Submitted by Allie Bush

GRAND RAPIDS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Member Survey: Continued Job Growth for West Michigan Businesses

The Chamber is proud of its role protecting your business' bottom line by advocating on your behalf to create the best possible economic climate at the local and state levels.

This year more than 600 members participated in the Chamber's Annual Government Affairs Survey.

The most exciting results of the survey are related to job growth. **Eighty-three percent responded that their firm hired and/or added new positions in the last 12 months** – this is an increase from 77% last year.

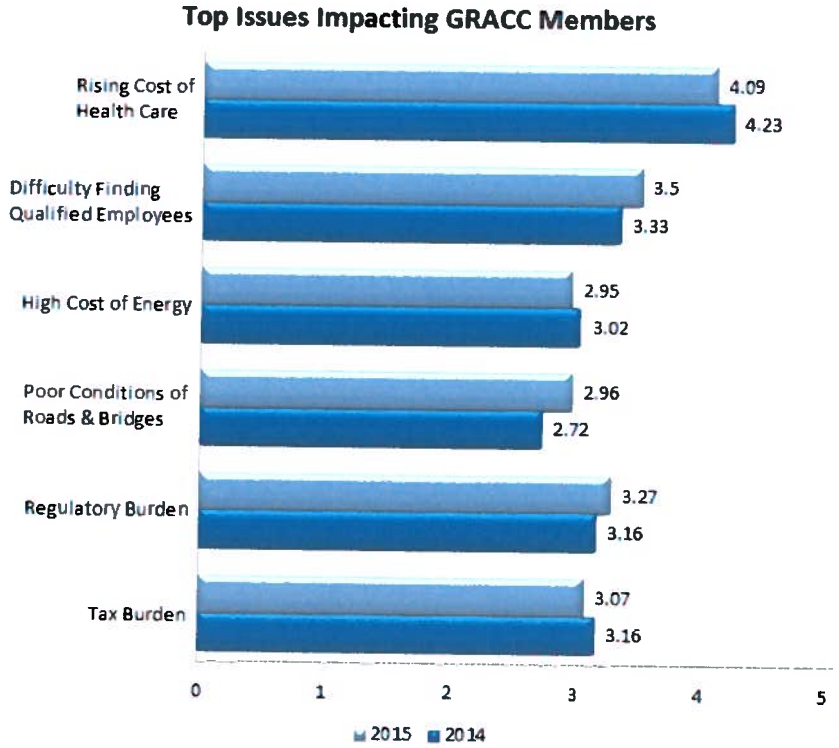
83%

Reported business growth in the last year

Nearly 56% noted that their firm had difficulty finding qualified applicants, and as a result of those that responded job growth, 34% increased wages to attract more qualified talent.

"We are very excited to see such a high percentage of members reporting job creation at their workplace," said Rick Baker, President and CEO of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. "The difficulty of finding qualified candidates highlights the need to continue focusing on building a talented workforce through education and training."

The rising cost of health care was cited as the top concern for members heading into 2015 for the third year in a row.



"The rising cost of health care and other health care policy issues were clearly the most important areas of concern for our members," said Andy Johnston, Vice President of Government & Corporate Affairs. "We will continue to advocate on behalf of our members to address this and the talent and workforce development challenges that face West Michigan businesses."

Other top issues that garnered support in the survey include: access to affordable primary care, health care cost transparency, renewable energy and energy efficiency standards, state and local investment in infrastructure and early childhood funding.

A summary of the survey can be found at www.grandrapids.org/government-affairs.

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TOP PRIORITIES

Long-term transportation funding
Michigan needs to immediately address the road funding crisis and return our infrastructure to a state of good repair.

Reliable, competitive and affordable energy policy
Energy policy should improve the competitiveness of Michigan businesses and provide an adequate and reliable energy supply for Michigan's job providers.

Lowering health care costs for business by resisting new mandates and improving the ACA
In light of the serious consequences of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that are affecting employers, employees, and providers, it is crucial to continue evaluating reform options that limit the burden on job providers and the system. This includes addressing rate banding for small groups under 50, the development of additional plans, specifically catastrophic plans, and repeal of the 30-hour work week.

Reforming air toxics regulations that currently limit business growth
Air quality regulations should promote clean air through reasonable and obtainable standards that do not place an undue burden on businesses or limit economic growth.

Create access to intermodal opportunities in West Michigan
Providing innovative opportunities for moving goods will help West Michigan businesses stay competitive in a global marketplace.

Comprehensive statewide recycling plan
A comprehensive and fair recycling program that measures progress and increases the recycling rate will improve the environment and promote growth.

Accountability and reform in talent development and education
To compete in the global marketplace, Michigan needs a rigorous talent system that prepares students and workers from early childhood through workforce development. Reforms should work to align the education and talent pipeline more closely with business needs. Some reforms include: early childhood funding, teacher effectiveness, 3rd grade reading, expanding diverse learning opportunities, and skilled trades training.

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