

2009

Legislative Agenda



Martine Downs Pollard
VP Government Affairs

NWA State Legislative Priorities

We support funding to reward regions that have proactively worked to identify funding sources for regional infrastructure projects. A regional mobility fund could also be used to incentivize other regions to establish regional funding strategies for infrastructure projects. Funds could be deposited in a regional mobility fund to assist with:

- Financing of regional transportation projects;
- Funding regional airport improvements.

> **Increasing Transportation Funding** – We support finding additional ways to grow the transportation funding levels. Proposals such as redirecting transportation-related general revenues could become a funding source for regions that have established RMAs. Any incremental transportation funding increases should be distributed within the region in which the funds were generated.

> **Higher Education Funding** – We support the University of Arkansas and NWACC priorities in the higher education funding formulas. We support full funding in the UAMS budget to establish and operate the UAMS-Northwest satellite campus in order to train more medical specialists within the state of Arkansas.

Positions on Other State Legislative Issues

> **Repeal of Sales Tax on Groceries** – We support further repeal of state sales taxes on groceries with any excess funds remain after key infrastructure priorities are fully funded.

> **Repeal of Sales Tax on Utilities** – We support a sales tax exemption for energy used in industry and manufacturing.

> **Severance Tax** – Severance tax revenues should “follow the cars” and be distributed based on need. We oppose any efforts to redirect the recently adopted severance tax revenues to areas other than transportation.

> **Tort Reform** – We support protection of the legal reforms enacted by Act 649 of 2003.

> **Economic development initiatives** – We support the legislative priorities of Accelerate Arkansas and the Arkansas Economic Development Corporation to foster the growth of knowledge-based and high-tech jobs in Arkansas. We support economic development incentives that keep Arkansas competitive with other states and encourage job creation through business expansions and relocations here.

> **Workmen’s Compensation and Unemployment Insurance** – We support protection of the workers’ compensation reforms enacted by Act 796 of 1993. We oppose any legislation that is a detriment to a sound unemployment compensation system. We support protection of the Department of Workforce Services’ Employment Security trust fund.

> **Immigration** – We strongly support comprehensive federal immigration reform that protects U.S. national and economic security. Reform should increase security, addresses delays and disruptions in our immigration and border management systems, and refrains from unduly burdening employers with worker verification systems that are under-funded or unworkable. We need legislation that is fair, meets the needs of our growing economy, and meets the test of common sense.

> **State Trauma Center** – Recognizing that Arkansas is the only state that does not have a Level 1 Trauma Unit, we support identifying appropriate funding sources for a state trauma center.