaluates and supports infrastructure projects, it looks at the direct correlation to long-term economic development and job growth potential for the region. Infrastructure projects that the Columbus Chamber supports for funding include: the

**Action:** The Columbus Chamber will work with local, state and federal governments to secure and support funding sources for supported projects.

### Ohio’s Medical Corridor

The Ohio Medical Corridor was created to align the strengths of the state’s leading medical and research institutions to make Ohio the destination for medical research, services and health care companies. The Medical Corridor will connect and promote Ohio’s significant health care assets and leverage these collective assets for job creation in the areas of health care supply chain, medical devices and imaging companies, data storage and health analytics and global clinical research organizations.

The health care, research, and health-tech assets in the Columbus Region are some of the strongest in the country, including Cardinal Health, Battelle, OhioHealth, the Ohio State University Medical Center, Nationwide Children’s Hospital Research Institute and TechColumbus.

**Action:** The Columbus Chamber will work with the governor’s administration on the Ohio Medical Corridor to leverage the Columbus Region’s significant assets to drive economic growth and development to the Region.

### FEDERAL: PROVIDING THE TOOLS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND JOB CREATION

As our nation continues to work its way through the current economic situation, it is the view of the Columbus Chamber that the federal government should concentrate on items that will help the nation’s infrastructure and job creation.

Below are the projects that the Columbus Chamber will advocate for on a federal level.

#### Transportation and Infrastructure

The Columbus Chamber supports a robust transportation reauthorization bill. This includes funding for infrastructure surrounding intermodal facilities, such as the East-West Connector at Rickenbacker, programmatic funding for priority projects in the Columbus region such as I-70/71 and US 33/I-270, funding for both surface and public transportation and alternative fuels. A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) bill will allow for greater stability, long-term planning and funding for the Columbus Regional Airport Authority’s capital projects. Securing and supporting funding sources will be critical.

**Action:** The Columbus Chamber will work with our congressional delegation to ensure Ohio and the Columbus Region can continue to improve infrastructure and all forms of transportation.

#### Health Care

In the health care arena, the Columbus Chamber will monitor the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) implementation in terms of delivery system and financing reforms,
expansion of eligibility and funding opportunities. The Chamber will seek out regulatory clarification as needed on matters impacting the financing, delivery and quality of care in Central Ohio. While the debate on the ACA prolongs, implementation continues and there are certain policy options that continue to have bipartisan interest from which the Central Ohio region can benefit. There is strong support to improve quality, increase the value of and accessibility to health care and fully adopt electronic health records.

Currently, the Administration has embarked on a series of global payment bundling, continuum of care and community based transition care pilot programs as part of the “new order” in delivering care. The ACA established the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to test payment and delivery system reform models that reduce costs and or improve quality.

Federal funding is available for a series of prevention, public health and health workforce grants under the Prevention and Public Health Fund. In addition, federal funds will be available for health care providers that meet quality standards established by the Health and Human Service Department and for the adoption of electronic health records.

Action: The Columbus Chamber will monitor the reforms and try to identify funding opportunities and any potential issues that would affect our members. This proactive approach will focus on a non-partisan community unified voice.

Workforce Development

A qualified workforce is key to sustaining and growing businesses in the Columbus Region. Columbus’ local government, regional organizations (e.g., the workforce investment board) and business partnerships have an opportunity to offer jobs and economic development program ideas and recommendations to the U.S. House Education and Workforce Committee and the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee as they begin to draft the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization bills, which are targeted for reauthorization.

The Columbus Chamber will work with the congressional delegation and committees to include provisions supporting the Columbus Region’s jobs-creating economic and business development initiatives, particularly the logistics industry. Priorities for reauthorization will include ensuring training programs meet the demands of local employers, are implemented based on the recommendations of local workforce boards and are coordinated to maximize efficiencies, regardless of which federal agency or department has authority over the allocation.

Equal emphasis in the implementation of WIA should be placed on principles of economic development as is currently placed on supportive social services to ensure one-stop systems are responsive to business needs.

Action: The Columbus Chamber, in coordination with its workforce development experts, will work with the congressional delegation to advocate for reforms that will improve WIA and other workforce development initiatives.