

How has GCP Advocacy Helped Your Business in 2017?

In 2017, a \$1.5 trillion federal tax reform package was signed into law and the 132nd Ohio General Assembly introduced more than 700 pieces of legislation. In addition, numerous local initiatives were debated, including several crucial ballot measures that allowed the voters to help determine what the regional landscape will look like in the future.

The Greater Cleveland Partnership (GCP) provides a unified voice for the Northeast Ohio business community and our policy priorities are driven directly by our members. The role of the [GCP Advocacy Team](#) is to mobilize private sector leadership, expertise, and resources from businesses of all sizes to create attractive economic conditions that create jobs, grow investment, and improve the prosperity of our region.

Last year, GCP enjoyed some significant victories and we take tremendous pride in serving as your voice. We look forward to continuing this important work with all our members going forward.

Looking Back

Public Policy Agenda

GCP unveiled its 2017-18 public policy agenda at the start of 2017 after months of development with the organization's board and staff leadership. This new agenda reflected the recent affiliation with the Council of Smaller Enterprises (COSE) and GCP by presenting a comprehensive set of public policy priorities on behalf of small, mid-market and large companies in Northeast Ohio.

Local

Cleveland Transformation Alliance

GCP supported advocacy efforts to remove the sunset provision for the Cleveland Transformation Alliance in state law. The Alliance, which is led by Mayor Frank Jackson and comprised of representatives from the business, education and civic community, plays an important role in monitoring the success of the Cleveland Plan for Transforming Schools. Removing the sunset provision extends the authority granted by state law for the organization to serve as a "watch dog" for the quality of charter schools in the City of Cleveland.

Levies

The GCP proudly supported the Issue 59 (Port of Cleveland) and Issue 61 (Tri-C) ballot questions and opposed Issue 2, a deceptive measure that would have changed the way Ohio purchased prescription drugs. Here is how each issue fared:

YES on Issue 59, Port of Cleveland

Yes	161,554
No	88,806

For more information on Issue 59 [click here](#).

YES on Issue 61, Tri-C

Yes	174,740
No	82,993

For more information on Issue 61 [click here](#).

NO on Issue 2, Drug Pricing

Yes 474,741

No 1,816,074

For video and more information on Issue 2 [click here](#).

Petition Transparency

GCP members have expressed concerns over parts of the process in place for petitioners to place an issue on the local ballot. Even well-intended ballot proposals and campaigns can severely limit the way businesses can strengthen and grow. To help shine more transparency on Cleveland ballot issues that are brought forward, City Council passed, and the Mayor signed a proposal that would make it mandatory for circulators of petitions to file an itemized statement that provides more information on that individual's petition circulation experience.

State

Business Courts

The Ohio Senate recently introduced legislation ([SB 183](#)) that would create a Joint Committee to study business courts in Ohio. Our member, Keith Ashmus, offered GCP proponent testimony on the legislation; GCP is in favor of creating a Joint Committee to study business courts in Ohio because our members believe in the ability of specialized courts to better create predictable case law for the business community and increase efficient rulings within Ohio that can benefit all parties. In fact, GCP supported recent action by the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court to reconstitute the commercial docket.

Computer Science Standards for Schools

GCP supported the passage of HB 170, legislation that would create academic content standards and model curriculum for computer science in Ohio schools. The legislation compliments the organization's education and workforce efforts to expose students early on to career pathways and develop a talent pipeline for in-demand jobs.

Cybersecurity

In October – cybersecurity awareness month – state legislation ([SB 220](#)) was introduced to incentivize data protection and provide a legal safe harbor to businesses that implement a specified cybersecurity program. The bill sponsors and Ohio's Attorney General recently unveiled the intent of the legislation at a [Statehouse press conference](#). GCP was represented at the event and formally extended our members' support for the initiative.

Employer Rights

Marijuana remains classified as an illegal controlled substance under federal law. Yet, medical marijuana technically became legal in Ohio on September 8, 2016. As the rules and regulations are finalized, the program is to be operational no later than September 2018. The GCP did not take a formal position on the state's medical marijuana legislation. Instead, our members sought to enhance employer rights and the GCP worked to secure protections included in the legislation that is now law. Those protections, for example, state that employers can still establish and enforce drug testing, drug-free workplace, and zero-tolerance drug policies. Our work continued in 2017 to ensure employers are properly protected as the Governor appointed a GCP/COSE board member to serve in an employer role on the [Medical Marijuana Advisory Committee](#); the role represents employers' views and interests as public input and proceedings continue.

Several separate state proposals were fortunately avoided that would have infringed on an employer's hiring or human resources practices and/or breach the private property rights of businesses and property owners.

Intrastate Crowdfunding

Ohio House and Senate Committees received testimony from the Greater Cleveland Partnership regarding HB 10, legislation that would permit intrastate crowdfunding in Ohio. HB 10 would allow Ohioans to invest in businesses through an online Ohio Invests Portal and building capacity and improving access to capital for businesses across the state is just one of the many important undertakings outlined by our members in the GCP Public Policy Agenda. “The importance of continuing to make strides to maintain an economic environment conducive to startup entrepreneurship cannot be understated and the need for Ohio not to lose ground on strides made in other states is critical to our collective success,” said Marty McGann, Senior Vice President of GCP Government Advocacy. The bill passed the Ohio House unanimously in June, the focus now shifts to the Ohio Senate.

Job Creation Tax Credits

When Governor Kasich signed the state budget bill into law, it included an important provision that GCP championed to allow eligible employers applying for the Job Creation Tax Credit to count qualifying work from home employees in their job creation totals. This creates benefits for the employer and employees by reducing costs, improving work/home life balance, and reducing traffic congestion. The provision also ensures that the benefit of an employer expanding in or locating in the state still has an advantage for Ohio by specifying that the new employees must reside here. This adds to the state’s tax base and creates new job opportunities for Ohioans.

JobsOhio

GCP hosted John Minor, president and chief Investment officer of JobsOhio, for a morning conversation with GCP members and a briefing with the Northeast Ohio state delegation. Minor, along with JobsOhio’s senior director of strategy, sales and research Andrew Deye, discussed the organization’s niche focus on business development and growing efforts to address talent attraction for companies through tailored solutions. Minor highlighted the organizations efforts to continuously boost Ohio’s brand and the competitive advantage the state – and its unique regions – have for companies that are looking to locate and grow here. JobsOhio was created in 2011 as the private economic development entity to drive business growth in Ohio. GCP was a vocal supporter of JobOhio’s creation and is a key player in the regional network of partners that work with the organization to drive business attraction, retention and expansion efforts in Northeast Ohio.

Microbusiness

Language our members supported was included in Ohio’s biennial budget creating a [statutory definition of microbusiness](#) in Ohio. The provisions defined microbusiness as an independently owned and operated for-profit business entity, including any affiliates, located in Ohio and has fewer than twenty full-time employees. The GCP welcomes the opportunity to continue to discuss additional steps that can be taken to address specific challenges for microbusinesses.

State Tax Reform

Proposed modifications were averted that would have shifted the state tax burden to other businesses, including changes related to income, sales, severance, commercial activity tax (CAT), tobacco/vapor and alcohol. The 100% [business tax deduction](#) on the first \$250,000 in business income remains in place, clarifying businesses that use a professional employer organization (PEO) are eligible for the business income tax deduction as originally intended.

Workers’ Compensation

Ohio’s Bureau of Workers’ Compensation budget is to provide \$6 million per year for a health and wellness program for workers at small employers (50 or fewer employees). As outlined by our members in our 2017-2018 Public Policy Agenda, the GCP is in favor of expanding and improving safety education and training program assistance meant to reduce workers’ compensation costs for employers while helping injured workers return to their jobs more quickly. Want to learn more about how you can participate in our workers' compensation rate reduction programs? [Click here](#) for more information.

Workforce Development

GCP's Advocacy and Education & Workforce teams hosted a workforce development panel with Ryan Burgess, director of the Office of Workforce Transformation, and Senator Sandra Williams with more than 50 GCP member companies and organizations to discuss current state and federal policies impacting talent development in Ohio. Workforce development continues to be a major strategic priority for GCP and working in partnership with the public sector on solutions is critical.

State & Federal

Federal & Defense Assets

Northeast Ohio is home to key federal assets – like NASA Glenn Research Center and DFAS Cleveland – that have a significant economic impact on the region. Maximizing the value and opportunities for these assets continues to be a key priority for GCP since its work in 2005 to prevent the closing of DFAS Cleveland in a federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. As Ohio considers how to position itself for a future BRAC process, GCP has worked closely with and hosted the Ohio House of Representatives BRAC and Military Affairs Taskforce to deepen their understanding of the breadth of federal and defense assets in Northeast Ohio and their impact on the state.

GCP also worked closely with the federal Ohio delegation to advocate for core missions that NASA Glenn plays a lead role on behalf of the overall agency. GCP also worked to secured state funding in the state operating budget to support advocacy needs for Camp Ravenna – a defense asset in the eastern part of the region – to secure a missile defense opportunity that would bring major construction and high-quality jobs to the broader region. Finally, GCP supported the Ohio Aerospace Institute proposal to create a Great Lakes Initiative, which was successful in receiving funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

Federal Tax Reform

A \$1.5 trillion tax bill was approved by Congress and signed by the President just before the holidays. GCP members believe a thoughtful, balanced and competitive tax environment is critical to the success of our economy and that any reforms made must be all-inclusive and benefit all sectors of the business community. GCP leadership and staff worked closely with U.S. Senator Rob Portman, who served on the conference committee resolving difference between the House and Senate proposals. Senator Portman was critical to preserving key economic development tools, like the New Market Tax Credit and Historic Tax Credit, which are crucial to advance economic development in Greater Cleveland.

[Click here](#) for a recent piece submitted and posted to Cleveland.com on these topics by Joe Roman, president and CEO of the Greater Cleveland Partnership. [View a recent correspondence from the Great Lakes Metro Chamber Coalition](#), which the GCP co-founded.

Water Quality

GCP advocated for the successful passage of SB 2—the legislature's key water quality legislation. Lake Erie is one of Ohio's greatest natural assets. The policy changes in SB 2 will help to strengthen the quality of the lake and connected waterways, which has a significant impact on a variety of industries in Ohio. GCP has played a lead role in advocacy efforts with the Port of Cleveland to ensure the Cuyahoga River is dredged appropriately and is a founder of, and current lead for, of the Great Lake Metro Chambers Coalition that advocates for federal water policies, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Events & Initiatives

COSE Day at the Capitol

Approximately fifty COSE/GCP members and staff made the trek to Columbus in April to take part in the annual COSE Day at the Capitol event. The day gave small business owners and entrepreneurs an exclusive opportunity to connect with key decision-makers on topics that are of primary importance to the business community in Northeast

Ohio. The timing of last year's event allowed our membership to share their experiences and meet directly with fourteen members of the legislature and their policy advisors during a key time in the legislative process. Each moment allowed attendees to influence Ohio's biennial budget deliberations and public policy issues – ranging from tax reform to workforce development – that will continue to be among the many initiatives in the limelight. Senate President Larry Obhof and Representative Kirk Schuring were honored as winners of 2016 COSE/GCP Small Business Advocate of the Year Awards. Additional featured speakers included: Attorney General Mike DeWine, House Minority Leader Fred Strahorn, and a representative from the Governor's Office of Health Transformation.

Save the date: COSE Day at the Capitol will be held on March 13, 2018. Additional details to come.

DC Fly-In

The DC Fly-In provides GCP members with an opportunity to engage directly with Ohio's congressional delegation and other federal public officials throughout a series of workshops and events over the course of two days in Washington D.C. Local government partners from Northeast Ohio also had the opportunity to hear directly from agencies about federal resources that they can leverage for their communities. In 2017, attendees heard from nearly two dozen elected officials, including Congresswoman Marcia Fudge, Congressman Dave Joyce, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, and Congressman Jim Renacci. Attendees also heard from federal agency and White House staff on key policy developments and from major corporations on developing technology trends to follow.

GCP Political Action Committee

Aside from voting, you can contribute to Cleveland's growth and momentum in many ways. The Greater Cleveland Partnership Political Action Committee (GCP PAC) is an important advocacy tool in our efforts to ensure the collective voice of our members is heard in state and local government. By contributing to the campaigns of officials who have demonstrated a desire to work with Northeast Ohio businesses for the good of the greater community, the GCP PAC helps advance policies and projects in line with the common goals of our members.

In 2017, the GCP carried out a strategy to successfully reach our annual fundraising goal. If you are interested in increasing the strength of our region's voice even further, please consider [contributing](#) to the GCP PAC and be a part of our movement.

GCP Public Officials Reception

The 54th annual Public Officials Reception, presented by the Greater Cleveland Partnership, brought more than 500 of Northeast Ohio's business and community leaders together with elected local, state, and federal officials at FirstEnergy Stadium. Many thanks to our sponsors, members, and their guests for once again making this not-to-be-missed event a tremendous success.

National Small Business Association

Last year, our partners at the National Small Business Association (NSBA) held the 2017 [Small Business Congress](#) in Washington, D.C. where leaders from across the country discussed topics ranging from tax reform to alternative financing. GCP board member Kevin Johnson of Glenwood Management Company served as chair and oversaw the successful event with a record number of attendees.

Small business leaders from across the country convened again in Washington, D.C. for the NSBA 2017 [Washington Presentation](#). Several GCP/COSE members took advantage of the opportunity to hear from and discuss challenges with policymakers, administration officials, and Congressional staff inside the Beltway. In addition, NSBA honored five small business owners for the 2017 Lewis Shattuck Small Business Advocate of the Year Award; two of the honorees (Mike Stanek, Deb Rutledge) were GCP/COSE board members who continually go above and beyond in advocating for policies to improve the business environment in our region and beyond. The Northeast Ohio delegation of small business leaders that took part in the conference, capped the week's activity off by visiting with the Offices of Senator Rob Portman and Senator Sherrod Brown.

Ohio Business Competes

This year GCP became a member of Ohio Business Competes, a non-partisan coalition of businesses committed to achieving non-discrimination policies to add protections in housing and employment for the LGBTQ community statewide. More than 200 businesses and organizations are a part of the coalition, including many GCP member companies. The driving factor for participating is the economic case – Ohio cannot truly be competitive in attracting the best and brightest talent if basic civil rights are not available for all current and future employees. Moving forward, GCP will monitor and evaluate support for state legislation that mirrors the goal of the coalition.

Looking Ahead

At the end of 2017, GCP released its list of state capital bill priorities. As the legislature and Administration work to develop a final bill for passage in early 2018, GCP will play a critical role in advocacy efforts to support high impact economic and community development projects in Greater Cleveland.

As part of the GCP Strategic Plan, we also intend to develop a study of Greater Cleveland's tax environment to benchmark current tax policy and its impact on growth and competitiveness.

GCP is partnering with the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce to lead the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition – a national coalition of more than 30 chambers that advocate collectively on core policy priorities for the Great Lake region. We expect our impact to grow significantly in this space over the next year.

Work will begin in the second half of 2018 to develop GCP's 2019-20 public policy agenda. We look forward to working with you to identify and support the highest policy priorities that impact Northeast Ohio's business community.

Congressional redistricting reform, Ohio's energy standards, and unemployment compensation reform are among the many issues that could be debated further on the horizon. The future will undoubtedly offer opportunities and simultaneously present challenges, but we will be prepared to work with all our elected leaders to advocate for you on the issues that matter most for our region.

Thank you for being a valued member of the Greater Cleveland Partnership. Your participation allows us to make progress on policy issues that allow the business community to achieve success.