



## **WEST VIRGINIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

### ***The Voice of Business in West Virginia***

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**For immediate release:  
Monday, July 9, 2007**

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## **W.Va. Chamber Survey: Health Care, Taxes, Legal Reform Remain Top Concerns Of State's Business Community**

### ***80 Percent Say Legal/Judicial Climate Hurting Their Businesses***

CHARLESTON – West Virginia's business community – both large and small employers – say health insurance, business taxes and litigation/legal costs are among the top concerns, according to an on-line survey conducted last week by the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce last week. As part of the survey, members of the W.Va. Chamber were asked to rank 14 key business issues.

The respondents noted that nearly all of the listed business issues are of high importance/concern, and these issues are of particular concern:

Health insurance costs	88 percent
Business taxes	88 percent
Litigation/legal costs	80 percent

Other top issues of importance/concern are partisan election of judges, skilled workers/labor and the state's education system.

The respondents noted that energy costs, health insurance and litigation were among those issues most likely to get worse next year. Specifically, two out of three respondents said health care will get worse next year. The only issue that the respondents had any hope for improvement was Workers' Compensation – 30 percent of the respondents said this issue would get better in the coming year.

When asked whether West Virginia is headed in the right direction, 14 percent said "Yes," 64 percent said "Mixed," and 20 percent "No." The respondents had a similar mixed view about economic growth prospects for the Mountain State. Sixty-three percent said they thought the state's economy would see limited growth next year, while 22 percent thought the state's economy would not grow or actually

decline. Only 14 percent said they expect the state's economy to have moderate to strong growth in the coming year.

However, the respondents were more upbeat when asked about the outlook for their own businesses and for growth of their own employment levels. Forty percent said they expect moderate to strong growth for their businesses, and 45 percent of the businesses said they expect to have some increase or strong increase in their employment in the coming year.

When asked specifically about the state's legal and judicial climate, 80 percent of the respondents said West Virginia's legal climate is having either a somewhat negative or significant impediment to their business growth and investment. Forty percent said it was having a significant impediment.

Of the changes enacted in the state over the past several years, reforms to the state's Workers' Compensation program are having the most positive impact. One out of two respondents picked Workers' Comp reforms as the reform issue having the most positive impact. When asked what other reforms would have the most positive impact, here is what the respondents indicated:

Legal Reforms	29 percent
Tax Changes	26 percent
Health Care Reform	25 percent

The Chamber's e-survey was sent to each member of the organization, and the respondents are as follows:

13 percent	employee 500 or more employees in West Virginia
23 percent	employee 100-500 employees
24 percent	employee 25-100 employees
40 percent	employee 1-25 employees

"West Virginia employers once again are stating that their primary concerns are factors that affect their costs of doing business – escalating health insurance costs, the state's high business tax structure and the constant fear of legal costs associated with being sued," said Steve Roberts, President of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce. "The results of this survey, which includes an equal number of small and large employer respondents, further reinforce the policy priorities of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce,"

'While progress on a number of issues has been made, particularly in the areas of Workers' Compensation, insurance and medical malpractice, this survey clearly shows where employers need to see

additional improvements,” Roberts added. “West Virginia can accelerate its growth rate and generate business investment if our leaders address these concerns of large and small employers across our state.”



**West Virginia Chamber of Commerce** – ([www.wvchamber.com](http://www.wvchamber.com)) As the state’s largest, most influential general business organization, the West Virginia Chamber represents all business sectors in every region of the state, with more than 95 percent of its members being small businesses. The organization’s 5,000+ membership reach comes from its network relationships with 54 local chambers of commerce and dozens of statewide business and trade associations. The West Virginia Chamber is a proactive leader in the search for solutions to problems, a voice for free market competition and streamlined government, a catalyst for progressive thinking and problem solving, and a partner with government as appropriate.

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