



Media Contact:
Jessica Fletcher
Communications Manager
(w) 502-848-8731
(c) 859-539-0511
jfletcher@kychamber.com

The 2008 session: Some immediate bottom-line positives, but short on long-term progress

**An Op-Ed By Dave Adkisson
President and CEO, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce**

The just-completed session of the 2008 General Assembly did not represent Kentucky's finest hour. There is a lot of frustration across the state and a fair amount of finger pointing for the chaotic nature of the session, especially in its closing hours.

Although the legislature held the line on a number of proposals that would have impaired Kentucky's ability to attract and grow jobs, it missed important opportunities for progress in a state that has a lot of ground to cover in education and economic growth.

Pro Biz

There were some immediate bottom-line positives for the state's employers – several of these falling into the “didn't pass” category:

- No corporate tax increases or sales taxes on services
- No expansion of litigation against employers
- No legislative mandates that increased workers' compensation costs

On the affirmative side of the ledger, measures winning approval will improve the math and science skills of Kentucky's middle and high school students; restore some funding for the successful Bucks for Brains program that has brought top-flight researchers to our postsecondary institutions; move the state forward in energy conservation initiatives; and help Kentuckians become better health care consumers by making provider cost and quality information available online.

No Biz

But there were significant disappointments and missed opportunities that threaten the long-term quality of life and prosperity of Kentucky and its citizens – both corporate and individual. Here's a sampling.

In education:

- No action to improve student financial aid
- No bonding authority for universities
- Funding cuts for K-12 programs and postsecondary institutions

In health care:

- No cigarette tax increase, which would reduce smoking and provide needed revenue for education and other critical programs
- No tax credits for employer wellness programs
- No physical education requirement for school children

In business development:

- No broad tax credits for small businesses—the source of most of the state's job creation

In government:

- No public vote on expanded gaming, another potential source of funds for needed programs
- No action on pension reform

That final failure is particularly unacceptable, given the ongoing, negative impact that rising pension costs have on schools, local governments, taxpayers and the state's overall cost of doing business.

How much more evidence do we need that Kentucky is on the brink of a pension crisis? Public safety is at risk in our cities, new dollars for education are being eaten up by benefit costs, and the state faces a \$26.6 billion shortfall in its pension system.

Surely we can do better in Kentucky.

Bipartisan cooperation – the kind that actually produces results – must be viewed as a victory for all, not as a capitulation of one side to the will of the other. Failure to address our critical problems must no longer be an option for the state and its elected leadership.

###