

2018 POLICIES

Elections

Businesses invest in Minnesota’s people, communities and economy. Like every Minnesota citizen, businesses are subject to taxes, regulations and laws. Many business owners believe the process of making laws has been overwhelmed by politics for the sake of politics, and by elected officials who have fewer ties to the private-sector, for-profit economy. Changes to how we elect legislators and conduct legislative sessions is a “business issue” with real and lasting impacts on our private-sector economy.

OUR GOALS

The Minnesota Chamber believes that changes to Minnesota’s state election and legislative processes are necessary to increase the Legislature’s accountability to all Minnesotans.

JUNE PRIMARY ELECTION

The Minnesota Chamber supports moving Minnesota’s primary to June to drive stronger voter turnout, ensure a more representative candidate selection process and maximize candidate voter contact efforts. Voter turnout in recent August primary elections is at a very low point. Only about 7% of eligible voters cast ballots in the August 2016 primary election. Our mid-August primary election is one of the latest in the nation. Moving the primary to June would place Minnesota in the middle of the primary calendar and better align with other Midwest states. A primary election that occurs when citizens are

better engaged and allows adequate time for general-election debate will improve the process, and as a result, the Legislature will be more likely to represent the state’s overall population.

ENSURE CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAWS ARE FAIR AND EQUITABLE FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS AND THE PUBLIC

The Minnesota Chamber supports continued political involvement by businesses and nonprofit organizations, including support for federal law permitting use of treasury funds by for-profit and nonprofit corporations to establish and administer a political action committee without restrictions. We support contributions to independent expenditure political action committees by for-profit and nonprofit corporations without requiring additional disclosure of funding sources, which would chill involvement and impede speech.

Other specific election-related concerns include:

Independent expenditures: Oppose any and all efforts to place additional restrictions on truthful, issue-oriented independent expenditure activity, regardless of the timing of the expenditures.

Express advocacy: Oppose any and all efforts to expand the definition of express advocacy beyond the “magic words” test set forth in *Buckley v. Valeo*.

Electioneering communications: Oppose any and all efforts to regulate speech based on timing relating to elections.

Disclosure: Oppose any and all efforts to force disclosure of names of members whose dues support contributions to independent expenditure political action committees.

Shareholder approval: Oppose any and all efforts to force corporations to gain shareholder approval prior to spending on issue advocacy and express advocacy efforts.

OUR KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2018 SESSION INCLUDE:

- Adopt June primary election.
- Ensure campaign finance laws are fair and equitable for all participants and the public.

Federal preemption clarification: Clarify that Minnesota campaign finance laws apply to state and local races only. They do not apply to elections for the U.S. House or Senate, which are governed by federal election laws. **Opt-in requirement for labor unions:** Require labor unions to obtain annual written permission from each member before using any portion of membership dues for political purposes.

False claims penalized: Individuals who intentionally make false or bad-faith claims that a person or business has violated the corporate contribution prohibition should be liable for defense costs of the party against whom the claim is made.

DRAW LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT LINES BY COMMISSION

With the next redistricting cycle approaching in 2021, it is time for Minnesota to adopt a system to more effectively redraw district lines every 10 years to ensure that the criteria reflect our population's growth and mobility. In Minnesota, congressional and state legislative district map lines are approved by the Legislature. In 2011, Governor Dayton vetoed the state legislative district map, so the Minnesota Supreme Court appointed a judicial panel to draw the final district lines. An effective, nonpartisan and independent redistricting commission is needed to remove a time-consuming step from the redistricting process, and insulate elected officials from the perception that lines have been drawn for political reasons.

OPPOSE INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

Advancing policy through Initiative and Referendum (I&R) is a reaction to the Legislature's inability to resolve the most controversial issues. Bringing these issues to a popular vote rarely resolves a policy question, and usually increases the complexity around finding a solution. Adoption of I&R could create adverse consequences for Minnesota businesses. It would increase the complexity of the legislative process and reduce the accountability of legislative leaders to the business community by enabling them to pass off decision-making authority on important business issues to the public. With no direct voting rights, businesses' representation on vital issues would be significantly reduced. ■