

Legislative Priorities

The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce has adopted five priorities for the 2009 legislative session:

- **Progress on a Natural Gas Pipeline Project and essential infrastructure improvements**
The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce encourages the Alaska Legislature and Administration to work in cooperation with the federal government and all stakeholders to accomplish measurable and real progress toward securing the construction of a natural gas pipeline in 2009.
- **Point of Discharge Waste Water Permit**
The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce urges the Governor and the Alaska State Legislature to delete the “point of discharge” standard governing the cruise ship wastewater permits. The State Chamber Commerce asks the 2009 legislature to apply the best available data and technology when setting standards for cruise ship wastewater discharge permits.
- **Ballot Initiative Reform**
The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce should work with the Alaska Legislature to pass legislation that makes the drafting, signature gathering and financing of ballot initiatives more transparent to Alaska voters. The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce should work with the Alaska Legislature to pass legislation that, at a minimum, establishes:
 1. A streamlined financial disclosure system including disclosure of the first dollar spent or collected – prior to an initiative being formally certified for the ballot – and online filing so that Alaskans can follow the money from the beginning and access important information prior to the election.
 2. An opportunity for meaningful public involvement and vetting of proposed initiatives to increase awareness and ensure the public is well informed prior to signature gathering and voting, e.g. requiring petition sponsors to hold public hearings in a majority of election districts prior to petition certification.
- **Workers Comp Fee Freeze**
HB228 passed in 2007 to extend to the fee schedule to March 31, 2009. The Legislature needs to either extend the freeze or apply a permanent solution for workers’ compensation health care benefit costs.
 - The State of Alaska should purchase a program containing the new data at the 90th percentile of every procedure code billed in Alaska by zip code for the 2008 year. The fee schedule would go into affect on March 31, 2009. Every year the CPT codes would be updated by the program provider to reflect the correct coding initiatives and new procedure codes.
 - New AMA and CMS procedure codes would be reimbursed at the 90th percent of the billed charges until the following year when the program provider can determine the 90th percentile.
 - The State of Alaska fee schedule should adopt the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ national correct coding standard (CCI edits) and the AMA’s published coding and billing practices. The majority of other state workers’ compensation fee schedules have either adopted the CCI edits outright or have made modified versions of them integral to their rules and regulations.

- **Support for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development in Alaska's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Waters**

The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce strongly supports offshore oil and gas exploration and production in Alaska's Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Cook Inlet and the North Aleutian Basin in Bristol Bay. The Chamber asks the Alaska Congressional Delegation and Governor to support responsible development of these valuable resources and organize a concerted effort to encourage Congress and the Federal Administration to enact offshore revenue sharing for states and local communities.

More than 80 State Chamber members considered over 35 proposals to come up with the five priorities. In addition to these priorities, the State Chamber has taken a position on a number of other critical issues facing the State of Alaska. The board ratified both the priorities and positions at a meeting Friday, October 31, in Anchorage.

The legislative priorities will be delivered to the Governor and all sixty members of the State Legislature. "These priorities will serve as the cornerstone of our advocacy efforts with the legislature during the upcoming session," said Caroline Higgins, Chair of the State Chamber.

State Chamber members employ the vast majority of private sectors workers. Action on our five priorities will remove barriers to job creation and create opportunities for business development.