



2017 State Policy Platform

At the heart of Vermont's prosperity are thriving local businesses, a vibrant workforce, and smart public investments. A 21st century economic development strategy requires looking beyond traditional economic development investments to tactics that support both our workforce and a strong culture of entrepreneurship and small business growth.

Main Street Alliance of Vermont's 2017 State Policy Platform focuses on strategies that target support for small businesses and their employees in acknowledgment of the interdependent relationship between a community's economic and environmental health and the success of the small businesses that bring their cities, towns, and villages together. In addition, many of these strategies are equalizers that will enable smaller "main street" businesses to better compete with larger businesses.

Main Street Alliance of Vermont has identified the following policies as opportunities and priorities for the 2017-2018 biennium.

Paid Family and Medical Leave: Main Street Alliance of Vermont supports the establishment of a statewide, publicly-administered, family and medical leave insurance program. A statewide insurance program will level the playing field for small "main street" businesses and make Vermont more affordable for and attractive to young professionals and working families.

Retirement Security: Main Street Alliance of Vermont recommends that the state establish a public retirement option and make it available to all those employed by businesses that do not currently offer access to a privately administered retirement plan. Many small business owners do not currently have or provide a retirement plan to their employees. The public option should be accessible to sole proprietors, small business owners, and their employees.

Health Care Reform: The high cost of health care is creating an increasing strain on businesses, families, and our state budget. We encourage the state to prioritize reducing the cost of health care and specifically support the continued exploration of the expanding the Dr. Dynasaur program to eliminate expensive family plans.

Child care: Main Street Alliance of Vermont recognizes an important relationship between a stable, supported workforce and accessible, affordable, high quality child care. With more than 70% of children under the age of six living in families that have all adults in the workforce, child care is a cornerstone of ensuring a healthy economy.

Housing: Housing is an integral part of Vermont's economy and a key workforce retention tool for employers and the state. Main Street Alliance of Vermont supports efforts to expand housing options, making it more realistic for Vermonters to stay in or return to Vermont. With smart partnerships, planning, and investments, we can build and retrofit energy-efficient housing that is affordable and close to workplaces, transportation options and downtowns.

Minimum Wage: Main Street Alliance of Vermont supports working toward further minimum wage increases. We also recognize that the benefits cliff must be addressed to make our lowest wage jobs more livable and to ensure that, with wage increases, there is a net benefit for the impacted employment base.