



**GREATER  
FORT WAYNE INC.**

METRO CHAMBER ALLIANCE

# Advocating for your Business

**2025 GFW INC. LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**



# A Message from our CEO

Dear Members and Community Partners,

As we look ahead to 2025, we want to share with you our legislative agenda which continues to reflect Greater Fort Wayne Inc.'s unwavering commitment to advocating for policies that fuel our members' growth and success. Our key priorities for the coming year will focus on enhancing workforce development programs, securing essential infrastructure funding, and advancing legislation that solidifies Northeast Indiana as a competitive, business-friendly region. Additionally, we remain deeply committed to championing initiatives that are focused on building a vibrant, thriving community.

At Greater Fort Wayne Inc., our mission to foster a prosperous, inclusive, and flourishing community is at the heart of everything we do. Each day, we are laser-focused on amplifying the voices of our members and ensuring that Fort Wayne and Allen County continue to be exceptional places for businesses and individuals to thrive.

Your partnership and engagement are the foundation of this important work. Together, we have achieved remarkable milestones, and together, we will continue to shape a brighter future for Fort Wayne and Allen County. I encourage each of you to stay involved, lend your voice to these critical efforts, and join us as we advocate for policies that will leave a lasting impact on our community for generations to come.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Urbahns". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

**JOHN URBAHNS**  
President / CEO

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## GFW INC. LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

# 2025 Legislative Priorities

At Greater Fort Wayne Inc., we believe that achieving our mission of building a nationally recognized economy requires collaboration. We partner with community organizations and government officials daily to shape effective public policy that drives economic growth and attracts investment in Fort Wayne and Allen County.

Our dedicated team engages with all levels of government throughout the year to advocate for policies that support local businesses and enhance our community. This 2025 Legislative Agenda highlights our key legislative priorities, amplifying the collective voice of our business community as we work together toward shared goals.

## LOCAL

- ▶ Advance the implementation of the Allen County Together (ACT) economic development action plan
- ▶ Support the continued implementation of efficient and effective local permitting procedures to ensure the capacity to move at the speed of business
- ▶ Support the advancement and long-term sustainability of quality-of-place projects including a \$1 billion Riverfront District in downtown Fort Wayne, continued investment in southeast Fort Wayne, and improvement projects throughout Allen County communities to build best-in-class amenities that attract and retain talent and businesses

## STATE

- ▶ Support the continued funding and conversion of U.S. Route 30 to a freeway to improve connectivity in northeast Indiana
- ▶ Accelerate the development of a 21st-century workforce to advance northeast Indiana's economy by investing in early childhood and PreK-12 education, postsecondary attainment, and career-ready initiatives
- ▶ Elevate Indiana's economic competitiveness by strengthening successful economic development tools such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), the Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) Tax Credit, the Skills Enhancement Fund (SEF), and the Redevelopment Tax Credit

## FEDERAL

- ▶ Support feasibility and environmental studies for the modernization of facilities at the Fort Wayne Air National Guard Base
- ▶ Preserve and strengthen federal economic development programs such as Historic Tax Credits, New Markets Tax Credits, Foreign Trade Zones, and Opportunity Zones

# Our 10-Year Vision

## Allen County Together (ACT) Economic Development Plan



The momentum in our community is real—and we're just getting started. Launched in 2022, our Allen County Together (ACT) economic development action plan sets the pace and tone for our next decade of growth, with a strategic focus around **three primary pillars**:

### HIGH-GROWTH



Accelerate the creation of high-quality spaces in Fort Wayne-Allen County's commercial, industrial, and mixed-use business districts to attract new jobs, investment, and strong positive in-migration of talent from outside Indiana.

### INNOVATION



Develop a robust network of entrepreneurial support organizations, access to capital, real estate space, research and development, and creative talent to fuel growth in technology-driven companies in emerging and legacy industries.

### INCLUSIVITY



Align business, government, education, and nonprofit partners to ensure equitable access to economic, workforce, and educational opportunities for all people and communities in Allen County.

Explore recent results of the Allen County Together (ACT) Plan

- ▶ GFW Inc. hosted its third annual **Economic Development Summit**, bringing together more than 500 community leaders to advance the Allen County Together (ACT) Plan
- ▶ **Riverfront Fort Wayne** has seen over \$330M in completed and ongoing investments. With new projects like the Treeline District, Wells Street Wedge, and The Landing Exchange, we're halfway toward achieving our \$1B goal for private investment
- ▶ Construction is underway in southeast Fort Wayne on **Google's latest data center campus**, set to become one of their largest and most advanced globally. Phase 1 represents a \$2B investment and 200 new jobs
- ▶ **Student housing development** is rapidly expanding to meet demand, with 800 new beds recently completed or underway. Trace, Purdue University Fort Wayne's \$100M project, will open in fall 2026, while Indiana Tech's Troder Hall and nearby Greystone Landing apartments opened in 2024 and 2023, respectively
- ▶ Junior Achievement, Allen County school districts, GFW Inc., and community partners are collaborating on the new **JA Career Ignite**, a career exploration fair in 2025
- ▶ Backed by funding from the Capital Improvement Board and Airport Authority, GFW Inc. has engaged a consulting team to create a concept plan for **base modernization at the 122nd Fighter Wing**
- ▶ Allen County secured \$26M in state funding to expand **broadband access**, to more than 5,000 homes and businesses in rural areas of the county
- ▶ **Visit Fort Wayne launched the Tourism Master Plan**, featuring key projects such as the Fields of Grace youth sports complex in New Haven, The Fairfield entertainment venue, and over \$100M for several arts and culture projects
- ▶ **The ACT Plan** set a goal of investing \$100M in southeast Fort Wayne within five years. As we conclude year three, we have exceeded that goal with \$125M in completed or underway projects
- ▶ Over \$125M in ongoing and completed projects at Indiana Tech, Manchester University, Purdue University Fort Wayne, and Trine University is **expanding academic programming** and opportunities for students throughout our community
- ▶ Support for small business remains a focus with **Brightpoint** expanding small business lending thanks to a \$2.5M grant from the City of Fort Wayne Legacy Fund along with expanded programming by GFW Inc.

Download the complete ACT plan at [act.gfwinc.com](https://act.gfwinc.com)







# Economic & Community Development

GFW Inc. is focused on attracting new businesses, helping existing businesses grow, and creating best-in-class amenities to attract and retain talent. We encourage creative uses of resources and support policies to improve quality of place, maintain infrastructure, and provide an environment for businesses to succeed.



Photography: Visit Fort Wayne



- ▶ Advance the implementation of the Allen County Together (ACT) economic development action plan
- ▶ Support the advancement and long-term sustainability of quality-of-place projects including a \$1 billion Riverfront District in downtown Fort Wayne, continued investment in southeast Fort Wayne, and improvement projects throughout Allen County communities to build best-in-class amenities that attract and retain talent and businesses
- ▶ Support local revenue-enhancement opportunities to give communities the tools to adequately fund capital improvement projects
- ▶ Support art and cultural institutions and developments as they are part of our community identity—attracting and retaining talent, leveraging tourism dollars, and helping sustain a positive quality of life for our residents
- ▶ Support the implementation of Visit Fort Wayne's comprehensive Tourism Master plan
- ▶ Support the state enacted ability for local communities to establish Tourism Improvement Districts to fund destination development and tourism promotion
- ▶ Rejuvenate neighborhoods by incentivizing investment in distressed properties, as vibrant neighborhoods are critical to our community's growth
- ▶ Support the implementation of state initiatives that encourage strategic investment in quality-of-place projects such as READI and the Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission
- ▶ Advance a county-wide site development and land-banking policy to have strategic sites available for new commercial, office, and industrial development
- ▶ Evaluate potential alignment of local and state site strategies and resources
- ▶ Support incentives to modernize and increase the competitiveness of aging and functionally obsolete downtown commercial office buildings
- ▶ Elevate Indiana's economic competitiveness by strengthening successful economic development tools such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), the Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) Tax Credit, the Skills Enhancement Fund (SEF), and the Redevelopment Tax Credit
- ▶ Preserve and strengthen federal economic development programs such as Historic Tax Credits, New Markets Tax Credits, Foreign Trade Zones, and Opportunity Zones



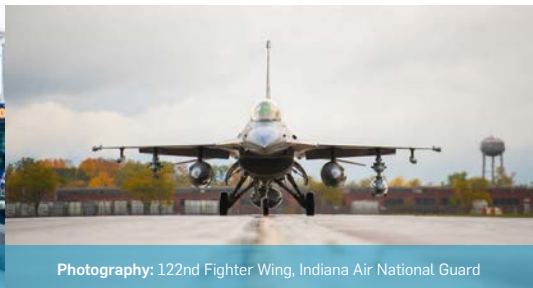
Rendering: Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority

# Transportation & Infrastructure

Reliable, high-quality infrastructure is fundamental to economic success. Indiana must invest in infrastructure—such as airports, roads and highways, broadband, railways, public transportation, and trails—that fuels business growth. GFW Inc. supports transportation and infrastructure projects and policies that align with the needs of our region and strengthen the ability to do business.



Photography: Citilink



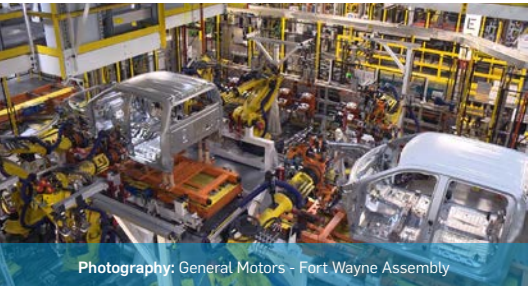
Photography: 122nd Fighter Wing, Indiana Air National Guard

- ▶ Support the continued funding and conversion of U.S. Route 30 to a freeway to improve connectivity in northeast Indiana
- ▶ Support a modernized, equitable local road funding formula
- ▶ Support efforts, including state matching funds, to restore passenger rail operation along the Midwest Connect corridor with service connecting Chicago, Fort Wayne, Columbus (OH) and Pittsburgh
- ▶ Advance policies and increase state funding to improve public transportation access, such as Citilink, including the ability to establish partnerships with neighboring counties to address regional transportation needs
- ▶ Support initiatives that increase accessibility to high-speed internet and investment in broadband infrastructure, as access to affordable, quality broadband is critical for economic development, education, digital health, and community connectivity
- ▶ Support energy transition initiatives, including renewable energy, to strengthen capacity and reliability for sustained business growth
- ▶ Support the expansion of air service and air cargo in Fort Wayne—in a global economy, it is essential for Fort Wayne International Airport (FWA) to maintain and expand air service to business destinations
- ▶ Continue to support FWA's terminal expansion project, Project Gateway, to increase capacity
- ▶ Support the military presence in northeast Indiana, including maintaining a combat fighter mission for the 122nd Fighter Wing
- ▶ Support feasibility and environmental studies for the modernization of facilities at the Fort Wayne Air National Guard Base
- ▶ Support local and state efforts to leverage federal funding from the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for local and regional priority projects



# Entrepreneur & Business Development

Entrepreneurs are the core driver of new, emerging growth businesses. Their ingenuity is the basis for a growing economy in which businesses can become national industry leaders. GFW Inc. supports initiatives that promote entrepreneurship, accelerate the growth of innovative businesses, and advance the development of early-stage industries.



Photography: General Motors - Fort Wayne Assembly



Photography: Google Data Centers

- ▶ Enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem by strengthening local and state initiatives that support entrepreneurs and startups to become high-growth firms and successful main street businesses
- ▶ Support the strategic alignment and coordination of services provided by local entrepreneurial support organizations that improve access to entrepreneurial networks, mentorship, spaces, and other services
- ▶ Support initiatives such as a community-based venture fund and accelerator to increase available capital to local startups by attracting national investment and incentivizing the retention of homegrown capital
- ▶ Support initiatives to attract and retain the orthopedic and medical device industry in the region
- ▶ Support initiatives to attract music production, industry innovation, technology development, and music technology training and education in a concerted effort to expand our music economy
- ▶ Support the expansion of Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) capacity to deploy \$10 million to close the disparity gap, providing financing to underserved individuals and small businesses
- ▶ Support investment for business development and expansion in R&D-intensive, engineering-focused, and technology-driven target industries to attract and grow high-wage jobs
- ▶ Support efforts to make northeast Indiana a national destination for the development of innovative automotive technology such as autonomous vehicles and mobility, microelectronics, electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, and other advanced technology
- ▶ Continue expansion of digital health opportunities and innovation to increase access to health care services
- ▶ Address the overall cost of health care for employers and employees
- ▶ Monitor government regulations of artificial intelligence to both advance and protect business efficiency and operations
- ▶ Strengthen measures for employers to defend against rising cybersecurity threats





# Education & Workforce Development

Access to a diverse and talented workforce is essential for business growth. GFW Inc. supports education and workforce policies that improve student outcomes, prepare students to be college- or career-ready, provide advanced training for current employees, and promote collaboration among educational institutions and businesses.

- ▶ Support initiatives to increase access to high-quality, affordable childcare and early-childhood education
- ▶ Further investment in education institutions at every level to provide the necessary resources to achieve student success
- ▶ Support PreK-12 education programs that help prepare all students to be college or career-ready by providing early access to career exploration opportunities, access to career and technical education (CTE) programs, and increase dual-credit attainment
- ▶ Support the growth and expansion of all our higher-education institutions to provide high-quality education that aligns community workforce needs, including Purdue Fort Wayne's funding request to reestablish a School of Nursing to help address regional nursing demands
- ▶ Work with Indiana University and IU Fort Wayne to expedite a market analysis of program needs with business community input and develop relevant academic programs based on the results of the analysis



- ▶ Continue to work with the Indiana University administration on regional campus designation for IU Fort Wayne
- ▶ Support graduate medical education grants to retain and attract highly skilled physicians to Indiana
- ▶ Support additional student housing for Purdue Fort Wayne and our other higher education institutions to meet the on- and off-campus student housing needs
- ▶ Support initiatives that increase the availability of additional workforce housing throughout the region
- ▶ Support the development of local and state relocation incentive programs to attract new talent including remote workers
- ▶ Support workforce initiatives such as MadeByMe that connect educators and businesses to highlight skilled-trades career opportunities to students
- ▶ Support workforce development initiatives that align with employers' training and education needs
- ▶ Increase funding for the Next Level Jobs Employer Training grant and local programs that reimburse employers who train, hire, and retain new or current employees
- ▶ Advocate for policies that cultivate diverse talent and leadership, and address equality, inclusion, and equity through leadership development, economic development, and employment
- ▶ Support initiatives that help businesses create workplaces that are more accessible to all people
- ▶ Support incentives to attract and create significant job growth in southeast Fort Wayne and other areas of limited employment opportunities
- ▶ Make Indiana the state of choice for retiring military veterans
- ▶ Support modernization of the federal immigration system including annual quotas for employment-based immigrant and non-immigrant visas to help employers meet their critical workforce needs



# Government Efficiency & Tax Policy

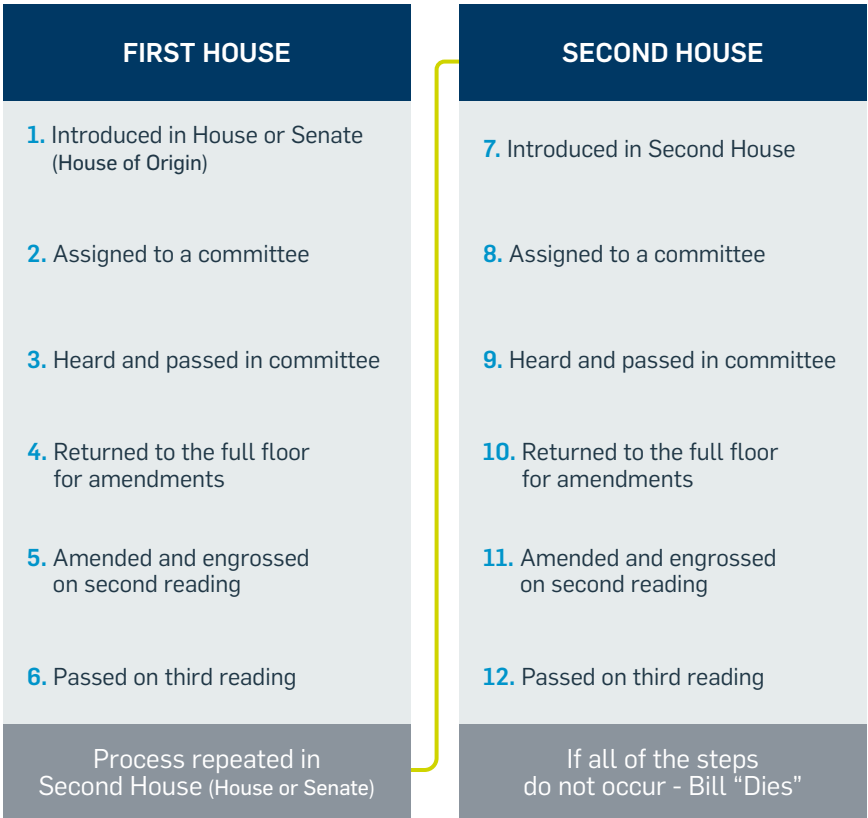
Government can foster a premier business environment by minimizing unnecessary regulations, reducing the cost of doing business, and delivering efficient, high-quality services. GFW Inc. supports a stable regulatory and tax environment to foster a strong business climate and drive economic growth. GFW Inc. will continue to collaborate with our government officials at all levels to move our community forward.



- ▶ Support zoning updates at major gateways and along key corridors to better align with the vision of the community and redevelopment potential
- ▶ Support a clear, concise, and predictable local tax phase-in policy for businesses
- ▶ Support the review of local government staffing capacity to provide the essential resources to sustain a high-growth economy
- ▶ Support the continued implementation of efficient and effective local permitting procedures to ensure the capacity to move at the speed of business
- ▶ Support an annual review of local surplus and unused funds
- ▶ Encourage efforts to diversify key revenue sources, expand voluntary efficiencies, and allow for more flexibility for local government
- ▶ Oppose overreaching administrative rulemaking and state and federal regulations that unduly burdens small businesses
- ▶ Monitor the State and Local Tax Review Task Force
- ▶ Support tax policies that encourage business growth, maintain Indiana's competitiveness, and attract and retain talent
- ▶ Support the elimination of the 30% depreciation floor on business personal property

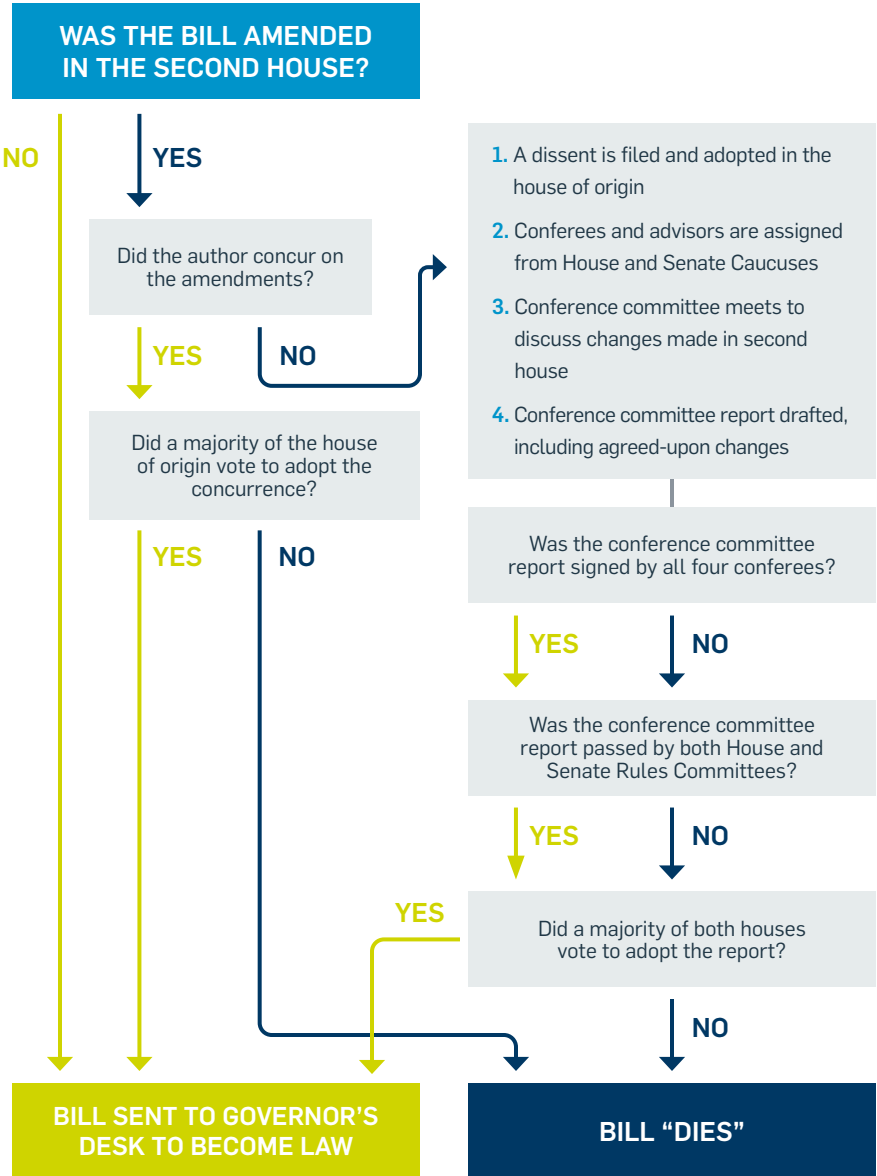
# How a State Bill becomes a law

The journey of a bill from introduction to enactment is a complex process crucial for community engagement. By understanding each stage of the bill's life, we empower ourselves to advocate effectively and influence decisions impacting local businesses and the community.



If Bill completes process in Second House, proceed to Conference Committee flowchart

# Conference Committee Flow Chart



# Contact your Elected Officials

## LOCAL CONTACTS

### ALLEN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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### CITY OF FORT WAYNE MAYOR

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**GEOFF PADDOCK 5TH DISTRICT**  
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## STATE CONTACTS

### SEN. LIZ BROWN

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### SEN. JUSTIN BUSCH

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### SEN. STACEY DONATO

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### SEN. SUE GLICK

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### REP. BOB MORRIS

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**DISTRICT 52 - AUBURN**  
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**DISTRICT 22 - WARSAW**  
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### REP. LORISSA SWEET

**DISTRICT 50 - WABASH**  
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## FEDERAL CONTACTS

### SENATOR JIM BANKS

Contact information  
to be determined

### SENATOR TODD YOUNG

(317) 226-6700  
1300 South Harrison Street  
Suite 3161  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802

### REP. MARLIN STUTZMAN

**3RD DISTRICT**

Contact information  
to be determined

## INDIANA ELECTION RESOURCES



Looking to get in touch with your local elected officials or additional voter resources online?

Visit [in.gov/sos/elections](https://in.gov/sos/elections) to learn more.

Contact information of elected officials current as of November 6, 2024.

# Get Involved

Getting involved with Greater Fort Wayne Inc.'s business advocacy efforts is crucial for fostering a vibrant economic landscape in our community.

By participating, you not only amplify your voice in local decision-making but also connect with a broad network of business leaders and innovators. These initiatives keep you informed on key issues, allow you to share insights, and collaborate on impactful solutions for growth.

With Greater Fort Wayne Inc. as a partner, your engagement drives progress, strengthens our business community, and creates a lasting, positive impact across Allen County and beyond.

Together, we're building a nationally recognized economy and creating a thriving community where businesses, families, and individuals can thrive.

## CONNECT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Attend an upcoming GFW Inc. business advocacy event to network with local, state and federal elected and government officials, and business leaders from around Allen County.

Visit [events.gfwinc.com](https://events.gfwinc.com) to find an upcoming business advocacy event.



**Legislative Preview Luncheon**



**Third House Forum Luncheon**



**Legislative Wrap-Up Breakfast**

## STAY INFORMED

Get weekly updates on business advocacy news, the latest policy issues, and emerging legislative actions that impact your business by subscribing to GovConnect - GFW Inc.'s weekly advocacy e-newsletter.

If you're a GFW Inc. investor and would like to receive GovConnect, or would like to learn more about becoming a GFW Inc. investor, email us at [advocacy@greaterfortwayneinc.com](mailto:advocacy@greaterfortwayneinc.com).

## TAKE ACTION

Contact your elected officials on issues that impact your business. Take a few minutes to write a letter, send an email, or give them a call.

Visit [advocacy.gfwinc.com](http://advocacy.gfwinc.com) to for more opportunities to get engaged.

## Want to learn how your business can get involved? Contact our team today!

Our on-staff registered state lobbyist is ready to serve as your advocate for all local, state, and federal government related issues. Reach out to the contact listed below to discuss your needs and explore how we can assist you.



**Melissa Beber**

Vice President of Business Advocacy



 (260) 203-5738 |  [mbeber@gfwinc.com](mailto:mbeber@gfwinc.com)

Greater Fort Wayne Inc. is a nonprofit membership organization serving the business community in Fort Wayne and Allen County, Indiana. Policies and positions expressed in this document do not represent those of any elected officials or government entities, and do not represent endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by any such officials or entities.



**GREATER  
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METRO CHAMBER ALLIANCE

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