



2020-21

OMA Public Policy  
**COMPETITIVENESS**  
**AGENDA**

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## Competitiveness Agenda

Manufacturing drives Ohio's economy. It is responsible for approximately \$112 billion (17%) of Ohio's Gross Domestic Product – greater than the contribution of any other Ohio industry sector.

In the competitive domestic and global economies, every public policy decision that affects Ohio's business climate affects Ohio's manufacturing competitiveness. In turn, Ohio's manufacturing competitiveness determines the state's economic growth and job creation.

Ohio manufacturers need public policies that attract investment and protect the state's manufacturing legacy and advantage. These policies apply to a variety of issues that shape the business environment in which manufacturers operate.

### **THE OMA'S MAJOR POLICY GOALS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

- **An Efficient, Competitive Ohio Tax System**
- **A Lean, Productive Workers' Compensation System**
- **Access to Reliable, Economical, Competitive Energy Resources**
- **A Fair, Stable, Predictable Civil Justice System**
- **Science-based, Technologically Achievable, and Economically Reasonable Environmental Regulations**
- **A Modern, Job-Supporting Infrastructure**
- **An Adequate, Educated, Highly Skilled Workforce**

# PolicyGoal:

## An Efficient, Competitive Ohio Tax System

For Ohio to be successful in a global economy, the state's tax system must encourage investment and growth. It must be competitive nationally and internationally. A globally competitive tax system is characterized by certainty, equity, simplicity, and transparency. Economy of collections and convenience of payment also are important attributes.

Generally, manufacturers support efforts to broaden the tax base, which enables lower rates. To preserve the integrity of the broad tax base and ensure fairness, credits and exemptions should be reduced and discouraged. Moreover, earmarking and dedicating tax revenues should be discouraged as well.

Government should instead build on initiatives such as the recently revised Jobs Retention Tax Credit and continue creating incentives for capital investment in Ohio. Productivity gains, which keep Ohio manufacturers competitive, are driven by capital investments in technology and equipment. Therefore, tax policies that encourage investment should be a priority.

As Ohio's number one industry and wealth producing sector of the economy, Ohio's tax structure should be maintained to leverage manufacturing. The state should continue to improve its manufacturing climate by removing the sales tax from temporary labor and manufacturing janitorial supplies and services.

Good tax policy also generates necessary revenue to support the essential functions of government. Good budgeting and spending restraint at all levels of government are vital to a competitive tax environment, especially in challenging times.

Major tax reforms approved by the Ohio General Assembly in 2005 – and additional reforms in 2011 through 2015 – significantly improved a tax system that was for many years widely regarded as uncompetitive and obsolete. These reforms reduced overall tax rates, eliminated tax on investment, and broadened the tax base, all of which provide more stable and predictable revenues and simplify compliance.

The elimination of the tangible personal property tax, the corporate franchise tax, and the estate tax has strengthened the competitiveness of Ohio's tax system. So has the reduction of the personal income tax rate, as well as the creation of a broad-based, low-rate commercial activity tax (CAT).

Going forward, these tax policy improvements must be protected. The tax bases should be protected against erosion caused by new credits and carve-outs to narrow special interests. Where possible and reasonable, tax bases should be expanded and tax rates reduced. Ohio has seen an increase in potential CAT exemptions and carveouts. While most of these have not come to fruition, leaders must ignore the siren song and maintain the broad base.

Finally, reducing the number and type of taxing jurisdictions would be beneficial. Because of its complex layering of local and state taxes, Ohio's tax system is at a competitive disadvantage.

### **ABOUT OHIO'S UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TRUST FUND**

The COVID-19 pandemic thrust the Ohio Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund into default. Coming out of the pandemic, state leaders must work toward aligning benefits with contributions to build a sustainable unemployment trust fund balance. The best solvency plan is one that includes a focus on job creation – because increased employment not only increases fund contributions, but also reduces benefit payouts.

To encourage job growth, unemployment compensation tax rates should be in line with surrounding states, as well as states Ohio competes with to attract and retain new business. Ohio should pause any substantive employer payment increases until sufficient economic recovery has occurred.

# PolicyGoal:

## A Lean, Productive Workers' Compensation System

An efficient and effective workers' compensation system benefits workers, employers, and the economy of the state. It is built on the following principles:

- Safety is the number one priority for Ohio's manufacturers.
- Injured workers receive prompt benefits that are adequate for returning to work quickly and safely.
- Rates are established by sound actuarial principles, so that employers pay workers' compensation rates commensurate with the risk they bring to the system.
- The system is financed with well-functioning insurance mechanisms, including reserving and investment practices that ensure fund solvency and stability.
- The benefit delivery system deploys best-in-class disability management practices that drive down costs for employers and improve service and outcomes for injured parties.
- The system consistently roots out fraud, whether by employers, workers or providers.

### FUNDAMENTAL PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE ACTION INCLUDE:

- The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) should continue to reform its medical management system to lower costs and improve medical quality through better coordination of care and development of a payment system that creates incentives for best clinical practices. In doing this, the BWC should build on emerging best practices in the private health care system.
- The Ohio General Assembly should enact statutory reforms of benefit definitions so the claims adjudication process is more predictable, less susceptible to fraud and manipulation, and less costly for employers and employees.
- The Industrial Commission should record hearings so the hearing process is more transparent and any appeals have a record on which to build.
- The Industrial Commission should create a mechanism whereby employers can file complaints related to the hearings process without the risk of adverse consequences.

### A WORD ABOUT WORKPLACE GUN POLICY

Manufacturers remain concerned with weapons violence and the erosion of private property laws at the expense of more relaxed gun rights. Ohio needs to ensure that businesses are in the driver's seat and can make decisions about whether an individual can bring a weapon, concealed or otherwise, onto their private property.

# PolicyGoal:

## Access to Reliable, Economical, Competitive Energy Resources

Energy policy can either enhance or hinder Ohio's ability to attract business investment, stimulate economic growth, and spur job creation – especially in manufacturing. State and federal energy policies must 1.) ensure access to reliable, economical, competitive sources of energy, and 2.) promote policies, regulations, and tariff designs that encourage and allow for manufacturers to lower costs through energy management, including efficiency, load management, and behind-the-meter generation.

The OMA's energy policy advocacy efforts are guided by these principles:

- Energy markets free from market manipulation allow consumers to access the cost and innovation benefits of competition.
- Ohio's traditional industrial capabilities enable global leadership in energy product innovation and manufacturing.
- Sustainable energy systems support the long-term viability of Ohio manufacturing.
- Effective government regulation recognizes technical and economic realities.

Shaping energy policy in Ohio that aligns with these principles will support manufacturing competitiveness, stimulate economic expansion and job creation, and foster environmental stewardship.

### ENERGY POLICY PRIORITIES ARE:

- To protect customers and markets, repeal and reform House Bill 6 (Ohio's nuclear bailout law) and related legislation.
- Ensure an open and fair electricity generation marketplace in which competition enables consumer choice, which drives innovation.
- Reforming Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) rate-making processes by eliminating electric security plans (ESPs) to protect manufacturers from above-market generation charges.
- Correct Ohio case law that denies electric customers refunds from electric utilities for charges that are later determined to be improper by the Supreme Court of Ohio.
- Design an economically sound policy framework for discounted rates for energy-intensive manufacturers.
- Oppose legislation and regulation that force customers to subsidize uneconomical generation, including nuclear and certain coal power plants.
- Encourage electric tariff and rate designs that encourage and allow for manufacturers to lower costs through energy management, including efficiency, load management, and behind-the-meter generation.
- Encourage fair and reasonable power siting regulations that allow new generation facilities in Ohio.
- Support deployment of customer-sited generation technologies, such as co-generation, energy efficiency and demand-side management, to achieve least-cost and sustainable energy resources.

# PolicyGoal:

## A Fair, Stable, Predictable Civil Justice System

For manufacturers to invest and grow in Ohio – and compete globally – Ohio’s civil justice system must be rational, fair and predictable. Manufacturers must be free to innovate and pursue market opportunities without fear of unreasonable exposure to costly lawsuits, while injured parties must have full recourse to appropriate measures of justice.

The OMA supports policy reforms that protect consumers without overly burdening businesses, while also positioning Ohio advantageously relative to other states. The association encourages policymakers to evaluate all proposed civil justice reforms by considering these questions:

- Will the policy fairly and appropriately protect and compensate injured parties without creating a “lottery mentality”?
- Will the policy increase or decrease litigation burdens and costs?
- Will the policy promote or reduce innovation?
- Will the policy attract or discourage investment?
- Will the policy stimulate or stifle growth and job creation?

Ohio has made great strides in reforming its civil justice system over the past decade, and longer. The primary aim of the state should be to preserve those tort reform improvements in areas such as punitive damages, successor liability, collateral sources, statute of repose, and public nuisance. This will protect consumers without unduly burdening businesses, while also positioning Ohio as an attractive state for business investment.

# PolicyGoal:

## Science-based, Technologically Achievable, and Economically Reasonable Environmental Regulations

### EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS ARE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- Provide clarity, predictability and consistency;
- Are based on scientific consensus;
- Provide for common-sense enforcement; and
- Incorporate careful cost-benefit analysis as part of the policymaking process.

Manufacturers urge policymakers to exercise restraint in establishing state environmental regulations that exceed federal standards, and to avoid doing so altogether without clear and convincing evidence that more stringent regulations are necessary. At the same time, manufacturers understand that fair and reasonable regulations must be balanced with responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

Manufacturing leads the way in innovation in solid waste reduction and recycling. Industry is an enormous consumer of recycled materials, such as metals, glass, paper, and plastics; manufacturers therefore are strong advocates for improving recycling systems in Ohio and nationwide.

The state should expand opportunities for industry to reuse non-harmful waste streams. Beneficial reuse policies can result in less waste and more recycling of industrial byproducts. Likewise, Ohio should continue to expand recycling programs that provide feedstock for the state's industrial processes.

With respect to Ohio's waterways, the state should continue to engage with the manufacturing community for solutions to nutrient loading issues and develop non-point source solutions as stringent as manufacturing-point source solutions.

In designing state implementation plans for new federal regulations, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency should use a transparent process of stakeholder involvement, supplemented by investment in independent research to determine the least costly and most scientifically sound and technologically feasible implementation plans.



# PolicyGoal:

## A Modern, Job-Supporting Infrastructure

Modern infrastructure is critical for today's advanced manufacturing economy. To remain competitive and maximize the economic benefits of Ohio's manufacturing strength, the state must update and expand Ohio's multi-modal transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, rails, and ports. Continued investment in these resources is critical to providing Ohio manufacturers with flexible, efficient, cost-effective shipping options.

The state also must continue to support the development of natural gas pipeline infrastructure that delivers the abundant energy resources from the Utica and Marcellus shale formations to Ohio manufacturers in all parts of the state and other markets. This infrastructure produces a job-creating competitive advantage for Ohio.

### INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY PRIORITIES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Support the creation of an Ohio Division of Freight to focus regulatory attention on the logistics needs of manufacturers.
- Support state and federal legislation, as well as rules and regulations, that safely provides greater flexibility and efficiency in truck movements.
- Support technology and workforce solutions that address the shortage of truck drivers.
- Ensure Ohio's freshwater ports remain competitive and state-of-the-art in functionality. Advocate for appropriate facility maintenance, including dredging to ensure navigability.
- Preserve access to, and provide responsible management of, Ohio's sources of water.
- Protect cyber infrastructure to safeguard data used by manufacturers and their customers and suppliers.

# PolicyGoal:

## An Adequate, Educated, Highly Skilled Workforce

A robust economy requires a reliable population of workers with technical knowledge and skills required to meet global standards for quality – and who can think critically and work collaboratively. Sustained growth in manufacturing productivity will require not only a new generation of globally competent workers, but also workers who are willing to embrace lifelong learning to keep pace with technological advancements and global competition.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT POLICY PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- Focusing state government and industry efforts on industry-led regional sector partnerships, guided by the statewide, OMA-led Workforce Leadership Committee. The committee's mission is to identify industry-specific workforce priorities, set standards for collaboration, align funding streams to minimize duplication of workforce programs and services, and evaluate program and service efficacy.
- Creating statewide strategies with clear funding sources supported by state agencies. Provide financial support for sector partnerships that have 1.) demonstrated industry leadership in their organizational structure, and 2.) gained meaningful commitments by way of financial and volunteer contributions to ensure they are truly demand-driven.
- Expanding the use of innovative earn-and-learn programs, including cooperative education, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships. Earn-and-learn programs enhance talent recruitment and retention because participants are exposed to company-specific, real-world job expectations and experiences. Students and employees develop job-specific and management skills by working closely with company mentors; participating companies benefit from reduced recruitment and training costs, while ensuring knowledge- and skill-transfer from their senior employees.
- Expanding the use of nationally portable, industry-recognized, “stackable” credentials in all sectors of manufacturing. Credentials validate foundational and technical competencies needed to be productive and successful in manufacturing career pathways.
- Incentivizing K-12 schools, as well as two- and four-year higher education institutions, to coordinate outcomes-based education and training programs along industry-driven career pathways. Multiple on- and off-ramps for entry-to leadership-level careers have been mapped to real industry needs and jobs. Industry-recognized credentials and certificate programs are being adopted across institutions to increase stackable and transferable credentials from classroom to workplace. Investment in demand-driven training programs that offer pathways to retain incumbent workers allow them to acquire new skills as job requirements shift.

- Supporting “Making Ohio” – a statewide manufacturing image campaign that is managed by the OMA to create a consistent, positive perception of Ohio manufacturing career opportunities and pathways.
- Urging state agency administrators to accurately measure and communicate the outcomes of recruitment and training efforts – including the number of industry-recognized credentials earned, as well as participation in earn-and-learn programs – while protecting individual privacy concerns. Having systems in place to produce these data will allow policymakers and industry leaders to better understand outcomes and create more informed policies and programs.
- Addressing the school funding disincentive for school districts to refer students to career and technical centers – a vital source of the skills training needed to fill the manufacturing workforce pipeline.
- Ensuring schools have career counselors whose sole focus is career planning – not just college planning – and equip them with an understanding of manufacturing career pathways and the various options for acquiring the skills necessary for success. Task them with sharing this information in meaningful ways with students, parents, teachers, and other influencers to better inform and align student career path choices.
- Providing meaningful professional development opportunities for educators to have exposure to industry so they can incorporate real-life exercises into lesson plans and classroom activities.
- Ensuring that career counselors within the network of OhioMeansJobs centers have a modern and accurate understanding of manufacturing career pathways to be able to share with adult job seekers and career switchers.



**The mission of  
The Ohio Manufacturers'  
Association is to protect and  
grow Ohio manufacturing**

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