

2005 Legislative Agenda

Identity Theft & Methamphetamine Related Crimes

Issue:

Identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America with the average victim spending 175 hours and \$1,000 re-establishing their identity. The total average loss to businesses to identity theft was \$10,200 with a total loss of \$32.9 billion nationwide. Within the last year, almost 10 million Americans became the victims of identity theft. The state of Oregon ranked tenth in the nation for the number of identity thefts in 2002. Nearly 100% of fraud/identity theft cases worked by FITE investigators had a methamphetamine nexus.

Increased use and production of methamphetamine in Hillsboro and Washington County is both a community and business problem. In 2003, Washington County had risen to first in the State of Oregon for the number of methamphetamine labs that were processed. For each pound of methamphetamine created by a meth cook, five to seven pounds of hazardous waste is produced. This is then dumped into various locations including business dumpsters, rivers, canals, storm drains and sewers.

Chamber Position Statement:

Both of these crimes have very real, negative economic impacts for our business community, our quality of life and for our customers.

Therefore, the Hillsboro Chamber:

- Will work with local public safety agencies to provide members of the business community with educational programs and information about how to safeguard themselves and their businesses from becoming victims of identity theft.
- Strongly urges and will support legislation that will provide stiffer penalties for exposing children to meth & meth labs, dumping toxic meth lab waste, or failure to clean up a contaminated meth lab site.
- Will support legislation that will require health care providers to supply health information pertinent to a child abuse investigation involving exposure of a child where meth was being manufactured or used.

Fiscal Policy & Economic Development

Issue:

Quality public services and credibility are paramount for a strong economy stimulating job growth.

Chamber Position Statement:

Job growth, retention, expansion and relocation efforts are dependent upon Oregon's ability to provide a healthy, prosperous climate for businesses to operate.

Therefore, the Hillsboro Chamber:

- Supports the creation of a rainy day fund.
- Supports the implementation of a cap on spending based on inflation, growth and other factors.
- Supports tax reform that encourages business and job growth.
- Supports cutting Capital Gains Tax to create jobs and increase the investment in Oregon's economy.
- Supports revamping the budgeting process to clearly identify funding priorities and hold public programs accountable for results.
- Supports the continued funding of research, development and innovation included in the Governor's 2005 budget.
- Supports the Simplify and Streamline Regulation and Permitting initiative recommendations included in the Oregon Business Plan.
- Supports the continued funding of transportation infrastructure such as road and bridge improvement projects that are critical to businesses both in terms of the effective and efficient movement of commerce as well as providing employee quality of life.

Health Care Cost Containment

Issue:

Rising health care costs are cited as one of the major issues facing small businesses today. Uncertainty surrounding annual double-digit premium increases leaves businesses unable to adequately plan for workforce growth. Increased costs also force employers to leave many citizens without coverage exacerbating the situation both locally and nationally. All Oregonians should have access to quality, affordable health care. Employers should take a leadership role in pushing the healthcare system to provide greater value-improved quality, better access and sustainable cost trends.

Chamber Position Statement:

The Hillsboro Chamber recognizes that continued rising health care costs adversely impact job growth. The cost to hire new employees and provide adequate health care benefit coverage is often too overwhelming for many small businesses to sustain.

Therefore, the Hillsboro Chamber:

- Supports Federal and State legislation that would allow small diverse businesses to pool together to purchase group health insurance at affordable rates.
- Supports reform of the medical/legal system.
- Encourages the implementation of initiatives that provide employees education and programs that keep employees healthy.

2005 Legislative Agenda

Health Care Cost Containment (cont.)

- Supports the exploration and implementation of new and expanded options of coverage such as:
 - Safety nets allowing small business employers to provide basic coverage plans for their employees. Benefits could be limited to basics and could cover minimum benefits including two prescriptions/month, six doctor visits/year, two emergency visits/year and seven hospital days per year as an example.
 - Health Savings Accounts
 - Defined contribution approach
- Supports plans for Oregon to pursue and implement innovative strategies used in the private sector to reduce health care costs as outlined in the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices.
- Supports plans for Oregon to follow the strategies used by other states to control Health Care Costs as outlined in the NGA Center for Best Practices.

Excellence in Education

Issue:

Education (preK-12 and beyond) is an integral component of skills training which will produce a pool of well-educated, skilled and highly motivated workers. A workforce that is well prepared and knowledgeable is paramount to all of our economic development efforts. Our international competitive advantage is absolutely tied to our ability to adequately educate and prepare our future workforce.

Quality schools continue to be one of the major factors when businesses are exploring relocation options. They want to be located in areas where their employees have access to quality schools and a well-trained, well-educated workforce. The relationship between quality schools and a prosperous, thriving business climate is undeniable.

Hillsboro must be able to continue to provide a quality education to the children of regional employees and business owners. This will continue to entice new businesses to our community and keep businesses here.

Access to regional opportunities for work-force development, retraining and continuing education are equally important for economic growth and business flexibility.

Oregon raises money from well-educated people through the collection of personal income taxes. Oregon spends more money on poorly educated people through the Oregon Health Plan, criminal justice system and the under- and un-employed.

Chamber Position Statement:

A strong educational system is vital to the long-term social and economic prosperity of the people of Oregon. The Oregon Education Act for the 21st Century established higher scholastic achievement standards for Oregon's children and created a foundation for excellence. A predictable, stable and accountable source of revenue for Oregon's schools is critical in allowing administrators, teachers, students, parents and communities to assist Oregon's children in meeting these higher scholastic achievement standards.

Therefore, the Hillsboro Chamber:

- Supports stable and adequate funding for local school districts, community colleges and universities.
- Opposes un-funded State and Federal mandates.
- Supports maintaining local decision-making authority.

Preserve Cities' Long-Term Water Supplies

Issue:

In April 2004, the Oregon Court of Appeals handed down a decision in the case of "Water Watch vs. Coos Bay North Bend Water Board and the Oregon Water Resources Department." The court held that in order to be granted a water right permit, a municipality must fully construct the works necessary to use the water within five years of receiving the permit. That decision overturned decades of precedent and threw Oregon's careful long-term planning traditions into doubt.

Under Oregon law, cities must carefully plan for the future development of water resources through Water Management & Conservation Plans. These plans require demand projections, an accounting of all water sources and specific conservation measures. Given the extensive environmental and financial requirements associated with water development, it's unreasonable to require a city to fully develop its water sources within 5 years. Additionally, this decision could impact water rights that, while developed today, were not developed within the first five years of being granted.

Therefore, the Hillsboro Chamber:

Supports the Responsible Community Planning Act (2005 legislation sponsored by the League of Oregon Cities)

- Oregon's 30+ year tradition of long-range planning works
- Oregon's economy needs certainty in water planning
- Years of effort invested by municipal water suppliers and the Water Resources Department in long-term planning for municipal water rights to assure secure water supplies are in jeopardy.