



Richard Studley, Nancy McKeague, James Barrett, Philip Guyeskey, Tricia Kinley, Robert LaBrant, Doug Roberts, Jr.

Bringing Employers Together To Influence State Policies

Business group takes lead role on high-profile issues.

Considered “the state’s major public policy interest group” by *The Detroit News* (1/8/01), the Michigan Chamber of Commerce is one of the largest state chambers in the nation. With 6,500 members, the Chamber represents businesses of every size and type in all 83 counties of Michigan.

Established in 1959, the Michigan Chamber has played a leadership role in legislative, political and legal action on behalf of Michigan’s job providers.

As recently reported by *The Detroit News*, bills routinely are run by its top lobbyists before serious consideration from House and Senate leaders—an impact that stretches beyond purely commercial concerns. And there’s no shortage of lawmakers eager to turn its ideas into legislation.

“As a small business owner myself, I’ve always appreciated the role the Michigan Chamber has played in the legislative process,” says Rick Johnson (R-LeRoy), Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives. “The Chamber

does its homework and is a strong advocate for Michigan’s job providers.”

The Lansing-based business advocacy group has taken the lead on high-profile issues such as unemployment insurance reform, tax relief for individuals and business, preserving pro-business majorities in the House and Senate and fighting to

elect and retain Michigan Supreme Court justices pledged to interpret state laws, not make them.

The Chamber has also taken the lead on ballot questions and in supporting pro-business candidates running for statewide office.

“From property taxes and school finance to environmental quality and urban redevelopment, the Michigan Chamber has played a key role in the effort to make Michigan a better place to live, work and do business,” says State Senator Ken Sikkema (R-Wyoming), the incoming Majority Leader.

Sen. Sikkema’s observation is not surprising, considering the Chamber’s guiding mission: “To advance human progress through an economic, political and social system

**MICHIGAN
CHAMBER
OF
COMMERCE**

600 S. Walnut, Lansing, MI 48933
517.371.2100 Fax 517.371.7224
www.michamber.com

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce was established in 1959 to represent employer interests by working to promote conditions favorable to economic development in Michigan. More than 6,500 businesses, local chambers of commerce, trade and professional associations are members of the Michigan Chamber.



based on individual freedom, incentive, opportunity and responsibility.”

In addition to its mission, there is a collective force that the Chamber relies upon to guide its legislative, political and legal action: hundreds of volunteer leaders. The Michigan Chamber has a large and diverse Board of Directors—87 members, in fact—which represents every region and size and type of business in the state. A major responsibility of the Board is to establish Chamber policy on economic, legislative and political issues that affect Michigan’s business and economic climate. During the last election cycle, almost 1,000 business people contributed to the Michigan Chamber’s Political Action Committee.

Also guiding the Chamber’s legislative, political and legal action are more than 240 business people who serve on the Chamber’s three standing policy committees: environmental quality, health and human resources, and taxes.

“Outstanding business leaders from throughout the state help set our agenda and chart the course of the Michigan Chamber,” says Michigan Chamber President & CEO Jim Barrett. “The size and diversity of the Michigan Chamber’s membership is a great strength as we bring employers together to develop creative solutions to the challenges facing the state of Michigan.”

“As a member and past chair of the Michigan Chamber’s Board of Directors, I saw firsthand how business people can help shape public policy to make our state a better place

to live, work and do business,” states Chris MacInnes, Senior Vice President of Crystal Enterprises, Inc., in Thompsonville. “My involvement with the Michigan Chamber has been time and effort well spent.”

Another aspect of the Michigan Chamber that separates this group from other advocacy organizations is the continuity, depth and experience of its leadership.

Jim Barrett has been with the Michigan Chamber 31 years and has served as president since 1976. Senior Vice President of Political Affairs and General Counsel Robert LaBrant, considered one of the nation’s leading experts on election law, lobby law, campaign finance and reapportionment, has been on the job 25 years. Senior Vice President of Government Relations Rich Studley, the Chamber’s chief lobbyist, has been there 21 years. Phil Guyeskey, director of political affairs, has served for 28 years. And Nancy McKeague, senior vice president of administration, has been with the Chamber for 12 years. Collectively, these five lobbyists represent more than 115 years of lobbying experience and are a treasure of institutional memory, not only for the organization but for the capital as well.

“They have smart people who have been around, they know the process and they’re able to make decisions on their own,” observes Dennis Muchmore, founder of Muchmore Harrington Smalley, one of Lansing’s largest multi-client lobbying firms. “They’re willing to stand behind their positions and they’ll take the applause or the shots.”

Representing the Chamber’s next generation of lobbyists are Tricia Kinley and Doug Roberts, Jr. Kinley joined the Michigan Chamber in 2001 as director of tax policy and economic development. Before joining the Michigan Chamber, Kinley served as a lobbyist and key staff member for the Detroit Regional Chamber. Roberts joined the Michigan Chamber in 2002 as director of environmental and regulatory affairs. Previously, he served as a leading policy analyst for the state House.

“Each member of the Michigan Chamber’s business advocacy group specializes in certain issue areas,” notes Barrett. “However, when the going gets tough, our entire team of lobbyists can focus on a single issue. It’s this focus on teamwork and cooperation that allows Michigan Chamber lobbyists to maximize the organization’s impact on key issues.”

During the 2003-2004 Legislative Session, the Michigan Chamber will work with a new governor and a new legislature to address the challenges facing Michigan. In 2004, the Michigan Chamber will also celebrate its 45th year of service to Michigan’s job providers.

“It is this mix of old and new,” says Barrett, “that gives the Michigan Chamber a sense of history and optimism about Michigan’s future.” ❖❖❖

Capitol Backgrounds...

James Barrett, CCE, President & CEO

Michigan Chamber staff member 31 years, President since 1976; Budget Analyst, Michigan Department of Education.

Robert S. LaBrant, JD, CCE, Senior Vice President of Political Affairs & General Counsel

Chamber staff member since 1977; Attorney; Midwest Regional Manager, Business-Industry PAC; State Legislative Lobbyist, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce; Press Secretary and District Assistant, U.S. Rep. Harold Froehlich; Appleton, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce.

Nancy McKeague, SPHR, Senior Vice President of Administration

Chamber staff member since 1991; President, Michigan Insurance Federation; Legislative Staff, Michigan Senate; Legislative Staff, Michigan House.

Richard K. Studley, Senior Vice President of Government Relations

Chamber staff member since 1981; Program Director, Michigan Senate Republican Office; City Manager, Clare.

Philip G. Guyeskey, Director of Political Affairs

Staff member since 1974.

Tricia G. Kinley, Director of Tax Policy and Economic Development

Chamber staff member since 2001; Director of Public Policy, Detroit Regional Chamber; Government Affairs Coordinator, American Society of Employers.

Doug Roberts, Jr., Director of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs

Chamber staff member since June 2002; Policy Analyst, Michigan House of Representatives.