Every day of the 87th Legislative Session the Texas Association of Business (TAB) will be at the capitol advocating and fighting for Texas businesses.

By supporting initiatives that grow jobs, encourage business growth and expansion, and create a climate where businesses can thrive. TAB is also known for and will continue to successfully oppose bills that threaten business and our state’s economy.

Despite the challenges faced by our state and our country in this moment, TAB stands ready to work for business.

TAB is proud to present its top 5 legislative priorities for the 87th legislative session. While this is not a comprehensive list of each of the priorities of our member-led committees, it is representative of key elements of an overarching set of principles for prosperity that will protect business, spur our economy, and allow the businesses, communities, and people of our state to thrive.

TAB remains a bipartisan advocacy organization representing thousands of companies of all sizes and industry sectors. Our members and local chamber of commerce partners employ hundreds of thousands of Texans in every region of the state. TAB’s Board of Directors approved a full agenda that aggressively protects the Association’s pro-job, free enterprise philosophy. For nearly 100 years, TAB has been recognized in leading the fight to keep Texas as the best place in the world to own a business, run a company, raise a family, and retire. We will continue this effort and look forward to working with lawmakers in addressing critical business priorities.
PROVIDE ECONOMIC PROTECTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

The ability to fully restart the economy hinges on the ability of employers to “get back to work”. TAB supports approaches that will allow businesses to reopen safely and without fear or risk of undue litigation.

- Support measures to protect employers who comply with federal and state guidelines from litigation stemming from open ended liability due to COVID-19 exposure or future pandemics.

- In such cases the plaintiff must present clear and convincing, scientifically valid evidence that the business intentionally exposed the plaintiff to the harmful pathogen through gross negligence and that the plaintiff suffered an actual and significant injury.

- Preempt cities from regulating private employment practices including hiring, scheduling, wages, benefits, etc.
MAINTAIN COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC EDUCATION, WORKFORCE SKILLS & EDUCATION FOR GROWTH

A strong focus must remain on strengthening the Texas workforce through education. Essential to this effort is the need to:

• Protect the excellent work and maintain the commitments made to education through HB 3.

• Protect district level funding by providing a one year hold harmless to districts relative to attendance allowing teachers to spend valuable instructional time teaching students.

• Pause utilization of A-F rating system for accountability and funding purposes for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

• Maintain and where possible expand opportunities to access workforce training for retooling and upskilling of the current workforce.

• Maintain formula funding from the 86th legislative session for public institutions of higher education including restoring 5% mid-biennium cuts to higher education institutions.
PROTECT THE RIGHTS AND EVEN THE PLAYING FIELD FOR JOB CREATORS

Protect the rights of employers to operate businesses in the most effective manner possible in alignment with company and free market principles.

- Provide regulatory consistency and avoid regulations and/or local ordinances aimed at dictating business operations or otherwise interfering with the employer/employee relationship.

- Maintain economic development programs like Chapter 313 aimed at increasing business investment, relocation and expansion in Texas.

- Level the litigation playing field in lawsuits against owners and operators of company vehicles by ensuring cases are based on the facts and evidence of an event. Further, rules of evidence should allow for admission of vehicle photographs and other pertinent information as well as clarity on attorney-doctor relationships of those providing services to plaintiffs.
PROVIDE A DIGITAL LANDSCAPE & TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE FOR PROSPERITY & GROWTH

A commitment to developing a state Broadband Plan that provides for access to all Texans.

- TAB supports developing a plan with key characteristics that include consistency with free market principles, creating economic activity and increasing statewide competitiveness. It should also provide solutions that allow Texas students to access learning tools when necessary and provides for citizens to access health care and other essential services including telemedicine.

Further, the ability of businesses to operate efficiently is critical to spurring the economy, rebounding from the pandemic and continuing the growth of the Texas economy.

- TAB supports encouraging business efforts to develop and disclose comprehensive, market-driven policies regarding privacy and information practices and oppose efforts that would create a “patchwork-quilt” of state laws that impede the growth of internet commerce.
• Working toward an environment that supports increased high-tech business development in Texas and the continued development of electronic business-to-business transactions.

• Legislation and budget measures aimed at quickly modernizing state hardware/software technology reducing outdated IT spending, strengthening cybersecurity, and improving operational efficiency.

• Engaging cutting edge private sector companies to choose and procure cost-effective, qualified data and IT services allowing the DIR to serve as IT Consultant and cybersecurity watchdog for state agencies.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation infrastructure will be important in facilitating economic recovery as well as a critical link to spurring job creation and job growth as Texas aspires to remain competitive in the global marketplace. TAB urges the legislature to:

• Restore public-private authority for major transportation infrastructure projects in Texas through utilization of the Texas Comprehensive Development Agreement authority which expired in 2017.