



2003 - 2004

Manufacturers' Competitiveness Agenda

Tort Reform

Taxation

Workers'
Compensation

Energy
Resources

Environment

Education and
Workforce Development

Health Care

Building Codes
and Standards



Manufacturing - The Driving Force Behind Ohio's Economic Future

As Ohio's economy changes and finds its place in today's global marketplace, Ohio manufacturing continues to be the anchor of the state's economy. Advancements and the utilization of new technologies within Ohio manufacturing facilities have boosted innovation to a new level, providing Ohioans with first-class jobs, a solid tax base and superior products for the national and international marketplaces.

Research estimates that 55 percent of Ohio's jobs are directly or indirectly dependent upon the manufacturing sector of the economy. Manufacturing productivity continues to rise significantly, while non-manufacturing productivity continues to drop.

Ohio manufacturers:

- provide more than one million good-paying jobs,
- lead all economic sectors in total state payroll,
- produce more than one quarter of Ohio's Gross State Product - far exceeding any other sector of the economy and generating the economic conditions for growth of Ohio's service sectors,
- support local schools and government infrastructures with more than a billion dollars in corporate franchise and personal property taxes annually - far more than any other economic sector,
- export nearly \$25 billion in goods to more than 190 countries.

The message is clear: Ohio's economic future depends on Ohio's manufacturers.

With today's fierce global marketplace, it is imperative that Ohio creates the most competitive environment possible for manufacturers, an environment that will encourage continued growth of industry, support superior government services, and protect Ohio's economic future and the prosperity of all Ohioans.

Working toward that goal, the OMA has developed the 2003-2004 Manufacturers' Competitiveness Agenda. Guided by manufacturing leaders, the Agenda reflects the concerns of Ohio manufacturers, highlights key competitive challenges facing the state's manufacturing community and proposes specific legislative and regulatory remedies. The 2003-2004 Manufacturers' Competitiveness Agenda establishes the OMA's public policy priorities for the 125th General Assembly and is the blueprint for a more competitive manufacturing environment in Ohio.

Tort Reform



Taxation



Workers' Compensation



Energy Resources



Environment



Education and Workforce Development



Health Care



Building Codes and Standards



► **Agenda At A Glance**

TORT REFORM

- Limit punitive damages to \$100,000 or economic damages, whichever is greater; limit non-economic damages to no more than \$250,000.
- Specify that punitive damages may be awarded only once for harm resulting from a single action.
- Establish a 10-year statute of repose for product liability.

TAXATION

- Support the repeal of the state tangible personal property tax and replace it with a broad-based, low-rate tax that is revenue neutral, lowers the cost of manufacturing in Ohio, and promotes capital investment.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

- Encourage a refined definition of intentional tort.
- Encourage the BWC to establish a system of appeals that would: allow enhanced predictability; deal with inequities; monitor and track the rate system process; and solve systematic problems.
- Set claim life at five years.
- Advocate legislative reform of the definition of permanent total disability thereby restoring the original intent of workers' compensation statutes.

ENERGY RESOURCES

- Seek rule changes encouraging the growth of competitive marketplaces for electricity and natural gas in Ohio.
- Ensure available, reliable, and affordable energy service to all consumers in the state.
- Require coupling between wholesale and retail energy markets.

ENVIRONMENT

- Continue to support the Industry/Ohio EPA Permit Processing Efficiency Committee.
- Work with the Ohio EPA to increase consistency of environmental requirements throughout the state.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Implement industry-developed national skills standards across the state's education and workforce development systems.
- Encourage the development of local industry-driven pre-employment training systems.

HEALTH CARE

- Encourage innovative approaches to health care benefits by eliminating legal and regulatory barriers.
- Oppose legislation that mandates coverage of specific health care services.
- Work against efforts to allow physicians to form cartels that would fix prices in the health care market in Ohio.

BUILDING CODES AND STANDARDS

- Encourage enactment of state legislation that would create uniform building codes developed by the International Code Council.

▶ Competitiveness Challenge

Punitive and non-economic damages are impossible to assess objectively and accurately. Due to the absence under Ohio law of a limit on the amount juries can award for punitive or non-economic damages, frivolous claims for these damages encourage abuse of the justice system and a "lottery mentality," overcompensating the injured and their respective attorney(ies).

Unlimited awards drive up the cost of settlements and increase the number of lawsuits that are filed. This results in: hidden "tort taxes" that all consumers must pay for in goods and services; stifled research and innovation; reduced consumer access to new products and critical services; and soaring health care costs that everyone pays.

OMA Agenda

- Limit non-economic damages to no more than \$250,000.
- Limit punitive damages to \$100,000 or economic damages, whichever is greater.
- For businesses with less than 500 employees, limit punitive damages to \$100,000 or economic damages, whichever is lesser.
- Specify that punitive damages may be awarded only once for harm resulting from a single action.

Benefit to Manufacturers

Alleviating the eccentric awards presented for non-economic and punitive damages will directly and indirectly benefit the vast majority of Ohioans and save them millions of dollars by: stabilizing and reducing health care costs; increasing Ohio's competitiveness in the global marketplace; reducing hidden tort taxes; and increasing access to critical services and innovative, new products.

▶ Competitiveness Challenge

Under current Ohio law, plaintiffs can be fully compensated for their economic losses several times by recovering full compensation from one source and then again, for the same losses, from other sources such as health insurance, disability insurance or workers' compensation. Since defendants being sued are restricted by law from telling juries about other sources of compensation, juries cannot determine what is fair for a plaintiff's losses without knowing how much compensation the plaintiff is receiving from other sources.

OMA Agenda

- Eliminate the collateral source rule to allow juries to hear all evidence regarding other compensation sources for the plaintiff. All facts will then be taken into consideration when determining damages to be awarded.

Benefit to Manufacturers

Plaintiffs' rights to recover fair and reasonable damages will be maintained, while at the same time the unjust practice of double recovery will be eliminated. This change will save taxpayer and corporate dollars, and will allow more opportunities for companies to invest and grow in Ohio.

► Competitiveness Challenge

Manufacturers face two significant challenges in regard to state and local taxes.

The first: Through state and local government's inability to control spending, taxation is too high and continues to increase. The out-of-control spending is fed by an obedient tax system. To solve the state's tax problem, Ohio must first solve its spending problem, beginning with sustainable budget practices, including strict limits on the growth of government receipts, limiting the use of one-time funding, and rigorously reviewing government programs for their effectiveness. For the 2004-05 budget, the OMA stands ready to provide a blue-ribbon commission of manufacturing executives to help the state cut costs to match the recession-driven decline in government receipts.

The second: Ohio manufacturers shoulder a significantly higher share of state and local government's tax burden than other economic sectors. A higher proportional tax burden inhibits manufacturers' competitiveness, thus reducing business revenues and tax contributions.

In particular, Ohio's business climate is hampered by a strategically outdated, anti-competitive tax system. Our uniquely burdensome personal property tax hinders capital investment that is critical to sustained productivity and job growth. Currently, Ohio excessively taxes business investment while using credits and exemptions to partially mitigate the negative impact.

OMA Agenda

- Work to encourage a comprehensive review and evaluation of how the current tax burden in Ohio is allocated. Modernize Ohio's tax system, simplifying its tax code, lowering its tax rates and ultimately creating an environment more supportive of productivity, growth and economic prosperity.
- Support the repeal of the state tangible personal property tax and, if necessary, replace it with a broad-based low rate tax that is revenue neutral for state and local government in order to: lower the cost of manufacturing in Ohio; promote capital investment which will increase manufacturing productivity and lead to a more prosperous Ohio; win fairer treatment of manufacturing from the state's business tax system; protect manufacturing in the face of looming business tax increases; and maintain the state's social infrastructure by leading it to a broader, more business-friendly tax structure.

Benefit to Manufacturers

An effective, efficient and equitable tax structure that encourages economic growth and prosperity, allowing all businesses to be more competitive in today's global marketplace.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

Since 1987, the Ohio Supreme Court has allowed injured workers to take action against their employer when it was determined the injury resulted from an intentional action or negligence. Therefore, additional compensation above and beyond the base Workers' Compensation benefits is allowable.

OMA Agenda

- Encourage a refined definition of intentional tort to serve all applicable parties and require the injured worker to select either workers' compensation or intentional tort.

Benefit to Manufacturers

There will be an unestimatable savings to employers, insurers and to the State Insurance Fund.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation is converting to an insurance-industry reserve system entitled Micro Insurance Reserve Analysis (MIRA). This transition has had the effect of raising premiums for certain types of employers. During this transition, the BWC must take action to solve existing system problems and balance real or apparent inequities that exist between the current system and MIRA.

OMA Agenda

- Encourage the Bureau of Workers' Compensation to establish a system of appeals that would: allow enhanced predictability; deal with inequities; monitor and track the rate system process; and solve systematic problems.

Benefit to Manufacturers

Estimated savings for taxpayers and consumers is \$10 million.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

The acceptability of claims involving only a psychiatric diagnosis and a cause unrelated to a physical injury or occupational disease has been the subject of many court decisions and legislation over the recent years. The Ohio Supreme Court has increased the likelihood that these conditions will continue to apply.

OMA Agenda

- Propose legislation that requires a physical injury before the allowance of a psychiatric condition.

Benefit to Ohio

Estimated annual savings for taxpayers, consumers, companies and the workers' compensation system is nearly \$176 million.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

The rules of civil procedure, together with an oddity in state law, allow an injured worker to voluntarily dismiss an employer's appeal to court. The injured worker must refile within one year of his or her dismissal. In the interim, benefits are payable for allowed claims, resulting in unjust enrichment of the injured worker.

OMA Agenda

- Propose legislation to correct this unintended result.

Benefit to Ohio

Allows for more fair and judicious proceedings and settlement of workers' compensation cases for all parties involved.

► Competitiveness Challenge

A medical-only claim remains active in Ohio for six years and a lost time claim remains active for 10 years. Claims can extend beyond these timeframes due to administrative activity (e.g., payment of a doctor bill). Open-ended claims leave the system extremely vulnerable to abuse. Claims that are virtually never-ending expose employers and the system to billions of dollars in potential liability, threatening the long-term stability of the system.

OMA Agenda

- Implement legislative changes that would reduce the life of a claim from 10 and six years to five years from the date of injury or diagnosis, or treatment in the case of occupational diseases.

Benefit to Ohio

A more efficient workers' compensation system that provides the best care possible for injured workers, quickly returns workers to the job, reduces fraud, and saves money for Ohio's employers.

► Competitiveness Challenge

Permanent Total Disability (PTD) benefits are awarded to injured workers who have sustained a workplace injury catastrophic enough that it does not allow them to return to work. The original concept of workers' compensation benefits that are linked directly to a workplace injury has eroded due to recent Ohio Supreme Court rulings. The court has considerably lowered the standard in defining who is eligible for PTD benefits by expanding the definition well beyond that seen in the past (for example, in *State ex rel. Thomas v. Industrial Commission* (2002), 97 Ohio St. 3d 37). Today, benefits are based not just on medical impairment related to workplace injuries, but also on social and general welfare factors. Unfortunately, these awards discourage workers from returning to work. The challenge is to redefine PTD standards to clear up ambiguity in the benefit-awarding process and to preserve benefits for workers who are unable to perform gainful employment as a result of workplace injury.

- Advocate legislative reform of the definition of permanent total disability thereby restoring the original intent of workers' compensation statutes. Establish standard statewide criteria which bases compensation on medical impairments resulting from workplace injury or occupational disease.

Benefit to Ohio

Estimated annual savings for taxpayers, consumers, companies and the workers' compensation system is \$9 million.

▶ Competitiveness Challenge

Pneumoconiosis claims, especially in regard to Asbestosis, are being filed against manufacturers at an alarming rate. Frequently the claims are filed in large groups and with a lack of sufficient medical information to support them. Compounding the problem is the refusal of the claimant to present himself or herself for examination by a physician of the employer's choice. The delay caused by this claim process can cause great harm to the employer in terms of potential liability.

OMA Agenda

- Work with the Bureau of Workers' Compensation and Industrial Commission to set up quick and fair methods for handling these claims. The system should compensate legitimate claims in an efficient, timely manner and quickly dismiss those with little or no merit.

Benefit to Ohio

Estimated annual savings for taxpayers, consumers, companies and the workers' compensation system is nearly \$250 million.

▶ Competitiveness Challenge

In late 2002, the Ohio Supreme Court struck down state law which provided that an injury to a worker was presumed to have been caused by drug or alcohol abuse if the worker tested positive for drugs or alcohol or refused to be tested. The presumption could be rebutted by the injured worker at the time of his/her hearing.

OMA Agenda

- Work with the legislature to ensure the passage of a bill that will reinstitute a rebuttable presumption statute that will withstand constitutional scrutiny.

Benefit to Ohio

With an estimated 38 to 50 percent of workplace injuries involving the use of alcohol or drugs, rebuttable presumption acts as a deterrent to offenders and creates a safer workplace for all Ohio workers.

► Competitiveness Challenge

Access to reliable and economical energy resources, such as electricity and natural gas, is crucial for Ohio manufacturers' competitiveness in the global marketplace. A well-functioning competitive energy marketplace should enhance the availability of reliable and economical energy resources. As Ohio moves from fully regulated energy markets toward full retail competition, the competitive viability and robustness of Ohio's energy marketplace will directly impact Ohio's ability to attract new business investment and retain existing businesses.

OMA Agenda

- Encourage the state to adopt administrative rule changes to facilitate the growth of competitive marketplaces for electricity and natural gas in Ohio and the multi-state region, as well as facilitate Ohio manufacturers' access to and participation in those marketplaces.
- Encourage the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to fulfill its obligations to ensure that retail electric services that have been declared to be competitive are in fact being provided in a competitive manner to Ohio consumers in accordance with state law and policy.
- Encourage the PUCO to fulfill its obligations to monitor and evaluate other retail electric services, including, without limitation, ancillary services and metering, for the purpose of determining whether such services should be made available on a competitive basis.
- Ensure the availability and accessibility of adequate, reliable, and affordable energy service to all consumers in the state.
- Encourage the PUCO to evaluate each electric utility's level of preparedness for the scheduled expiration of its market development period, including, without limitation, the ability of each such utility to provide its customers with a market-based standard service offer and a competitively bid alternative, and take the steps necessary to ensure that each such utility has fulfilled its obligations in that regard.
- Encourage incentives for energy suppliers to diversify their wholesale energy supply portfolios so that there can be more efficient management of price, consumption and credit risks.
- Advocate statutory changes and/or encourage the PUCO to promote the availability of innovative and flexible pricing options for energy consumers.
- Ensure adequate, accessible, reliable, safe and affordable transportation, transmission and local distribution of energy to all consumers in the state.
- Enact legislation to ensure that Ohio electric transmission owners (utilities) participate in regional transmission organizations.
- Monitor FERC proceedings regarding its Standard Market Design (SMD) proposal to ensure that the SMD proposal is consistent with the OMA Competitiveness Agenda.

- Ensure the development of new electric generation capacity sufficient to meet future demand growth and ensure that adequate and integrated energy infrastructure (electric transmission and natural gas transportation and distribution) is developed and improved in sync with the development of new generation capacity and future energy demand growth.
- Advocate for changes in the Ohio Power Siting law and/or regulations. Although Ohio Power Siting law is regarded as one of the most proactive siting laws in the United States; it is more than 30 years old and designed for an exclusive monopoly environment. Ohio Power Siting law and regulations need to be updated to remove any obsolete provisions that are inconsistent with the competitive environment of today.
- Advocate for Ohio Power Siting Board changes in rules and procedures that encourage the construction of new natural gas and electric infrastructure and the upgrade of existing infrastructure through a streamlined process.
- Promote development of diverse and environmentally friendly electricity supplies throughout the state including, but not limited to, hydro, wind, biomass, solar, landfill gas, fuel cells, microturbines and ethanol electricity sources.
- Encourage energy efficiency, conservation, and the production and use of energy efficient products.
- Expand by law environmentally sound air emissions processes and equipment eligible for Ohio Air Quality Development Authority treatment.
- Implement by law a non-refundable tax credit for producers of energy-saving appliances and household products which are both produced and purchased in Ohio.
- Ensure adequate coupling between wholesale and retail energy markets so that energy consumers can receive timely and accurate price signals from the market.
- Mandate laws and/or advocate PUCO rules that (I) permit and encourage electric customers to provide for their own electronic measurement of real time electric and gas consumption data; or (II) require Ohio's regulated energy distribution utilities to provide customers with such consumption data on a real-time basis.
- Mandate laws and/or advocate PUCO rules that Ohio's regulated electricity distribution utilities implement an effective electricity demand response program whereby electric customers would be permitted to reduce electric demand on a voluntary basis and be compensated for such reduction in a fashion commensurate with relevant avoided generation costs.

Benefit to Ohio

In 2000, Ohio's commercial and industrial enterprises spent an estimated \$6.3 billion on electricity.¹ Implementation of programs resulting in a five percent reduction in this amount would result in a benefit to Ohio commercial and industrial companies of approximately \$315 million per year.

1. Source: Center for the Advancement of Energy Markets, "Retail Energy Deregulation Index 2002 Update," September, 2002.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

The energy utility industry has changed from a wholly monopoly environment to one that is largely competitive. This competitive environment requires leadership from a non-regulatory state agency which will facilitate energy issues primarily in a competitive environment. The OMA supports the engagement of the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) as the lead agency for Ohio's energy policy. The ODOD is the most logical organization for this responsibility because an all-encompassing and consumer-choice driven energy policy is critical for Ohio's growth. Energy costs and a market-based energy environment are significant factors in the decision of companies to locate, expand and remain in Ohio. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) should maintain jurisdiction over regulated energy entities.

OMA Agenda

- Engage the ODOD as an ombudsman with state and local departments, commissions, boards and agencies to facilitate the transportation, transmission and development of adequate, reliable and affordable energy sources in Ohio.
- Engage the ODOD in vigorous participation in all regulatory policy-making proceedings presented to PUCO on energy-related issues. This function would include coordination of various state agency permitting procedures on behalf of developers of energy in Ohio.
- Engage the participation of the ODOD in FERC proceedings pertaining to RTO development and operation in Ohio.
- Encourage the ODOD to play a larger role at the Ohio Power Siting Board with respect to advocating less "regulatory" oversight and with respect to coordinating the permitting that involves other state agencies. The ODOD would develop a set of standards based on promoting energy sources and growth which would be incorporated in Ohio Power Siting Board decision making.

- Encourage the ODOD to issue its own semi-annual report to the Ohio General Assembly with respect to the state of competition. The report would be subject to comment from the entities affected by Ohio's energy policies and energy competition.
- Ensure the ODOD is assigned the responsibility of monitoring the effectiveness of the energy policies and initiatives of neighboring Midwest states with a focus on making Ohio's energy policies and programs the best in the region.
- Ensure the ODOD takes the lead on promoting energy efficient methods Ohioans can use and promoting Ohio-manufactured energy efficient products.
- Ensure the ODOD heavily promotes its available funding for these technologies.

Benefit to Ohio

Low-cost reliable energy resources that will promote future economic growth in Ohio.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

Ohio EPA air quality permits are an essential component to environmental protection and are needed for every industrial project and plant in Ohio. Unfortunately, delays by Ohio EPA in issuing these Permits to Install (PTI) and Permits to Operate (PTO) for air quality systems result in lost market opportunities and increased project costs for Ohio businesses. Creating a more efficient and predictable air permitting process will allow Ohio companies to be more competitive in today's domestic and global marketplaces.

Benefit to Ohio

The dialog between OMA, Ohio EPA, and U.S. EPA Region V on air permit issues will help streamline and solve potential air permit and pre-permit construction/installation issues and inconsistent application of operating terms and conditions.

OMA Agenda

- The OMA Environment Committee will continue to support the Industry/Ohio EPA Permit Processing Efficiency Committee (PPEC). Created in July 2001 by the OMA Environment Committee, the Industry/Ohio EPA PPEC will continue to work to reduce the number of air permits and to increase the efficiency of the air permit process in Ohio.
- The work of the Industry/Ohio EPA PPEC will save Ohio companies both time and money and help promote economic growth in Ohio. The PPEC has made significant progress toward the goal of reducing the number of air PTIs required by Ohio EPA each year by as much as 40 percent.
- The OMA is committed to creating a dialog with U.S. EPA Region V, Ohio EPA, and Ohio's manufacturers to work on Title V air permit efficiency and uniform application of comparable permit terms and conditions, such as capacity monitoring. Ohio manufacturers need a "level playing field" with other manufacturers in U.S. Region V states and throughout the U.S.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

Future water quality regulatory issues will create an economic cost to Ohio's manufacturers that will hinder their future competitiveness.

OMA Agenda

- Proactively work with the Ohio EPA to provide creative solutions to water quality regulatory issues. Be an aggressive, active participant in the development of both legislation and environment opportunities for Ohio manufacturers. Ohio EPA must have a consistent application of water regulatory requirements concerning Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) and Anti-degradation.
- Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) is the maximum load of pollutant that a water body can receive on a daily basis without violating water quality standards. The federal Clean Water Act requires Ohio to develop a TMDL program to ensure that every water stream segment meets state and federal water quality standards. The TMDL program will require Ohio's manufacturers to invest in costly water quality operations and systems to insure that water quality standards are met.
- Anti-degradation: Under the Clean Water Act, water quality in Ohio's streams, lakes and rivers that is better than Ohio's water standards and that exceeds levels necessary to support aquatic life and recreation must be maintained and protected. Ohio's Anti-degradation policy prohibits any degradation of the water quality. Ohio's manufacturers will need to monitor their discharges to insure that water quality and anti-degradation standards are met.

- Continue to monitor and work with the Taft Administration on the Great Lakes Water Quality Initiative including the Great Lakes Strategy 2002 and Annex 2001 water issues that will affect Ohio's manufacturers.
- Work with Ohio EPA to promote a more efficient and predictable water permitting process in Ohio. The Industry-Ohio EPA PPEC would be the model to work with water issues after the reduction in air permits is completed.

Benefit to Ohio

Creative solutions to future water regulatory issues will create a cleaner environment and revenue savings that will allow Ohio's manufacturers to maintain a competitive advantage.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

Ohio's cumbersome environmental regulations system costs Ohio's manufacturers valuable time and money, hindering their ability to invest additional resources into growth and expansion opportunities.

OMA Agenda

- Economic concerns and the lack of state revenue funds will limit the future resources of Ohio EPA. The Ohio EPA and the Ohio General Assembly need to examine funding resources to ensure that the Ohio EPA is reasonably funded. An efficient and properly budgeted Ohio EPA will continue to preserve Ohio's environment and protect Ohio manufacturers' ability to operate effectively and efficiently.
- Encourage Ohio EPA to adopt federal environmental standards from U.S. EPA as written, instead of the current practice of rewriting federal environment standards specifically for Ohio. This initiative would save Ohio EPA resources without compromising environmental standards in Ohio.
- Support Ohio EPA in quality management, streamlining and cost saving efforts that improve departmental efficiency (Developing Excellent Agency Leaders Program [DEAL]) and the reorganization of the Division of Air Pollution Control.

Benefit to Ohio

A more efficient Ohio EPA will encourage growth and economic investment in Ohio.

► **Competitiveness Challenge**

Different interpretations of Ohio EPA environment requirements by Ohio EPA inspectors create an unnecessary enforcement and regulatory burden on Ohio's manufacturers.

OMA Agenda

- Create a dialogue and potential process with Ohio EPA whereby inconsistent interpretations and applications of environmental requirements throughout the state are resolved by Ohio EPA for universal application statewide.

Benefit to Ohio

A more consistent interpretation of environmental requirements by Ohio EPA inspectors will save Ohio manufacturers time and money in the administration of their environmental programs.

► Competitiveness Challenge

To improve Ohio's competitive advantage in manufacturing, Ohio's education and workforce development systems must be among the best in the world. Currently, too many of Ohio's students are inadequately prepared for work in high-skill, high-technology manufacturing operations. In addition, Ohio's existing workforce development system is fragmented, misaligned and uncompetitive. The system fails to meet the needs of both employers and of incumbent and emerging workers.

OMA Agenda

- Promote an enlarged leadership role for the Ohio Department of Development in the state's workforce development system, providing an economic development focus for the system.
 - Support rapid implementation of the strategic plan, "Advance Ohio," from the Governor's Workforce Policy Board, working toward improvement of the state workforce development system.
 - Implement industry-developed national skills standards across the state's education and workforce development systems, creating the supply of technical skills necessary in modern manufacturing.
 - Encourage the development of local industry-driven pre-employment training systems, modeled after the successful Licking Valley Joint Vocational School program.
 - Monitor implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, with implementation of rigorous school performance measurement, accountability systems, and parental choice in low-performing schools.
- Promote accelerated implementation of quality systems (such as the proven Baldrige in Education model) within school districts across the state.

Benefit to Ohio

An educated, highly trained and motivated workforce will encourage manufacturers to remain in and relocate to Ohio. All Ohioans will benefit from the increase in jobs and economic prosperity created by a highly trained manufacturing workforce.

► Competitiveness Challenge

Manufacturers support market-driven, innovative approaches to health care benefits. Managed care systems continue to offer efficient, cost-effective solutions to manufacturers and their employees. Every individual must assume responsibility to be educated advocates on behalf of their own health – including living healthy lifestyles, understanding the relationship between behavior and health, and seeking effective health care in times of illness. Government intervention in the health care financing system often results in increased costs and unintended, adverse effects. Our challenge is to promote efforts by manufacturers and employees to have access to effective, affordable health care and health care benefits.

OMA Agenda

- Encourage innovative approaches to health care benefits by eliminating legal and regulatory barriers.
- Oppose legislation that mandates coverage of specific health care services.
- Support the on-going ability of employers to offer efficient health care benefits - - including managed care and other arrangements.
- Work against efforts to allow physicians to form cartels that would fix prices in the health care market in Ohio.
- Support efforts to provide information to employees about health issues, allowing them to make informed decisions about their health care and benefits.

Benefit to Ohio

A financially sound and efficiently regulated health care system will provide high quality, affordable and accessible health care for Ohio employers and their employees.

► Competitiveness Challenge

A standard regulatory code for construction projects is essential for the productivity of Ohio businesses. The lack of a regulatory structure creates construction project delays, cost overruns and ambiguity in construction standards from one project to another. The challenge in Ohio is to create a code system that adds structure and uniformity to the construction process.

OMA Agenda

- Encourage enactment of state legislation that would create uniform building codes developed by the International Code Council, a universally accepted standard for construction practices.
- Within the uniform code legislation, advocate the creation of a state advisory committee to serve as a source for resolving issues where there is lack of clarity in the code.

Benefit to Ohio

A uniform building regulatory code and standards system will allow Ohio's manufacturers to proceed with construction projects in a more timely and consistent manner. A more streamlined construction process will lower costs, speed facility readiness, increase production for manufacturers, and lead to greater employment and economic development for the state as a whole.

About the OMA

Established in 1910, the Ohio Manufacturers' Association is the only statewide organization exclusively serving manufacturers. The OMA's primary mission is to represent manufacturers' interest in the Ohio General Assembly and before state regulatory agencies to ensure a competitive legislative and regulatory climate. The collective strength of its 2,000 manufacturing members makes the OMA the most powerful and effective voice for manufacturers in Ohio.

Built by Members. Guided by Members.

All of the OMA's activities are guided by volunteer leaders from manufacturing companies across Ohio. Our Board of Directors represents manufacturing companies of all sizes statewide. Public policy positions taken by the OMA are driven by members. Member-company experts in various fields serve on the organization's policy committees and task forces. Working with the OMA's professional public policy services staff, these committees and task forces move manufacturers' concerns from the factory floor to the halls of government.

It is this emphasis on member involvement that sets us apart from similar organizations – and is our greatest strength. The synergistic combination of an involved membership and OMA's dedicated, professional staff provides the knowledge, expertise and access to move Ohio toward a beneficial business environment in which manufacturers can flourish.

