

Are Your State Lawmakers Helping or Hurting Your Business?

Maryland Free Can Help You Decide

BY DUANE CAREY



1 Let's Start with the Facts.

Each year, it gets a little harder to be an employer. Not only must we deal with market forces, competition and hiring/firing/retention, but our own legislators enact new laws that make it more expensive (increased compliance and record-keeping), more risky (increased liability), and less free (added mandates and bans) to be a business owner. These laws increasingly wedge the government into the employer-employee relationship, making it harder – and less fun – to be an employer.

The disincentive created by these legislative acts reduces jobs as employers turn to automation, offshoring, doing more with less, and perhaps most tragically, moving their business to another state.

In just the last couple of years, the Maryland Legislature has mandated how, when and by how much employers must provide paid leave to employees. They mandated a dramatic 48% increase in the minimum wage. Both mandates were enacted despite testimony from the business community that they will reduce hours and kill jobs for many people who can least

afford it. The legislature also voted to a) prevent employers from learning about job applicants' criminal history during the application process, b) make it easier for employees to file suit and c) expand liability to contractors for the payment practices of their subcontractors.

So what is a business owner to do? What should we say when our State Delegates or Senators ask us for campaign donations?

2 Roll Call Tallies the Votes.

Roll Call (www.marylandfree.org/roll-call) is an annual compilation and scorecard of how each of Maryland's 188 legislators vote each year on critical issues affecting business owners, job growth and Maryland's economy. Each year, approximately 10 votes are evaluated in each of the House of Delegates and the Senate. These votes are typically on full bill, but sometimes amendments and committee votes are included. Maryland Free publishes how each legislator voted on each of those bills/amendments. If they voted in favor of business and the economy on six of 10 bills, they receive a 60% score for that session. It's a

very simple, clear, objective and transparent method of holding lawmakers accountable for their actions. Each bill writeup includes a short description that explains why it is or is not good for job growth and the economy, as well as a full accounting of how each legislator voted. There is also a cumulative score so that you can assess a lawmaker's long-term tendencies, rather than evaluating them on any one particular year.

3 There's an App for That!

Roll Call can be accessed on the Maryland Free website, but the same valuable information is available via the Vote Jobs Maryland app. Search for it on the App Store or Google Play and download it for free. You can easily determine who your representatives are and how they voted in the most recent legislative session.

4 Contribute to the Political Action Committee

Once you know how your legislators are voting, call them and give them your feedback! Better yet, when they call you to ask for a donation, first check their Roll Call score and *then* give them your answer. Encourage them to start treating business owners like the critical economic cogs that we are.

But that may not be enough. You might also need to let your wallet do the talking. There are scores of political action committees (PACs) in our state, most tied directly to a given industry. But Maryland Free's PAC* is unique in that it is the only statewide PAC in Maryland focused exclusively on making Maryland a better place to do business. The PAC contributes to statewide political candidates who are most likely to vote in the interests of a strong private-sector economy, regardless of party affiliation.

Interested in membership? We would love to have you. Just visit our website at www.MarylandFree.com. **195 Content Marketing**



DUANE CAREY is a small business owner and President of the Maryland Free Enterprise Foundation (Maryland Free), a 36-year old non-partisan, non-profit organization focused on improving Maryland's business

climate and economic health.

Connect: www.MarylandFree.com

*Authority: Maryland Free Enterprise Foundation PAC: Mark Cissell, Treasurer.