



The Kalispell Chamber of Commerce focuses on developing and enhancing the economic vitality of the Flathead Valley. We are a non-partisan, member-driven organization representing 723 small businesses, large employers, and nonprofits operating in the Flathead County area and 20,000+ employees. Serving as the voice of business is the center of our mission via our role as an advocate and a trusted source of information for the business community. We seek to build a business-friendly Flathead County and City of Kalispell that allows businesses to fully compete for customers and market share based on their goods and services. The Kalispell Chamber's legislative strategy is to support policy proposals that fit our mission and oppose measures that detract from our goals. The Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Government Affairs Committee uses these broad criteria when determining positions on policy issues.

We strive to ensure elected officials, government staff, and other community leaders are aware of the business community's concerns.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

ECONOMIC GROWTH: Promote policies that enable businesses of all sizes to thrive and grow.

INCLUSIVITY: Engage and listen to business stakeholders on policies that impact how employers operate.

COLLABORATION: Collaboratively develop policies with a willingness to consider alternative paths and compromise agreements.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY: Prioritize state and federal spending based on outcomes and results to create a balanced and stable budget.

COMMUNITY: As a business organization we recognize our important role in growing and supporting a healthy and vibrant community.

Regional Transportation - Air Service, Rail, Local Public Transportation

We advocate for transportation systems that allow for the efficient transportation of goods and freight mobility, enabling our employees to get to work and our visitors to experience

our area safely. A balanced transportation system reduces traffic congestion and increases the quality of life, availability, and efficiency of the area workforce.

We **SUPPORT** local and state government working with the Montana Congressional delegation to ensure that Montana receives a maximized amount of federal transportation funding.

We **SUPPORT** continued development of the ALT-93 bypass, and with the successful designation of Reserve Drive, an expansion of capacity on crucial connectors throughout the County.

We **SUPPORT** the continued expansion of our Glacier International Airport with the \$100 million terminal expansion and AERO's efforts to expand airline capacity and routes during our shoulder seasons

We SUPPORT rail transport as an opportunity for economic growth, utilizing its efficient method of transferring travelers and goods to the Flathead Valley.

We SUPPORT the continued growth of our Public Transportation System (Mountain Climber) as they work to meet our general public transportation needs, in addition to serving as a link for our tourists and visitors to their destination points.

We **SUPPORT** multi-modal transportation options which may include trails, bike paths and pedestrian improvements along our transportation corridors while balancing the needs of private landowners.

Tourism

We **SUPPORT** all local and state efforts to promote Kalispell and NW Montana as THE first-class destination for fall, winter, and spring travel. The Chamber recognizes how vital tourism is to our local and state economy and supports public policy that promotes, educates, and enhances tourism opportunities and infrastructure.

We **OPPOSE** attempts to redirect statewide collections of bed tax and tourism business improvement district dollars expressly collected to help support the tourism economy in Montana.

Given our proximity to Glacier National Park we understand that peak-season travelers, while essential to our economy, can challenge our infrastructure and capacity. We **SUPPORT** messaging and promotions that educate visitors on how to travel and recreate responsibly, encourage travelers to support local business, and promote kindness and grace.

We **SUPPORT** economic development initiatives that aid in diversifying our economic clusters to ensure long-term economic viability that sustains family-wage jobs in our Valley.

Taxation & Government Regulation

We believe in efficient and cost-conscious limited government. For the state's long-term economic health, we cannot rely on tax increases to stabilize the state budget and fund a growing number of programs.

We believe that government at all levels should strive to streamline processes and provide maximum affordable service with a customer-service facing focus. The Chamber encourages local and state government to provide strong oversight of agency budgets and to make the public reporting of local/state spending transparent.

We **OPPOSE** new government regulations that would impede business innovation and efficiency.

We **SUPPORT** a regulatory environment that fosters business innovation.

We **OPPOSE** unfair business taxes, fees, and heavy regulations that dissuade job growth and attraction of new businesses should be discouraged.

Economic Development

We believe Government should establish policies that provide incentives to foster a competitive business environment to increase growth and development opportunities. Fostering the growth of family-wage jobs is vital.

We **SUPPORT** allowing our local and state government to use economic development tools to attract new business and implement redevelopment programs. We believe the most successful results which include the attraction of high family-wage jobs to our region will be a result of both government and the private sector working together to achieve a robust, welcoming, and prepared community to receive and respond to opportunities.

Kalispell is a wonderful place to encourage both remote workers and startup industry to consider relocation to our valley. Innovation and creativity are the backbone of thriving, economic environments and incentives should be widely available.

We **SUPPORT** expanded broadband capabilities as essential to achieving robust business attraction and expansion in the valley.

We **SUPPORT** continued efforts to clean up Brownfields sites and redevelopment/repurposing of said sites in our community.

Education

We support our high quality, accessible, and accountable public education system (K-16), which is essential to having a skilled workforce that provides the foundation for a competitive economy and a sought-after quality of life. We value the inclusive opportunities

afforded to students in our community, and we support a system that celebrates the diverse abilities and talents of all learners and recognizes the full potential of each individual child.

We hold high expectations for our regional schools and public education systems and believe increased funding, rigorous student achievement standards, and local control are vital to Kalispell and the Flathead's ability to compete in the knowledge-based global marketplace of the 21st Century.

We SUPPORT private education opportunities and alternatives that meet the needs of individual learners.

We SUPPORT our Flathead Valley Community College as a vital community partner and stakeholder. We recognize the vital 2-year educational programs they provide for our youth, adult workers, and employees of Northwest Montana.

We BELIEVE every child should be given the opportunity to develop their talents to the fullest extent possible to be successful and prepared for their next step, whether career technical two-year education, four-year university, or a job directly in the workplace.

We SUPPORT our school districts in the development of career pathways, internships and apprenticeships aligned with local workforce needs, including dedicated funding for career and technical center cooperatives and innovation centers.

In a world of high-tech and innovation, **we SUPPORT** the continued expansion of our education system, which provides for the training and retraining of our adult workforce, giving them the tools and expertise to grow and change as the world of business does.

We **SUPPORT** full, stable and predictable funding of our public education system that meets our communities' future workforce needs (K-12, 2-year, 4-year) and support regular assessment of the impact of the funding formula, including restrictions on the annual inflation-related adjustments.

We **SUPPORT** the supplementation and State match for employer training dollars for partnerships between k-12 & higher education delivery systems.

Natural Resources and Environment

Montana's natural resources represent a bounty that deserves stewardship and conservation. Previous generations have shown that we can support agricultural and forest

management uses through careful management and planning while ensuring clean air, clean water, healthy wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities we all treasure. Our public and private lands provide multiple-use opportunities and, through balanced management, can provide space for all users. These working landscapes provide a myriad of recreational opportunities as well as serve as the backdrop for the natural splendor of the Flathead Valley. This bounty does not, however, come without responsibility.

We **SUPPORT** voluntary private sector initiatives to promote efficiency, sustainability, and stewardship to conserve and enhance our spectacular natural environment on public and private lands.

We **SUPPORT** responsible active management of our working forest and agriculture lands to meet the demands of society for food and fiber while conserving the environmental and societal attributes of the landscape and supporting the economies of our communities.

We **SUPPORT** through careful planning, development, and implementation of community protection plans that address wildfire and other natural disasters and threats.

We recognize businesses, citizens, and government share the same environment. As Montana continues to grow, we must commit to improve our air and water quality, conserve limited natural resources, retain working landscapes, promote responsible use and development of lands while ensuring first class access to outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities persist.

We **OPPOSE** settlements, regulations, and legislation at the state or federal level that fail to balance natural resource protection with the needs of people and businesses in the Flathead Valley.

Workforce/Affordable Housing

We believe Flathead County faces a gap in the availability of ownership and rental housing that is affordable for residents. Residents are increasingly burdened by high housing payments. Addressing the needs and gaps in our housing issue is essential to the continued success and growth of our businesses across industry sectors.

Workforce rentals are being removed from that market as they convert into short-term rentals. If left unchecked, the supply of workforce housing is in peril.

We **SUPPORT** reasonable adjustments to the development impact fees.

We **SUPPORT** additional resource being allocated to the statewide Permanent Coal Tax Trust Fund for low-income and moderate-income housing loans.

Workforce Development

We believe everyone in Montana should have the right skills to fill the jobs of today and have the ability and opportunity to adapt for the jobs of tomorrow. The demographic shift to a significant aging population and an increasing demand for skilled workforce across industry sectors requires a concerted community approach to workforce development efforts.

We **SUPPORT** state funding for programs that help increase workplace readiness, adult education, and workforce certification programs.

We **SUPPORT** incentives for employers to invest in trades education and training for employees.

Healthcare

We believe that the United States has the most advanced health care in the world, in large part due to private sector-led innovation and employer-sponsored healthcare coverage, and ensuring access to quality and affordable healthcare is critical for the health of Flathead County residents.

We **SUPPORT** making quality health care more affordable, more accessible, and more reliable for all residents.

We **OPPOSE** regulations that increase the cost of healthcare and add undue burden on the already overregulated healthcare industry.

We **OPPOSE** cuts to government programs that ensure our most vulnerable residents have access to healthcare services and believe healthcare funding should be a priority of the legislature.

We **SUPPORT** value-based healthcare solutions that reduce costs and reward quality outcomes.

We **SUPPORT** the permanent renewal of Medicaid Expansion as it brings approximately \$900 million in federal funding annually to Montana, creating and sustaining healthcare jobs. Medicaid provides low-income Montanans access to essential physical and behavioral health services. Maintaining healthcare facilities open and retaining providers in rural areas of our state is vital.

We **SUPPORT** the efforts of the State's Behavioral Health Commission to establish an accountable and effective mental and behavioral health system for Montana. Allocating funding to re-open Western Montana Mental Health Center's treatment facilities for 72-hour detox access and longer-term crisis center.

Energy

Our communities depend on energy that is reliable, affordable, and secure. Energy resources that can satisfy the present and future demands of businesses and individuals are essential for our economic health and well-being.

We are fortunate to have hydropower in our region, however, the risks of breaching dams and removing other generation resources jeopardizes the reliability of the energy we depend on, which can endanger lives and discourage business planning and development.

We **SUPPORT** Flathead Electric Cooperative as a vital partner and stakeholder in the distribution of electricity throughout the Flathead Valley. We recognize that we are all members of Flathead Electric Cooperative and that it strives to ensure electric grid reliability and resilience while maintaining affordable electricity rates.

We **SUPPORT** outcomes that allow Flathead Electric Cooperative to use, create, build, generate, and/or obtain a variety of energy resources at its discretion to provide the businesses and residents of the Flathead Valley with safe, secure, reliable, and affordable electric and natural gas service.

We **SUPPORT** hydropower generation across our region and **OPPOSE** all efforts to remove dams or negatively impact existing carbon-free, reliable hydropower generation projects.

We **SUPPORT** the efforts of Flathead Electric Cooperative to work with its transmission provider, the Bonneville Power Administration, to increase and/or strengthen the resiliency of electric transmission into the Flathead Valley.

We **SUPPORT** a regulatory environment that does not impose undue liability and risk on energy providers for wildfires.

We **OPPOSE** any government regulation that would impede energy generation development, innovation, efficiency, and reliability.