



**ARKANSAS**  
STATE CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE



ASSOCIATED  
INDUSTRIES OF  
**ARKANSAS**

*Business matters.*

# Annual Report

2023



ADVANCING AND PROTECTING THE BUSINESS CLIMATE IN ARKANSAS



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# A Message from the President and CEO

RANDY ZOOK



Because of the support of our members and community partners, 2023 was a productive year for the advancement of the business environment in our state.

We know that policy matters. That's why the State Chamber/AIA is constantly working to elevate the voice of business, promote and defend free enterprise in Arkansas, and by extension, improve the quality of life for Arkansans. In 2023, we worked closely with state leaders to promote and prioritize tax rate reduction and business-friendly legislation during the general session and special session of the 94th General Assembly. Legislators made changes to the state's unemployment insurance tax, repealed the "Throwback Rule," and dramatically reduced the state's corporate and personal income tax rate, just to name a few.

These changes are significant to the continued success of employers and instrumental in making our state more attractive to prospective companies and families that are fleeing other states' high taxes. Individual and corporate income tax reform within the past nine years has resulted in \$1.27 billion total annual taxpayer savings. Manufacturers saved nearly \$171 million in 2023 thanks to reduced taxes on manufacturing. Plus, employers are also saving more thanks to alternative tax reforms spearheaded by the State Chamber/AIA, such as unemployment insurance tax reform. Employers' average unemployment insurance cost per employee has decreased by 84% since 2012. On average, employers are saving \$349 per employee in annual unemployment insurance costs compared to 10 years ago. Meanwhile, the unemployment insurance trust fund has reached an all-time high of \$924.7 million — more than enough to protect Arkansans in the event of an economic downturn.

We can already see the fruit of these reforms throughout Arkansas' economy. According to the American Legislative Exchange Council, Arkansas has become the 15th most economically competitive state in the nation and is the

**"We believe that business matters.  
Because when business  
thrives, we all do."**

third best for recently legislated tax changes. In 2023, Arkansas welcomed several new businesses, primarily in the aerospace and defense, forest products, metals, distribution, food and beverage, and outdoor sporting and recreation industries. Manufacturing was over 15 percent of Gross State Product for the year, and Arkansas' manufacturing employment as a percentage of total nonfarm employment ranked at 12 percent.

The State Chamber/AIA also advocates on your behalf through our affiliated organizations and programs, such as the Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives, the Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence, and Leadership Arkansas. The AIA's workforce initiative, Be Pro Be Proud, currently operates within six states across the nation. Plus, Be Pro Be Proud has made more than 1,450 tour stops, visited more than 425 cities, and connected with more than 68,300 students in Arkansas alone. All these initiatives were created for a singular purpose—to serve and support Arkansas business.

Thank you for your partnership with us in 2023. At the State Chamber/AIA, we believe that business matters. Because when business thrives, we all do.

Sincerely,

Randy Zook



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# Our 2023 Leadership

The Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce / Associated Industries of Arkansas is the leading voice for business at the State Capitol and serves as the primary business advocate on all issues affecting Arkansas employers. Our mission is to promote a pro-business, free-enterprise agenda and prevent anti-business legislation, regulations, and rules.

## 2023 Executive Committee

### State Chamber of Commerce Officers



CHAIRMAN  
OF THE BOARD

**Gary Head**  
Signature Bank of  
Arkansas



IMMEDIATE PAST  
CHAIRMAN

**Ronald Dedman**  
AT&T Arkansas  
*(retired)*



PAST CHAIRMAN

**Ray Dillon**  
Deltic Timber  
*(retired)*



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Curtis Barnett**  
Arkansas  
BlueCross  
BlueShield



VICE CHAIRMAN

**John Burgess**  
Mainstream  
Technologies, Inc.



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Raymond Burns**  
Rogers Lowell  
Chamber



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Stanley Hill**  
Arkansas Farm  
Bureau Federation



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Laura Landreaux**  
entergy Arkansas



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Michael Lindsey**  
Walmart



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Andy Miller**  
Flywheel Energy



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Adam Mitchell**  
Citizens Bank



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Nelson Peacock**  
NWA Council



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Larry Shackelford**  
Washington  
Regional Medical  
Center



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Frank Thomas**  
Stephens Inc.



VICE CHAIRMAN

**George Wheatley**  
Waste Management  
of Arkansas

### Associated Industries of Arkansas Officers



CHAIRMAN  
OF THE BOARD

**Greg Williams**  
Nabholz  
Construction  
Services



IMMEDIATE PAST  
CHAIRMAN

**Chris Hart**  
Central  
Moloney, Inc.



PAST CHAIRMAN

**Grady Harvell**  
W&W/AFCO  
Steel LLC



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Michael Callan**  
Stephens  
Production  
Company



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Thomas Dickinson**  
McGeorge  
Contracting Co.



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Dean Hoover**  
Koontz Electric  
Company Inc.



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Patty Cardin  
Lawson**  
Lanxess  
Solutions Inc.



VICE CHAIRMAN

**Lenore Trammell**  
U. S. Steel/Big  
River Steel



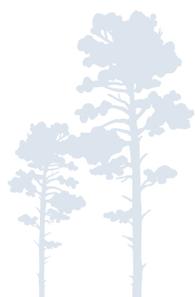
VICE CHAIRMAN

**Jeffrey Wood**  
Tyson Foods, Inc.



STATE CHAMBER/AIA  
TREASURER

**Reggie Rose**  
Simmons Bank



## 2023 State Chamber Board

**Blair Allen**  
Beechwood Hospitality

**Tim Allen**  
Fort Smith Regional  
Chamber of Commerce

**David Avery**  
Windstream

**Mark Biggers**  
E.C. Barton & Company

**Don Bobbitt**  
University of  
Arkansas System

**Robin Bowen**  
Arkansas Tech University

**Jessica Breaux**  
Amazon

**Daryl Brown**  
MISO

**Darlene Brugnoli**  
Verizon Wireless

**Jim Carr**  
Highland Home Holdings

**Bret Carroll**  
Conway Corporation

**Josh Carson**  
Rausch Coleman Homes

**Davy Carter**  
Centennial Bank

**Joe Carter**  
Snyder Environmental

**Jim Casey**  
USable Life

**Jay Chesshir**  
Little Rock Regional  
Chamber

**Marvin Childers**  
The Poultry Federation

**Craig Cloud**  
Friendship  
Community Care

**Andrew Clyde**  
Murphy USA Inc.

**Steve Cole**  
Cossatot Community  
College of UofA

**Mel Coleman**  
North Arkansas Electric  
Cooperative

**Steven Collier**  
ARcare

**Matt Crafton**  
Crafton Tull

**Brad Crain**  
Arvest

**Melissa Curry**  
Methodist Village  
Senior Living

**Susan Davenport**  
Forvis

**Houston Davis**  
University of  
Central Arkansas

**Bryan Day**  
Port of Little Rock

**Gene Dresel**  
Kimbrel Mechanical  
Systems

**Steve Edwards**  
GES Inc./Edwards  
Food Giant

**Ron Ekstrand**  
Easterseals Arkansas

**Bradley Hardin**  
AEP Southwestern  
Electric Power Company

**Buddy Hasten**  
Arkansas Electric  
Cooperatives

**Adam Head**  
CARTI

**Daniel Heard**  
Uniti Group Inc.

**Adam Henderson**  
U.S. Bank

**Kenny Henderson**  
Summit Utilities

**Eddie Lee Herndon**  
OG+E

**Jerry Holder**  
Garver

**Jeff Hunnicutt**  
Highlands Oncology  
Group

**Osi Imomoh**  
Southland Casino Hotel

**Crystal Johnson**  
Batesville Area Chamber  
of Commerce

**Chad Kinsley**  
Black Hills Corp.

**George Knollmeyer**  
Ben E. Keith Company

**Benny Koontz**  
Koontz Electric  
Company Inc.

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Conway Area Chamber  
of Commerce

**Sam Lynd**  
NEA Baptist Health  
System

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University of Arkansas

**Kevin McKenzie**  
Farm Bureau Mutual  
Insurance Company of  
Arkansas

**Kristin Merlo**  
Delta Dental of  
Arkansas Inc.

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Friday Eldredge &  
Clark LLP

**Charles Morgan**  
First Orion Corp.

**Alan Morse**  
Ritter Communications

**Mike Myers**  
Winrock International

**Gary Newton**  
Arkansas Learns

**Michael Parker**  
Wright Lindsey Jennings

**Cam Patterson**  
UAMS

**Len Pitcock**  
Cox Communications

**Chris Raymer**  
Mississippi County  
Hospital System

**Matt Reddin**  
Simmons Bank

**Mike Ross**  
Southwest Power Pool

**Reynie Rutledge**  
First Security Bank

**Carlton Saffa**  
Saracen Casino Resort

**Jim Schaffitzel**  
Highland Industrial Park

**Sam Sicard**  
First National Bank of  
Fort Smith

**Wayne Smith**  
Oaklawn Jockey Club

**Roderick Smothers**  
Philander Smith College

**William Thames**  
McGriff Insurance

**Greg Thompson**  
MEMS

**Lorrie Trogden**  
Arkansas Bankers  
Association

**Gary Troutman**  
Greater Hot Springs  
Chamber of Commerce

**Lorie Tudor**  
Arkansas Department of  
Transportation

**Sam Walls III**  
Arkansas Capital  
Corporation

**Drew Weber**  
U.S. Pizza Co. Inc.

**Colby Wells**  
South Central  
Arkansas Electric

**Troy Wells**  
Baptist Health

**Sherece West**  
The Winthrop  
Rockefeller Foundation

**Gordon Wilbourn**  
Kutak Rock LLP

**Jeff Williams**  
America's Car-Mart Inc.

**Larry Wilson**  
First Arkansas  
Bank & Trust

**Mark Young**  
Jonesboro Regional  
Chamber of Commerce

## 2023 Ex-Officio Board Members

**Ken Calhoun**  
Altec Industries Inc.

**Vanessa Cook**  
Arkansas Institute for  
Performance Excellence

**Angela DeLille**  
Cox Communications

**Jane Duke**  
Tyson Foods, Inc.

**Tom Kennedy**  
entergy Arkansas

**Kurt Knickrehm**  
McGriff Insurance

**Kevin McGilton**  
Riceland Foods Inc.

**Nancy Lee McNew**  
Arkansas Economic  
Developers & Chamber  
Executives

**Robert Smith**  
Robert D. Smith, III

**Connie Vaughan**  
McKee Foods  
Corporation

**Guy Wade**  
Friday Eldredge &  
Clark LLP

## 2023 Associated Industries of Arkansas Board

**James Adams**  
Gar-Bro Manufacturing  
Company

**Jason Allen**  
Pace Industries

**Richard Anderson**  
Arkansas Steel  
Associates

**Jennifer Anglin**  
Pernod Ricard

**Steven Anthony**  
Anthony  
Timberlands, Inc.

**Scotty Bell**  
Virco Manufacturing  
Corporation

**Chris Chandler**  
Chandler Equipment

**Elmer Cherry**  
Nucor Steel Arkansas

**Caryl Childres**  
Tokusen U.S.A., Inc.

**Tom Cramer**  
Manhattan Road &  
Bridge Company

**Tom Cullins**  
Cooper Tire & Rubber  
Company

**Sébastien Deltheil**  
Dassault Falcon Jet

**Haskill Dickinson**  
Granite Mountain Quarry

**Chester Fort**  
West Fraser, Inc.

**Robert George**  
George's, Inc

**Clay Gordon**  
Kinco Constructors, LLC

**Jason Green**  
ABB

**George Harguess**  
Denso Manufacturing  
Arkansas, Inc.

**Chris Harris**  
Tokai Carbon

**Brad Harville**  
Green Bay Packaging

**Chris Heitzmann**  
Caterpillar Inc.

**Ken Hendrix**  
S&H Systems

**Trish Henry**  
Russellville Steel  
Company Inc.

**Justin Holmes**  
Martin Sprocket &  
Gear, Inc.

**Chandra Hooker**  
Aerojet Rocketdyne  
Corporation

**Aaron Huckaby**  
Lockheed Martin Missile  
& Fire Control

**Harold Johnson**  
Hino Motors  
Manufacturing USA, Inc.

**Ron Keeneth**  
Bridgestone Americas  
Tube Business

**John Kelleher**  
Gerdau Special Steel

**Robert Langston**  
Langston Companies  
Inc.

**Rickey Ledbetter**  
Southern Bakeries, LLC

**Mike Lyles**  
Evergreen Packaging  
Pactiv Evergreen

**Malcolm Massey**  
Clearwater Paper

**Gary McChesney**  
FutureFuel Chemical  
Company

**Scott McGeorge**  
Pine Bluff Sand & Gravel  
Company

**Jon Mobley**  
American Tubing

**Dustin Morphis**  
Bridgestone Americas  
Tube Business

**Ben Noble**  
Riceland Foods, Inc.

**Patrick Noland**  
PECO Foods

**Kimmie Provost**  
Simmons Foods, Inc.

**Gina Radke**  
Galley Support  
Innovations

**Mike Simpson**  
TCPrint Solutions

**Melissa Smith**  
McKee Foods  
Corporation

**Shannon Sullivan**  
American Greetings  
Corporation

**Van Tilbury**  
East Harding  
Construction

**Derek Turner**  
El Dorado Chemical  
Company

**Ernie Walker**  
Rineco Chemical  
Industries

**Bill Ward**  
Twin Rivers  
Paper Company

**Tammy Waters**  
Domtar

**Don Weaver**  
Weaver-Bailey  
Contractors, Inc.

**Chris Weiser**  
JV Manufacturing  
Co., Inc.

**Adam White**  
Remington

**Ivan Wilson**  
Dassault Falcon Jet

**Joe Wilson**  
Conagra

**Jon Witherow**  
Nucor-Yamato Steel  
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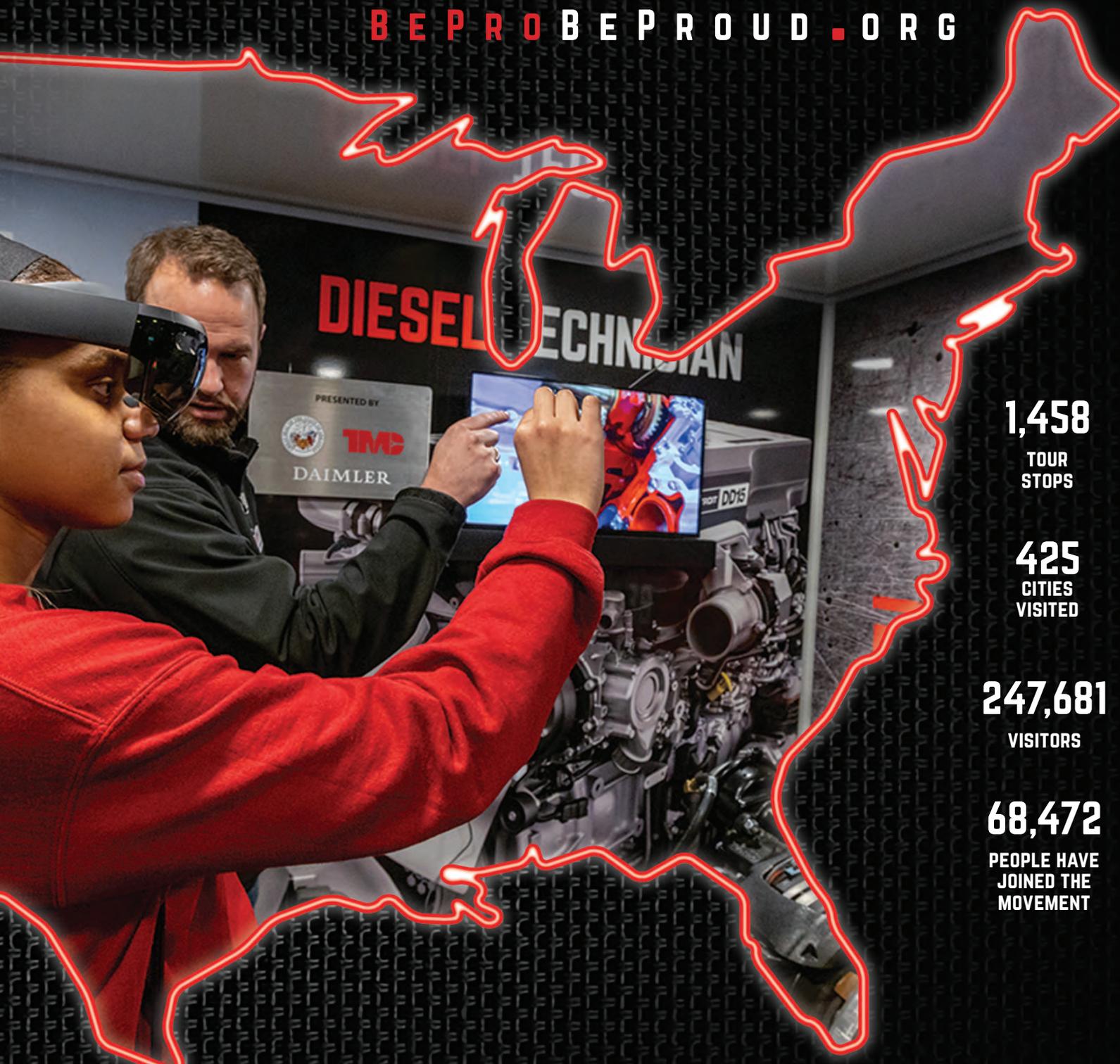


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STOPS

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CITIES  
VISITED

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VISITORS

68,472  
PEOPLE HAVE  
JOINED THE  
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# Political Action Committees



## 2023 PAC Stats

**\$155k**

We raised \$155k into our PACs (State PAC, AIA PAC, and Businesses for Justice PAC) to prepare for the 2024 election cycle.

## Balances *as of 11/16/2023*

### Year End Balances

**\$115,928**

State Chamber PAC

**\$72,050**

AIA PAC

**\$21,276**

Businesses for Justice PAC

## Partner with Us

### 2024

We hope your company will partner with us in 2024. PAC donors at any amount are invited to meetings with candidates/elected officials when we present them with campaign donations and are listed on signage throughout the year.

**Reminder:** Your corporation cannot directly donate to a candidate, but it can donate up to \$10,000 to a PAC per calendar year.

## PAC FAQs

### What is State Chamber PAC?

Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce Political Action Committee (State Chamber PAC) serves as a vehicle that allows the State Chamber/AIA to help communicate the business community's goal of economic prosperity in Arkansas to candidates and elected officials.

### What is AIA PAC?

Associated Industries of Arkansas Political Action Committee (AIA PAC) serves as the vehicle to support candidates and elected officials who stand up for the needs of manufacturing businesses and industrial businesses.

### What is Businesses for Justice PAC?

Businesses for Justice PAC supports judicial races in Arkansas, contributing to the development of a fair and just legal system in the state.

### Who Funds the PACs?

Per Arkansas law, any individual, proprietorship, firm, partnership, joint venture, company, corporation, or association may contribute to a state PAC. The donation limit is \$10,000 per calendar year.

### What Happens with the Money Raised?

1. It supports candidates and elected officials who share our vision to grow the economic prosperity of our state, whether by fighting for an issue that helps business, or against one that hurts our interests.
2. It helps members stay informed about various issues during election season by allowing them to meet candidates and learn more about their platforms.
3. State Chamber/AIA may call on its members to engage with their representatives regarding issues that impact business.

### Will All of the Money Raised Stay in Arkansas?

Yes. Our PACs are solely focused on making a difference in Arkansas and do not participate on a federal level. These PACs operate exclusively at the state level.

### Do the PACs or the State Chamber/AIA Have a Particular Party Affiliation?

No. Neither the State Chamber/AIA nor its PACs have loyalty to any specific political party. The allocation of funds will depend solely on a candidate's position concerning matters important to the business community.

### Who Decides Who Will Receive a Donation?

We have a PAC committee of appointed State Chamber/AIA members that decides which candidates or elected officials will receive donations. Candidates must meet certain criteria to gain the support of our organization. The PAC committee is always open to membership feedback.

### How Can I Make a Donation?

1. Make a check payable to State Chamber PAC, AIA PAC, and/or Businesses for Justice PAC and mail to PO Box 3645, Little Rock, AR 72203.
2. Give a percentage of your dues to a PAC when you renew your membership each year.
3. Make a donation online to State Chamber PAC and/or to AIA PAC by scanning the QR codes below.



State Chamber PAC



AIA PAC

# Governmental Affairs

## 94th General Assembly

### 2023 Regular Session Summary

The General Assembly convened for a regular session on January 9, 2023, and met for 89 days before concluding business on April 7, with *sine die* adjournment on May 1. Not only did the regular session mark the beginning of Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders' administration, but it also marked the inaugural terms of dozens of new state legislators. The State Chamber/AIA worked alongside our state's leaders—both new and familiar faces—and made every effort to promote pro-business reforms throughout the general session.

Throughout the regular session, lawmakers filed more than 1,600 bills and resolutions—880 of which became law. Several of the State Chamber/AIA's top policy priorities passed. Most notably, legislators made changes to the state's unemployment insurance taxes; repealed the "Throwback Rule"; and approved more than \$186 million in tax cuts through a measure that reduces the state's corporate income tax rate from 5.3% to 5.1% and lowers the top individual income tax rate from 4.9% to 4.7%.

Legislators spent a significant amount of time addressing a handful of major reform measures, including Gov. Sanders' comprehensive education reform bill, known as the LEARNS Act, and Gov. Sanders' criminal justice reform measure, known as the Protect Arkansas Plan. Legislators also passed the state's \$6.2 billion budget, amended the state's net-metering law, and referred one proposed constitutional amendment to voters.



The State Chamber/AIA continued to work on behalf of our members by advocating for Arkansas business and industry throughout the regular and special sessions of the 94th General Assembly.



Gov. Sanders signs Arkansas LEARNS into law on March 8, 2023

Courtesy of the Office of Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders



Sen. Pro Tempore Bart Hester and Sen. Steve Crowell chat in the Senate Chamber on February 9, 2023

Courtesy of the Arkansas Senate



The Arkansas House of Representatives conducts business on February 7, 2023

Courtesy of the Arkansas House of Representatives



## 2023 Extraordinary Session Summary

Gov. Sanders called the 94th General Assembly into an extraordinary session (special session), which convened on September 11, 2023. During the four-day special session, legislators considered nine proposals identified by the governor’s office that addressed issues such as state tax cuts, the Freedom of Information Act, school safety, COVID vaccination requirements, and more.

By the adjournment of the special session on September 14, the state legislature agreed on measures to further reduce the top individual income tax rate from 4.7% to 4.4%; lower the top rate for corporate income taxes from 5.1% to 4.8%; and provide a one-time credit of \$150 for qualifying taxpayers. The General Assembly also approved legislation that amends the Freedom of Information Act to preserve certain security measures for constitutional officers, justices of the Supreme Court and judges on the Court of Appeals. Gov. Sanders’ proposal to prohibit state and local government officials from requiring proof of COVID vaccinations in order to qualify for services, employment, or education also passed into law, as did legislation to clarify that schools must keep all doors that lead outside locked during school hours.



**Gov. Sanders signs legislation near the end of the special session on September 14, 2023.**

*Courtesy of the Arkansas House of Representatives*



**Rep. Brian Evans addresses the House Chamber on September 13, 2023**

*Courtesy of the Arkansas House of Representatives*



**Rep. Tara Shephard chats in the House Chamber ahead of the convening of the special session on September 11, 2023**

*Courtesy of the Arkansas House of Representatives*



**The Arkansas House of Representatives 94th General Assembly convenes for special session on September 12, 2023**

*Courtesy of the Arkansas House of Representatives*

# Governmental Affairs

## Legislation passed by the 94th General Assembly

### What you need to know

#### LEARNS Act

##### State Chamber/AIA supported legislation

Legislators spent hours in committee debating a 144-page education reform bill known as the **LEARNS Act**. Arguably the most highly anticipated measure of the session, it has been called the largest education overhaul in state history. The LEARNS Act is an initiative of Gov. Sanders and was sponsored by **Sen. Breanne Davis (R-Russellville)** and **Rep. Keith Brooks (R-Little Rock)**. The act sets new standards for student literacy; creates reforms to provide students with better access to high-quality instructional materials; and emphasizes Science of Reading instructional practices. The legislation also creates Education Freedom Accounts, which are designed to allocate 90% of the state's per-pupil funding to enable students to attend private schools or receive home schooling. This voucher is valued at approximately \$7,618 per student, based on the 2023-2024 funding formula. Additionally, the law increases starting teachers' salaries from \$36,000 to \$50,000 and gives those who are already above the minimum salary a \$2,000 raise. The LEARNS Act cost an estimated \$297.5 million in 2023 and is predicted to cost approximately \$343.3 million in 2024 as more students become eligible for the accounts. This education plan, initiated by Gov. Sanders, addressed many of the State Chamber/AIA's workforce quality and education priority issues.

#### Protect Arkansas Act

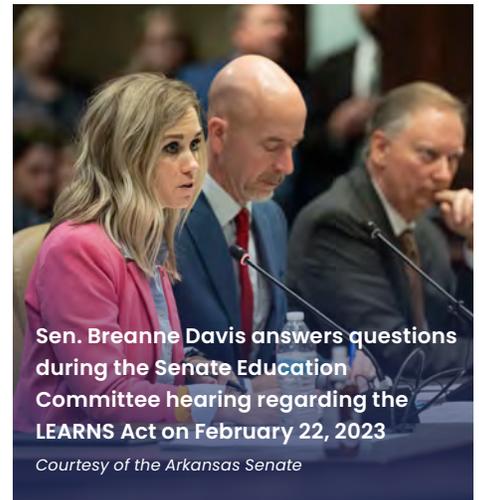
##### State Chamber/AIA supported legislation

In the final days of the session, legislators approved Gov. Sanders' comprehensive criminal justice reform measure, which overhauls the state's parole system. This reform, sponsored by **Sen. Ben Gilmore (R-Crossett)** and **Rep. Jimmy Gazaway (R-Paragould)**, will require those convicted of serious crimes to serve most—if not all—of their prison sentences. The measure also includes funding to help formerly incarcerated individuals enter the workforce and suspends court fines and fees for 120 days after an individual is released from custody. The state estimates that the additional inmate care will cost approximately \$163.8 million over the next 10 years. Lawmakers also set aside \$330 million in surplus funding to build 3,000 new prison beds.



Gov. Sanders signs legislation to create the Protect Arkansas Act on April 11, 2023

Courtesy of the Office of Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders



Sen. Breanne Davis answers questions during the Senate Education Committee hearing regarding the LEARNS Act on February 22, 2023

Courtesy of the Arkansas Senate

#### Tax Cuts

##### State Chamber/AIA priority legislation

Toward the end of the session, lawmakers passed more than \$186 million in tax cuts. The legislation reduced the corporate income tax rate from 5.3% to 5.1% and the upper individual income tax rate from 4.9% to 4.7%. The measure, proposed by **Sen. Jonathan Dismang (R-Beebe)** and **Rep. Les Eaves (R-Searcy)**, applied retroactively to January 1, 2023. The State Chamber/AIA team advocated strongly for these tax reforms on behalf of the business community. These reductions, combined with earlier cuts, go a long way to improve the tax climate in our state. Individual state income taxes will be reduced by \$100 million a year and corporate income taxes will be reduced by \$24 million a year.



## Legislation passed by the 94th General Assembly: What you need to know (cont'd)



Sen. Jonathan Dismang prepares for business in the Senate Chamber on January 23, 2023

Courtesy of the Arkansas Senate



Gov. Sanders and Chief Workforce Officer Mike Rogers hold the first Workforce Cabinet meeting Mar 13, 2023

Courtesy of the Office of Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders

### Repeal of the Throwback Rule

#### State Chamber/AIA priority legislation

One of the State Chamber/AIA’s top priorities for the 2023 regular session was repealing the outdated Throwback Rule, which has long put Arkansas’ economy at a competitive disadvantage. The Throwback Rule authorizes a state, where the sale of tangible property originates, to tax the income from those sales if the destination is the federal government or another state that lacks jurisdiction to levy a tax. Unfortunately, this regulation often leads to disproportionately high and uncompetitive rates of taxation for certain businesses. It can create a significant burden on businesses that operate in multiple states, as they may be subject to taxation in both the state where the sale originated and the state where the product was delivered. Additionally, the Throwback Rule can discourage interstate commerce by making it more costly for businesses to sell their products across state lines. The State Chamber/AIA team worked closely with **Rep. Howard Beatty (R-Crossett)** to create a measure that phases out the Throwback Rule over the next seven years. State Chamber/AIA staff members successfully educated leadership, tax committee chairs, and key members of the General Assembly about the importance of repealing this rule, and the General Assembly passed the legislation with bipartisan support. The measure will cost \$10.6 million in the next fiscal year and \$74 million once fully implemented.

### Unemployment Insurance Changes

#### State Chamber/AIA priority legislation

The State Chamber/AIA highly prioritized legislation to change the state’s existing unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 94th General Assembly passed a measure proposed by **Sen. Kim Hammer (R-Benton)** and **Rep. Robin Lundstrum (R- Elm Springs)** to reduce employer unemployment taxes by an estimated \$31 million. The legislation also prevents an increase in the unemployment insurance wage base if the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund has a balance of at least \$600 million. (The 2023 year-end balance is approximately \$925 million.) The measure also reduces the maximum number of benefit weeks from 16 to 12; lowers the new employer UI tax rate from 2.9% to 1.9%; reduces the maximum UI tax rate from 14% to 10%, and repeals the Stabilization Tax, which included a dedicated 0.2% for administration. The State Chamber/AIA team collaborated with the General Assembly sponsors to develop this measure and worked with members of the General Assembly to convey how significant this legislation will be in reducing the burden on employers and enhancing the business climate in Arkansas.



Reps. DeAnn Vaught, Nicole Clowney, and Jamie Scott chat in the House Chamber on January 9, 2023

Courtesy of the Arkansas House of Representatives

# Governmental Affairs

## Legislation passed by the 94th General Assembly: What you need to know (cont'd)

### Constitutional Amendments

During the session, lawmakers submitted over 30 constitutional amendments for the General Assembly to consider referring to voters. These proposals ranged from eliminating the property tax to enforcing partisan elections for state judges. However, the legislators decided to refer only one amendment to voters. This constitutional amendment was proposed by **Sen. Jane English (R-North Little Rock)** and **Rep. Robin Lundstrum (R-Elm Springs)** and seeks to expand the use of lottery proceeds. The proposed amendment, which is supported by the State Chamber/AIA, aims to allow lottery funds to be utilized for vocational and technical school scholarships, as opposed to the current law which allows this funding to go exclusively toward two and four-year colleges. Voters will have the opportunity to approve or reject the proposal at the ballot in November 2024.

### Net-Metering Amendment

**Sen. Jonathan Dismang (R-Beebe)** and **Rep. Lanny Fite (R-Benton)** proposed a bill to change the state's net-metering policy, which had been implemented in 2020. This new measure would reduce the compensation that solar users currently receive for energy produced and returned to the grid, which is currently set at a one-to-one ratio. Advocates for the change, including utility providers, argued that the policy unfairly burdens traditional electric ratepayers and that reducing reimbursements to wholesale rates—rather than the current retail rates—would address this issue. However, opponents contended that such a change would discourage solar investment in the state. The issue remained unresolved for the first few weeks of the session until legislators reached a compromise amendment that would “grandfather” in current users through 2040.

### Budget

Lawmakers passed a \$6.2 billion general revenue budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023. The budget, as laid out in the state's Revenue Stabilization Act (RSA), represents an increase of \$177.7 million in expenses, primarily due to the costs associated with education and corrections programs. The RSA prioritizes funding into three categories, A, B, and C, dictating the flow of revenue to various departments and programs. The Public School Fund will receive roughly \$2.4 billion, representing an increase of \$118.7 million. The Educational Freedom Accounts created under the LEARNS Act will receive \$31.7 million. The Division of Correction will receive \$434.3 million in funding, representing an increase of \$55.3 million. The Department of Human Services will be granted approximately \$1.8 billion in General Revenue, an increase of \$5.5 million.



**Rep. Denise Ennett chats in the House Chamber ahead of the convening of the special session on September 11, 2023**

*Courtesy of the House of Representatives*



**Speaker Shepherd addresses the House Chamber on January 9, 2023**

*Courtesy of the Arkansas House of Representatives*

# Tax Reform Efforts

## Legislative Tax Cuts Championed by the State Chamber/AIA Since 2010

The State Chamber/AIA's work to reduce taxes since 2010 has resulted in millions in savings for Arkansas business and industry.

### Tax Cuts

- ✓ Personal income tax reductions
- ✓ Corporate income tax reductions
- ✓ Unemployment insurance
- ✓ Repeal of the Throwback Rule
- ✓ Rebate for sales taxes on utility costs paid by manufacturers, electric generators, and printers
- ✓ Taxability of nonresident Arkansas income taxes
- ✓ Sales tax exemption on manufacturers' repair and replacement parts
- ✓ Elective pass through entity-level flat income tax
- ✓ Section 179 expense
- ✓ Net operating loss carry forward extension
- ✓ Sales factor
- ✓ Apprenticeship income tax credit
- ✓ Property tax fairness and tax administration fairness
- ✓ Increased income tax credits for historic rehabilitation
- ✓ Capital gains income tax exemption
- ✓ Waste reduction tax credit carry forward for steel manufacturers

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# Events & Outreach

## Annual Meeting

The State Chamber/AIA's 95th Annual Meeting was an opportunity for state leaders, public officials, businesses, and individuals to come together and celebrate the success of the Arkansas business community. The record number of attendees and sponsors—including Luncheon Sponsors U.S. Steel, Central Moloney, Inc., and Stephens Inc., and Presenting Sponsors Amazon, entergy Arkansas, and Snyder Environmental—were a testament to the strength of the state's business ecosystem and the value business leaders place on connection with state and local leaders.

State Chamber/AIA president and CEO Randy Zook opened the event by presenting information about the state of business in Arkansas. In his presentation, he explained why Arkansas is more economically competitive than ever before, a statement underscored by several national nonpartisan research groups such as the American Legislative Exchange Council. Randy also discussed the role of the State Chamber/AIA in continually assessing and improving the state's business environment—because whenever Arkansas businesses thrive, our communities, neighborhoods, and families thrive, too.

The 95th Annual Meeting also featured Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who spoke about the importance of growing Arkansas' economy and reminded the audience of the immense potential that lies within the state.

Attendees also learned about four Arkansas products vying for the title of "Coolest Thing Made in Arkansas," a competition presented by the Arkansas Business Publishing Group and the State Chamber/AIA which celebrates the innovative accomplishments of Arkansas manufacturers. The public weighed in and selected Domtar's fluff pulp product as the coolest thing made in Arkansas in 2023.

The event concluded with remarks from keynote speaker Robert Bryce, an author and podcaster who shared his extensive knowledge of global energy and why energy is a primary catalyst for business and economic growth.

**“The record number of attendees and sponsors were a testament to the strength of the state's business ecosystem.”**



**Gov. Sanders makes remarks at the 95th Annual Meeting**



**The 95th Annual Meeting had a record number of attendees**



**Randy Zook presents the State of Business 2023**



2023 State Chamber Board Chairman Gary Head introduces Gov. Sanders



Don Gooch, Regional Director of Community Banks for Arvest, leads the audience in the National Anthem



2023 AIA Board Chairman Greg Williams introduces keynote speaker Robert Bryce



Owner and President of the Arkansas Business Publishing Group Mitch Bettis announces the Coolest Thing Made in Arkansas



Domtar leadership accepts an award for making the coolest thing in Arkansas



Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders addresses the audience at the 95th Annual Meeting

# Events & Outreach

## Washington Fly-In

The State Chamber/AIA held its 63rd Annual Washington Fly-In and Congressional Reception, presented by Central Moloney, Inc., on May 10-12, 2023. The State Chamber/AIA hosts this exclusive three-day event each year in Washington, D.C., to offer participants the opportunity to network and meet with Arkansas' federal delegation and other Arkansas business leaders.

This year's Fly-In began with the Arkansas Delegation Leadership Reception, honoring the chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and schedulers, and concluded with the Arkansas Leadership Breakfast, featuring special guests Congressman Steve Womack (AR-3), Chris Stirewalt, who is the politics editor for NewsNation and a contributing editor for The Dispatch, and Congressman Jodey Arrington (TX-19), who is Chair of the House Budget Committee.

Fly-In participants had the opportunity to attend an education and workforce update, a federal legislative update, and an employment policy update, each led by a member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's executive leadership.

The event also offered several other networking opportunities with members of the Arkansas Delegation, a private tour of the U.S. Capitol, hosted by Congressman Bruce Westerman (AR-4), and time for participants to coordinate individual meetings with other federal and business and industry leaders.



**Congressman Bruce Westman leads a private tour of the U.S. Capitol**



**Attendees pose for a photo at the Arkansas Delegation Leadership Reception**

**“Fly-In participants had the opportunity to attend an education and workforce update, a federal legislative update, and an employment policy update, each led by a member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s executive leadership.”**



**Attendees pose in front of the U.S. Capitol**



**Congressman Steve Womack speaks at the Arkansas Leadership Breakfast**



**Congressman Rick Crawford poses with State Chamber Board Chair Gary Head and others at the Congressional Delegation Reception**



**Nancy Lee McNew, Jennifer Kline, and Buckley O'Mell pose for a photo at the Arkansas Delegation Leadership Reception**



**State Chamber Board Chair Gary Head introduces Texas Congressman Jodey Arrington at the Arkansas Leadership Breakfast**



**Congressman French Hill addresses attendees at the Arkansas House Delegation Working Breakfast**



**Randy Zook chats with attendees at the Arkansas Delegation Leadership Reception**



**Senators John Boozman and Tom Cotton speak at the Arkansas Senate Delegation Lunch**

# Manufacturing and Workforce Development

## BE PRO BE PROUD

BEPROBEPROUD.ORG

### BE PRO BE PROUD is growing!

Be Pro Be Proud, the workforce initiative of the Associated Industries of Arkansas, launched a solo mobile workshop in 2016 with the purpose of changing the perception of trade programs and careers.

The message that a successful career does not require a traditional four- \_ year baccalaureate degree has resonated not only here in Arkansas but around the country. The effort has expanded to two mobile workshops in Arkansas and it now includes tours in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and New Mexico.



337,451  
VISITORS





The Be Pro Be Proud mobile workshops tour schools around these states featuring virtual reality (VR) simulators that allow students to step into technical careers that may be unfamiliar.

To date, more than 83,623 students have Joined the Movement to be connected to more information about starting technical careers in the construction, manufacturing, transportation or utilities industries. The popularity of the Be Pro Mobile Workshop in schools and in workforce development circles has led to a growing tour stop waitlist that represents the significant opportunities that exist in trade professions.

For more information on Be Pro Be Proud, go to [beprobeproud.org](http://beprobeproud.org) or contact Andrew Parker at [aparker@arkansasstatechamber.com](mailto:aparker@arkansasstatechamber.com).



**2,205**  
TOUR STOPS



**671**  
CITIES VISITED



# Manufacturing and Workforce Development



## Be Pro Be Proud Draft Day 2023 Overview

### Arkansas Spring 2023

Be Pro Be Proud hosted four career events in the Spring of 2023 in the Northwest, Northeast, River Valley, and Grand Prairie regions. At the Draft Day events, high school seniors were strategically paired with Be Pro Be Proud Partners and regional employers, based on student aptitude and interest and employer needs.

Prior to Draft Day, graduating seniors prepared for interviews with Resume Building, Interview Preparation, and Mock Interview Workshops facilitated by Be Pro Be Proud in partnership with the Department of Education and its Career Coaches and CTE Coordinators and Future Farmers of America Advisors. Over 750 prepared seniors were interviewed for positions in the Transportation, Utilities, Manufacturing, Construction, and Healthcare industries. Nearly half of the seniors who interviewed were invited to a second interview or offered a job.

The 2023 Draft Day Series allowed companies to engage with over 3,500 members of their future talent pipeline through the Career Expos which were open to all sophomores, juniors, and seniors at the host high schools. These students are now prepared and excited to participate in one of eight regional Draft Days scheduled for Spring 2024.





**DRAFT DAY 2023 RESULTS FROM ALL FOUR EVENTS\***

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	41	INTERVIEWED SENIORS	753
PARTICIPATING COMPANIES	142	SENIOR INTERVIEWS	1,695
CAREER EXPO ATTENDEES	3,514	AVERAGE % INTERVIEWEES ADVANCING**	41.4%

\* Northwest Arkansas, Arkansas River Valley, Northeast Arkansas, Arkansas Grand Prairie

\*\* This reflects the number of seniors who interviewed and received a job offer or have been invited to continue in the hiring process



# Committees

## Advisory Committees Play Major Role in State Chamber/AIA Success

Committees play a major role in the success of the State Chamber/AIA. Consisting of business leaders and subject matter experts from member companies across the state, issue committees meet as needed throughout the year to help identify and develop key issues that are critical to the future of Arkansas.

The committees provide the State Chamber/AIA governmental affairs team guidance in understanding complex topics that often require a great deal of specific expertise. This equips our lobbyists with insights and knowledge about an issue's potential impact on our member companies and our state.

The State Chamber/AIA Committees and their leaders include:

### Workforce Excellence

**Chairman: Ken Calhoun, Altec**

Recognizing that the workforce of tomorrow is in the schools of today, the Workforce Excellence Committee proactively advocates the interests of business and industry as the State Chamber/AIA strives to improve education in Arkansas. The committee examines issues in K-12 education, higher education, and workforce development. This committee identifies projects and tracks their successful implementation, as well as identifying and recommending policy changes and positions that will make Arkansas school systems more successful.

### Health Care

**Chairman: Kurt Knickrehm, McGriff Insurance**

The Health Care Committee provides guidance in the development of healthcare-related issues. Many times, the committee has played the role of facilitating a consensus between employers and health care providers as the State Chamber/AIA endeavors to maintain and improve quality health care and find practical means of providing benefits and containing costs.

### National Affairs

**Co-Chairs: Connie Vaughan, McKee Foods Corporation; Kevin McGilton, Riceland Foods Inc.**

The National Issues Committee helps identify issues that the State Chamber/AIA should address at the federal level. Given the myriad of national issues, this is an ambitious task. But we also rely on strong partnerships with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, National Association of State Chambers, Council on State Taxation, The Tax Foundation, and the Arkansas Congressional Delegation. The committee's priority issues are health care, the farm bill, education and workforce development, unions, climate change, energy policy, economic stimulus, taxes, and immigration.

### Governmental Affairs

**Co-Chairs: Angela DeLille, Cox Communications; Tom Kennedy, entergy Arkansas; Robert D. Smith, III, Attorney**

The Governmental Affairs Committee is comprised of governmental affairs representatives who work for our member companies, business associations and business-related lobbying organizations. A large group of business lobbyists meet weekly during legislative sessions to hear from legislative leaders, monitor pending legislation and discuss other issues of importance to the business community with the goal of developing a consistent lobbying strategy on business issues. This group also participates in Candidate Forums that review candidates for open seats. The Committee contributes to the development of the State Chamber/AIA's Legislative Agenda and provides support to the State Chamber/AIA lobbying team on a variety of issues.



## Tax

**Chairman: Marvin Childers, The Poultry Federation**  
**Co-Chair: Tammy Waters, Domtar**  
**Legal Counsel: Michael O. Parker, Wright Lindsey Jennings**

The Tax Committee works to ensure a favorable business climate in Arkansas through analyzing tax issues, recommending positions and testifying at legislative and regulatory hearings on tax matters. It also accomplishes this goal through educating, coordinating and working actively with taxing entities to ensure the fair and equitable administration of taxes. The committee meets often during sessions to review bills and develop positions and recommendations to make the Arkansas tax climate more competitive. In the off-season, it meets to address regulatory issues and tax policy.

## Unemployment Insurance/HR

**Chairman: Michael S. Moore, Friday Eldredge & Clark, LLP**  
**Co-Chair: Chris Hart, Central Moloney, Inc.**

The Unemployment Insurance/HR Committee helps the State Chamber/AIA lead the business community on important cost of doing business issues. It plays a vital role in identifying and reviewing issues that impact employers' unemployment insurance costs and other human resource issues. Broad business representation on this committee enhances our understanding of how issues impact all segments of business, which helps the State Chamber/AIA governmental affairs team.

## Workers' Compensation

**Chairman: Jane Duke, Tyson Foods, Inc.**  
**Co-Chair: Guy Wade, Friday Eldredge & Clark, LLP**

The State Chamber/AIA serves as employers' watch dog on workers' compensation issues. The committee keeps a close eye on the state's workers' compensation laws, rules and regulations, and related Court of Appeals decisions. It also develops legislation as needed to keep Arkansas workers' compensation costs in the top five lowest in the country. The committee's evaluation of issues is greatly enhanced when there is a broad range of business types active in this committee.

## PAC

**Co-Chairmen: Ray Dillon, Deltic Timber Corp. (retired) and past State Chamber and AIA chairman; Andy Miller, Flywheel Energy**

The State Chamber/AIA PAC Committee manages three Political Action Committees and an Independent Expenditures Committee, as defined by Arkansas Rules of Ethics. PAC Committee members are selected by our leadership and meet as needed to review election races, generate revenue, and determine which candidates to support and the amount of support. Our PACs provide an opportunity to communicate the goals of employers to those individuals running for selected political offices in Arkansas. The Arkansas State Chamber PAC and the AIA PAC focus on state legislative races and, if needed, Arkansas Supreme Court races. Our Businesses for Justice PAC is available for Court of Appeals races, other judicial races, and potential ballot issues. The Independent Expenditures Committee is available to help selected candidates, independent of the candidates' campaign. Per Arkansas law, any individual, proprietorship, firm, partnership, joint venture, company, corporation, or association may contribute to a state PAC. The limit is \$10,000 per year per entity per PAC. There are no limitations on contributions to our Independent Expenditures Committee.

## Get Involved

The State Chamber/AIA invites our members to become involved by having any relevant employee serve on one or more committees. **If you are interested, please contact Kenny Hall at [khall@arkansasstatechamber.com](mailto:khall@arkansasstatechamber.com).**

# Leadership Arkansas

## Who We Are

Leadership Arkansas is a unique program designed to take a comprehensive view of the economic and political challenges that face this state. First introduced in 2005 by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Arkansas, our staff, with the guidance of the organizations' boards and executive committees, recruits highly motivated individuals to experience first hand the dynamic interactions between cities, industries, governmental units, and the people they serve.

Leadership Arkansas is grounded in the belief that it is from bringing diverse interests and backgrounds together that real progress is achieved. Through shared experiences and frequent interactions, Leadership Arkansas participants, facilitators, and alumni learn and grow as they advance through an innovative nine-month program designed to expose class members to the challenges and opportunities of our local communities and their impact on the state.

## What We Offer

Leadership Arkansas has helped over 800 graduates deepen their background and understanding of issues facing the state and provided them with effective tools to develop initiatives to improve the quality of life in Arkansas. We have also helped create a statewide community to generate dialogue on those issues, setting the stage for progress throughout the state. Participants have been developing, strengthening, and connecting with emerging leaders in Arkansas for several years. Many of our program graduates become well-established political, business, and community leaders.

## How the Program Works

The mission of Leadership Arkansas is to build a strong, diverse, statewide network of leaders with a shared commitment to connect our communities and to make Arkansas a better place in which to live and prosper.

### Leadership Arkansas sessions include:

- Educational, issue-oriented program
- Nine day-and-a-half sessions
- Hands on demonstrations and on-site tours
- Eight day-and-a-half sessions held in various communities throughout the state
- Arkansas leaders who represent a wide geographic base and who have diverse backgrounds and vocations
- Exposure to the many social and environmental complexities of the state
- On-site demonstrations and tours
- Diverse geographical and cultural experiences
- Insight into the people, places, and history that influence public policies
- Fun and casual settings which foster new relationships and camaraderie

### Class members gain:

- An inclusive network of colleagues and resources
- A broad understanding of state issues and developments
- A better sense of personal leadership potential and enhanced leadership skills

### Employers and sponsoring organizations acquire:

- Employees connected to a diverse network of dynamic leaders
- Individuals with knowledge to discuss a variety of issues at the state and community levels
- Staff energized and motivated to apply program information to organization situations
- Leaders prepared to address issues and keep companies in action

Participants are required to attend at least 80 percent of the program sessions, including the entire opening session and graduation, which are mandatory. For more information on the Leadership Arkansas program, contact Toni Lindsey, Leadership Arkansas Program Director, at [tlindsey@arkansasstatechamber.com](mailto:tlindsey@arkansasstatechamber.com) or (479) 409-4389.





## Leadership Arkansas Graduates Class XVII

Leadership Arkansas Class XVII continued the 2022-2023 program with sessions in Camden, Magnolia, Blytheville, West Memphis, Hot Springs, and Northwest Arkansas. In May 2023, 53 members of the class graduated from the program at a ceremony in Little Rock.

The Underwriting Sponsor for the 2022-2023 Leadership Arkansas program was Citizens Bank. The Presenting Sponsors were Central Moloney, Inc. and ARcare. Statewide Program Sponsors were Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, Farm Credit Services of Arkansas, Nucor Steel Arkansas, Southwest Power Pool, entergy Arkansas, and Walmart.



Corey Tate and Sophie Ozier tour PotlatchDeltic in Magnolia



Leadership Arkansas Class XVII



Class members participate in a highway improvement project exercise alongside our state highway commissioners



Class members tour Nucor-Yamato Steel in Blytheville



Billy Ray, Will Phillips, Philip Powell, Chelsea O'Kelley, Tiffany Hinson-Flock, Meagan Bowling Fudge, and Toni Lindsey at Lake Hamilton

# Leadership Arkansas



Benjamin Van Wagner and Sara Lynn Geiger chat with Nucor-Yamato Steel personnel



Class members learn about the tourism industry during a tour of Lake Hamilton in Hot Springs



Class XVII tours the Arkansas Razorbacks Basketball Performance Center on the University of Arkansas Campus



Will Phillips and John Thomas tour Nucor-Yamato Steel with other class members



The group tours an oil rig in Magnolia



Class members tour PotlatchDeltic in Magnolia



Class members tour Garvin Woodland Gardens

## Leadership Class XVII

**Elizabeth Anderson**  
*Farmers Bank and Trust*

**Tom Arens**  
*ARcare*

**Jennifer Bingaman**  
*Black Hills Energy*

**Matuschka Lindo Briggs**  
*Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis,  
Little Rock*

**Sara Brown**  
*First Step, Inc.*

**Tammy Browning**  
*Trademark Real Estate*

**Amanda L. Cervantes**  
*Rheem Manufacturing Company*

**Cody Decker**  
*University of Arkansas at Little Rock*

**Maegan Dyson**  
*Conway Regional Health Foundation*

**Nathan Finch**  
*Wright Lindsey Jennings LLP*

**Amy Finster**  
*White River Health*

**Tonya Fletcher**  
*Paris Area Chamber of Commerce*

**Tiffany Hinson Flock**  
*O.J.'s Commercial Cleaning*

**Matt Flora**  
*Arkansas BlueCross BlueShield*

**Meagan Bowling Fudge**  
*University of Arkansas Fort Smith*

**Allyson Pittman Gattin**  
*The Peacock Group*

**Sara Lynn Geiger**  
*Rogers Lowell Chamber*

**J. T. Geren**  
*Runway Group*

**Don Gooch**  
*Arvest Bank*

**Russ Greenlee**  
*Signature Bank of Arkansas*

**Kenneth Johnson**  
*City of West Memphis*

**Colbie Jones**  
*Keep Arkansas Beautiful*

**Carl Kirtley**  
*Farm Credit of Western Arkansas*

**Jana K. Law**  
*Energry Services, LLC*

**April Legere**  
*The Hana Group*

**Whitteni Lindsey**  
*Magnolia School District*

**Megan Markham**  
*Arkansas Secretary of State's Office*

**Wilson Marseilles**  
*Harrison Regional Chamber of Commerce*

**Brian Marsh**  
*Goodwill Industries of Arkansas*

**Malea McElyea**  
*Central Moloney, Inc.*

**Nancy Lee McNew**  
*Economic Development Alliance for  
Jefferson County*

**Ryan Moore**  
*Signature Bank of Arkansas*

**Chelsea O'Kelley**  
*Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/  
Associated Industries of Arkansas*

**Sophie Ozier**  
*Arkansas Travelers Baseball Club, Inc.*

**Brad Peterson**  
*Crafton Tull*

**Lt. Colonel Will Phillips**  
*Arkansas National Guard*

**Philip Powell**  
*Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation*

**Billy Ray**  
*Saracen Casino Resort*

**Bourgon Reynolds**  
*Rose Law Firm, P.A.*

**Sarah Riffle**  
*Arkansas Foodbank*

**Samantha Robertson**  
*Simmons Bank*

**Jerrod Sandefur**  
*Citizens Bank*

**Bart Stark**  
*Dassault Falcon Jet*

**Colonel Sara Stigler**  
*Arkansas Air National Guard – 188th Wing*

**Corey Tate**  
*Midcontinent Independent System  
Operator (MISO)*

**John Thomas**  
*Citizens Bank*

**Carol Vella**  
*Walmart*

**Benjamin M. Van Wagner**  
*Oaklawn Racing Casino Resort*

**Lori Walker**  
*Chambers Bank*

**Phillip White**  
*Nucor-Yamato Steel Company*

**Colonel Chris Wolter**  
*Arkansas Air National Guard – 189th  
Mission Support Group*

**Jeremy Woody**  
*Legacy National Bank*

**Seth Yancey**  
*Garver*



# Leadership Arkansas

## Leadership Arkansas Class XVIII Selects 53 Members

The State Chamber/AIA Leadership Arkansas Selection Committee chose 53 individuals from throughout Arkansas to participate in the 2023–2024 Leadership Arkansas program. A record number of individuals applied to be considered for Leadership Arkansas Class XVIII, according to Leadership Arkansas Director Toni Lindsey. “The number of applicants this year was more than double the number of spots available,” she said. “The selection committee carefully worked to identify individuals who have demonstrated a superior level of professional and personal performance and a commitment to be outstanding leaders within their communities. This year’s class members represent a diverse set of industries from across the state, and I am confident that the program will further equip them as they strive to make Arkansas a better place to live and work.”

The Underwriting Sponsor for the 2023–2024 Leadership Arkansas program is Citizens Bank. The Presenting Sponsors are Central Moloney, Inc., Southwest Power Pool, and ARcare. Statewide Program Sponsors are Nucor Steel Arkansas, Farm Credit of Arkansas, Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., Walmart, and entergy Arkansas.

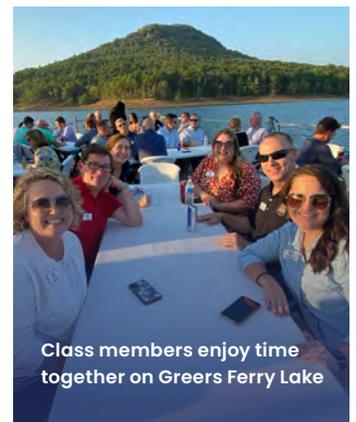
Leadership Arkansas Class XVIII began the program with orientation at Fairfield Bay Conference Center in September 2023. The class traveled to Batesville in October to learn about economic development, education, and workforce development. In November, the class studied agriculture, conservation, and outdoor life in Stuttgart. Class XVIII finished the year in Little Rock for its government and military session.



Jeff Overton, Justin Hart, and Rheo Morris pose together in a faux duck blind in Stuttgart



Daniel Fudge addresses his classmates in the House Chamber during a mock legislative session



Class members enjoy time together on Greers Ferry Lake



Jaime Land tries on military equipment at the Little Rock Air Force Base during the government and military session



Class XVIII visits Batesville to learn about economic development, education, and workforce development

## Leadership Class XVIII

**Arthur Ashby**

Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO)

**Adam Bailey**

Lockheed Martin

**Tawana Bailey**

East Arkansas Family Health Center

**Jordan Bearden**

Runway Group

**Cassandra Caldwell**

Arkansas Waterways Commission

**Mark Calhoun**

Black Hills Energy

**Nina Castaldi**

Simmons Bank

**Lt. Col. Jason Cooper**

Arkansas Air National Guard - 189th Wing

**Amy Cornell**

Tyson Foods, Inc.

**Nick Coulter**

City of West Memphis

**Matt Cramblett**

Citizens Bank

**Laura Crowell**

Edward Jones

**Jerrad Cude**

Nucor-Yamato Steel Company

**Landon Downing**

Citizens Bank

**Dr. Martin Eggensperger**

Black River Technical College

**Shelby Fiegel**

University of Central Arkansas

**Chris Friemel**

W&W/AFCO Steel

**Dr. Daniel Fudge**

University of the Ozarks

**Judith Goodson**

**Donna Graham**  
University of Arkansas

**Courtney Guppy**

Crafton Tull

**Kelly Hanks**

Summit Utilities

**Stacey Hargett**

Saracen Casino Resort

**Chip Hargrave**

Walmart

**Justin Hart**

entergy Arkansas

**Will Hegi**

Community First Trust

**Col. Michael Henderson**

Arkansas National Guard

**Jen Hoss**

Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation

**Justin Johnson**

Think Idea Studio (ARcare Foundation)

**Lt. Col. Michael L. Krom**

Arkansas Air National Guard/188th Wing

**Jaime Land**

Arkansas Secretary of State's Office

**Brock Langford**

Blackstone Construction, LLC

**James Luyet**

Nabholz

**Mark Morrow**

Arvest Bank

**Allison McDaniel**

Signature Bank of Arkansas

**Dr. Rho Morris**

Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts (ASMSA)

**Karlea Newberry**

Signature Bank of Arkansas

**Sheena Olson**

Arkansas Children's

**Marcus Orf**

Ozarka College

**Jeff Overton**

Cromwell Architects Engineers

**Shawntill Puryear**

HARK at Excellerate Foundation

**Ashtin Rogers**

White River Health

**Kyndall Rogers**

Delta Dental of Arkansas

**Tonya Sarlls**

Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce

**Shelley Short**

Arkadelphia Regional Economic Development Alliance

**Leslie Sink**

Southwest Power Pool

**Shealyn Sowers**

Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism

**Melissa Stiles**

Museum of Discovery

**Adam Storey**

Dassault Falcon Jet

**Trish Villines**

Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence

**Cody Waits**

Transfr Inc.

**Jeff Whitener**

Farmers Bank & Trust

**Mary Zunick**

Visit Hot Springs



# Pinnacle Members

The Pinnacle program recognizes the state's outstanding corporate citizens – State Chamber/AIA members who desire to make a significant statement about their participation in Arkansas' future. These leading companies are helping make the state a better place to live, work and conduct business by supplying the leadership and financial support necessary for the State Chamber/AIA to effectively represent the Arkansas business community.

Through the involvement and leadership of senior representatives of their firms, Pinnacle members actively participate in our grassroots action network, work on policy committees and lead the State Chamber/AIA on the board of directors. In doing so, these Pinnacle members provide resources necessary for our organization to achieve success while helping to shape the future of Arkansas and enhance its economic climate.

Levels of investment include \$5,000 (Crown), \$10,000 (Peak), \$25,000 (Summit) and \$35,000 and up (Apex). Benefits of Pinnacle membership include recognition in State Chamber/AIA printed publications, e-publications and on our website; special recognition at all State Chamber/AIA events; preferred seating at State Chamber/AIA events and networking opportunities with other high-level Arkansas business and industry leaders.

## Apex



## Summit



## Peak





Crown

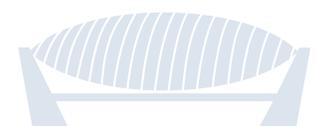


Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind



# Pinnacle Members

## Crown (continued)



# New and Upgraded Members

Albemarle	Central EMS	Holcim-Building Envelope Division	Pea Ridge School District
Allen Engineering	City of Cabot Economic Development	House Of Webster Inc.	Philip Morris International
Alma School District	City of Huntsville	Hugg & Hall Equipment Company	Quadrivium, Inc.
Altec Industries, Inc.	City Water & Light	Insurica	Reed Precision Manufacturing Co.
American Industrial Brands DBA Jason Hydrotherapy	Clarksville School District	John's Contracted Commercial Cleaning	Rogers Water Utilities
AP Fabrications	CLEAResult Consulting, Inc.	Jonesboro Public School	Rose Group
Apptegy	Confetti's Party Rental	Keep Arkansas Beautiful	Runway Group, LLC
Arkansas Public Employees' Retirement System	Cor Solar & Electric	Lifepoint Health	Rush Truck Centers
Arauco	Corinth Coca-Cola Bottling Group	Little Rock Sign Conway Sign	Russellville School District
ARBuy	Crafted Design Co.	Lockheed Martin Missiles & Fire Control	Savory Catering & Event Planning LLC
Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators	Crystal Ridge Distillery, Inc.	LRS South (Lakeshore Recycling Systems)	Scott Manufacturing, LLC
Arkansas Community Bankers	Cumulus Media	Magnolia School District	Sheridan White Rock, Inc.
Arkansas Teacher Retirement System	Dan's Whetstone Company, Inc.	Massco Dental	Sloan Valve Company
Ashdown School District	Decatur School District	Mathews Management Co.	Southern Arkansas University Tech
Ashley Wallace Creative	Delta Dirt Distillery	McDonald's Corporation	Southern Cast Products, Inc.
ASU Mountain Home	Dyke Industries, Inc.	Meta	Springdale School District
Bald Knob Public Schools	El Dorado School District	Metal Recycling Corporation	Star Transportation LLC
Batesville School District	Embassy Suites Hot Springs-Hotel & Spa	Michael Baker International, Inc.	Stone Bank
Bekaert Corporation	Exxon Mobil Corporation	Multi-Craft Contractors Inc.	Teslar Software
Black River Technical College	FedMet Arkansas LLC	Nelson Intelligence Solutions, LLC	The CBI Team
Blackstone Construction, LLC	First Tape & Label LLC	Newport School District	The Hughes Agency
Brightspeed	Flexion Point, Inc.	North Little Rock School District	The Payroll Company - TPC
Brinkley School District	FSAAP	Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	Trademark Real Estate
Camden Regional Chamber of Commerce	Gigerich Electrical, Inc.	Packaging Specialties, Inc.	United Way of NWA/Arkansas 211
Canterra Concrete Company, LLC	Goodness Village	Party Time Rental & Events	Unity Health
Catering Arkansas	Greenland School District		Vantage Point of Northwest Arkansas
CDI Contractors LLC	Haas Factory Outlet/Division of Phillips Corp.		Wayne Farms LLC
	Hamburg Area Chamber of Commerce		White River Health
	Hamburg School District		Wilbur D. Mills Education Service Cooperative
	Hines Trucking		Xova Energy

# 2023 Sponsors and Advertisers

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AGC Arkansas	Arvest Bank	Garver	Riceland Foods, Inc.
Agricultural Council of Arkansas	Associated Builders & Contractors of Arkansas	Gerdau Special Steel	Rose Law Firm
Alcoa	AT&T Arkansas	Goodwill Industries of Arkansas	Saracen Development dba Saracen Casino Resort
Amazon	Ben E. Keith Company	Government Solutions, LLC	Signature Bank of Arkansas
American Concrete Pavement Assoc.	Black Hills Energy	Haas Factory Outlet/ Division of Phillips Corp.	Simmons Bank
America's CAR-MART, Inc.	Broadview Strategies	Hargraves Consulting LLC	Snyder Environmental
Arkansas Manufactured Housing Association	Capitol Partners LLC	Impact Management Group Inc.	Southern Bancorp Bank
ARcare	CARTI	Independent Insurance Agents of Arkansas	Southland Casino Hotel
Arkadelphia Regional Economic Development Alliance and Area Chamber of Commerce	Caterpillar Inc.	International Paper Company	Southwest Power Pool
Arkansas Asphalt Pavement Association	Central Moloney, Inc.	inVeritas	Stephens Inc.
Arkansas Automobile Dealers Association	Citizens Bank	Kinco Constructors, LLC	Summit Utilities
Arkansas Bankers Association	Coca-Cola Bottling Company Consolidated	Kutak Rock LLP	The Poultry Federation
Arkansas BlueCross BlueShield	Cox Communications	Little Rock Port Authority	The Stephens Group, LLC
Arkansas Business Publishing Group	Crafton Tull	Little Rock Regional Chamber	Tokusen U.S.A., Inc.
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Arkansas Children's	Dassault Falcon Jet	Mainstream Technologies, Inc.	U.S. Bank
Arkansas Electric Cooperative, Inc.	DBH Management Consultants	McGeorge Contracting Company Inc.	U.S. Steel, Wheeling Machine
Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation	Deloitte	Mckee Foods Corporation	U.S. Steel/Big River Steel
Arkansas Forestry Association	Delta Dental of Arkansas Inc.	MHP/Team SI	UA Little Rock
Arkansas Grocers & Retail Merchants Association	Domtar Ashdown Mill	Mitchell Williams Selig Gates & Woodyard, PLLC	UAMS
Arkansas Hospital Association	Edwards Food Giant	Mullenix & Associates, LLC	Union Pacific Railroad
Arkansas Learns	Energy Transfer Partners	Nabholz Construction Services	W&W AFCO Steel LLC
Arkansas Municipal League	Farm Credit Services of Arkansas	Nucor	Walmart
Arkansas Railroad Association	First Arkansas Bank & Trust	Nucor-Yamato Steel Company	Washington Regional Medical Center
	First Community Bank	Oaklawn Racing Casino Resort	WDD Architects
	Flywheel Energy	OG+E	White River Health
	Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce	Pactiv Evergreen	Wholesale Beer Distributors of Arkansas, Inc.
	FORVIS		Windstream
	Friendship Community Care, Inc.		Wright Lindsey Jennings LLP



# Take good care.

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What does it mean to be taken care of? At Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield, it means providing peace of mind. We've been taking care of Arkansans for over 75 years, providing affordable, reliable health insurance ... to keep your employees healthy and help them heal. We're investing in your communities to keep this diverse and wonderful state strong. And looking out for your physical, emotional and social health, connecting you with resources, and helping you navigate the healthcare system — so your organization's employees and the ones they love can live their best life, their whole life long. Take good care, Arkansas.

[takegoodcarear.com](https://takegoodcarear.com)   



# Energy That's Always On.

## A Team That's Always On It.

At Summit Utilities, we're more than just your gas bill. We're also your neighbors. We're the same local team members who have kept gas flowing smoothly to community homes and businesses for years. And like any good neighbor, we're here to help! From servicing gas lines to setting up payment plans, we put you at the center of all we do – providing reliable service because you rely on us to deliver the energy that's always there when and where you need it.



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**We  
advocate  
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business  
matters  
*that matter most.***



**Business matters.**

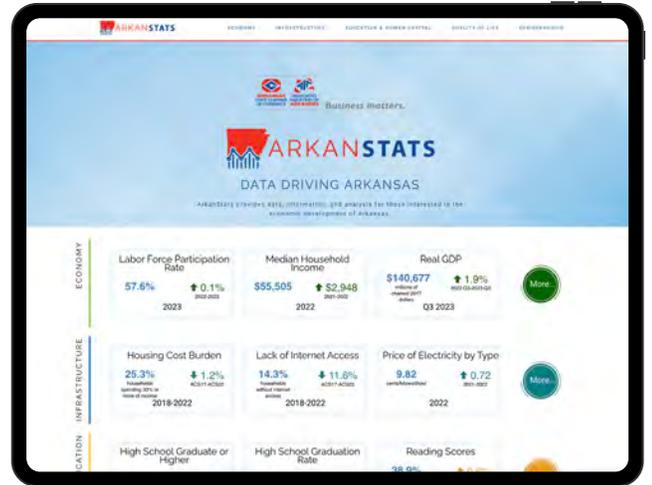
# ArkanStats

## Data Driving Arkansas

In 2023, the State Chamber/AIA partnered with the Arkansas Economic Development Institute (AEDI) to bring you *ArkanStats*. This new online resource has been created and designed to keep you and your business informed about economic trends throughout the state.

ArkanStats' interactive visualization tools allow users to explore in-depth data about Arkansas' economy, infrastructure, education and human capital, quality of life, and demographics.

[statechamber.arkanstats.com](https://statechamber.arkanstats.com)



### Economy

Data and analysis about average weekly wage rates, labor force participation rates, median household income, real GDP, and more.

### Infrastructure

Data and analysis about housing costs, internet access, electricity prices, and commute time.

### Education & Human Capital

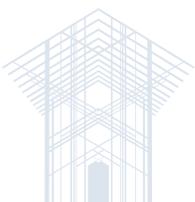
Data and analysis about educational attainment, reading scores, and more.

### Quality of Life

Data and analysis about health insurance, life expectancy, access to care, and more.

### Demographics

Data and analysis about age demographics, racial demographics, population, and more.



# Affiliated Organizations



ARKANSAS' PREMIER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS AND CHAMBER PROFESSIONALS

Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives (AEDCE) is the state's premier organization representing professional and volunteer economic developers and chamber executives and staff in Arkansas.

Our mission is to enhance the professional development of our membership and to advocate for community and economic development benefiting the citizens of Arkansas.



## Membership Benefits

### Professional Development & Training

- Mid-South Basic Economic Development Course
- AEDCE Annual Conference
- New Chamber Professional Boot Camp
- Benchmarking Best Practices Visits
- Workshops & Seminars tailored for economic developers & chamber professionals
- Executive mentoring, network building and peer-to-peer idea sharing and best practices
- Advocacy and governmental affairs
- Scholarships awarded for training opportunities to enhance the career of the chamber or economic development professional

### Exclusive Member Resources

- Members-only information including the AEDCE Membership Directory and member discounts to events
- Communications tailored to Arkansas' chamber and economic development professionals
- Resource library and customized technical assistance on a variety of topics including operational issues, economic development taxes and incentives, site development, board relations, staffing and workforce development



Apply for membership online at [aedce.org](http://aedce.org)



ARKANSAS' PREMIER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS AND CHAMBER PROFESSIONALS



## Membership Investment

Membership in Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives (AEDCE) is available to anyone with an interest in the economic and community development of Arkansas. Our membership covers all aspects of the economic development and chamber industry in Arkansas, from rural to urban areas and everything in between. This allows us to provide a broad array of resources and expertise in the chamber and economic development fields.

### Chamber/Economic Development Organization

Member dues are tiered based on the total revenues of the organization. For this dues payment, all employees listed by the chamber/EDO are covered as a member of AEDCE.

Total Revenues of Chamber/EDO	AEDCE Dues Amount
Volunteer Chamber <i>(no paid executive/director)</i>	\$100
Up to \$100,000	\$250
\$100,001 - \$500,000	\$500
\$500,001 - \$750,000	\$1,000
\$750,001 - \$1M	\$1,500
\$1M+	\$2,250

### Corporate/Organization

Corporations and other organizations may determine the number of memberships they desire in AEDCE.

Number of Memberships	AEDCE Dues Amount
1 - 3 Memberships	\$300 per Membership
4 - 7 Memberships	\$250 per Membership
8 - 10 Memberships	\$225 per Membership
Unlimited	\$5,000

*(must work at the same organization)*

### Elected Officials/Retired Professionals

Available to elected officials and retired professionals at \$200 per person. Any other individual memberships will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis by the AEDCE board of directors.\*

\*The AEDCE board of directors retains the authority to approve all memberships and to terminate memberships if dues are not paid in full by March 1.

Apply online  
at [aedce.org](http://aedce.org)

Candice Lawrence, Executive Director  
501.210.4205  
[candice@aedce.org](mailto:candice@aedce.org)

1200 W. Capitol Ave.  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
[aedce.org](http://aedce.org)

# Affiliated Organizations

## Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence (AIPE)

The Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence (AIPE) is an Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce affiliated organization that provides **training, assessment, recognition and coaching** to all types of Arkansas organizations. The program's affordable assessments may be used to apply for a Governor's Quality Award or as an internal training and continuous improvement tool. This program uses the national Baldrige Excellence Framework to assist organizations with identifying improvement opportunities in key focus areas such as leadership, strategy, customers, workforce, and operations.

Since 1994, AIPE has recognized **more than 470 organizations** in manufacturing, healthcare, government, nonprofit, and education. In 2023, seven applicants were recognized at one of four levels—Challenge, Commitment, Achievement, or Governor's Award for Performance Excellence.

Nearly 50 industry experts were trained as examiners to assess the award applications and conduct site visits. Following the assessment process, **applicants received an in-depth feedback report with notable best practices and opportunities for growth.** The examiners who complete these assessments are the backbone of the program.

### 2023 Applicants

#### ARORA

Little Rock

#### Cromwell Architects Engineers, Inc.

Little Rock

#### Delta Dental of Arkansas

Sherwood

#### Gosnell Health & Rehabilitation

Gosnell

#### L'Oreal USA

North Little Rock

#### Manila Healthcare Center

Manila

#### Metropolitan Emergency Medical Service (MEMS)

Little Rock

#### White River Health

Batesville



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Contact Trish Villines [tvillines@arkansasstatechamber.com](mailto:tvillines@arkansasstatechamber.com) to learn more.



2023 Challenge Awards  
ARORA



2023 Challenge Awards  
Gosnell Health & Rehabilitation



2023 Challenge Awards  
Manila Healthcare Center



2023 Challenge Awards  
Metropolitan Emergency Medical Service (MEMS)

## How do excellent organizations know they are excellent?

### Seven Tips for Organizational Excellence

Using the nationally recognized Baldrige Excellence Framework, leaders must ask themselves hard questions about their organization's performance. Organizations that apply the Framework, like those that participate in the Governor's Quality Award program, learn key characteristics of excellent organizations. Ask yourself how your organization stacks up compared to these seven tips.

#### Excellent organizations:

1. Make their Mission Matter – a widely known mission sets expectations for all stakeholders.
2. Have a Strategic Plan – a great plan clearly describes what you want to achieve.
3. Engage Their Customers – engaged customers show that your organization believes in customer relationships and not simply transactions.
4. Measure What's Important – effective measurement systems are balanced, not just financial.
5. Engage Their Workforce – engaged employees are more productive and save money in turnover costs.
6. Approach All Work as a Process – systematic, measured, and documented processes create organizational sustainability.
7. Benchmark – compare themselves to the best to be the best and set expectations for world-class performance.

*Do you know you're excellent? It's easy to learn more about the Governor's Quality Award and an affordable assessment of your opportunities for growth.*

# State Chamber/AIA Staff



**Randy Zook**  
President & CEO



**Kenneth R. Hall, J.D.**  
Executive Vice President



**Candice Lawrence**  
Vice President of Programs & Partnerships  
Executive Director of Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives



**Marcus Turley**  
Vice President of Membership Development



**Andrew Parker**  
Director of Governmental Affairs;  
Executive Director of AIA Foundation, Inc.;  
Executive Director of Be Pro Be Proud



**Toni Lindsey**  
Director of Governmental Affairs;  
Leadership Arkansas Program Director



**Trish Villines**  
Executive Director of Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence



**Chelsea O'Kelley**  
Director of Communications



**Deb Mathis**  
Manager of Scheduling & Events



**Tori Barry**  
Administrative Manager



**Bill Watson**  
Manager of Event Sponsorship



**Jeanette Sanderlin**  
Executive Assistant



**Carol Mugerdtichian**  
Executive Assistant;  
Facilities Manager

## State Chamber/AIA Staff Recognitions

### Toni Lindsey

The Women's Foundation of Arkansas, Little Rock Soirée magazine, and Arkansas Business Publishing Group together named Toni Lindsey among the Top 100 Women of Impact in Arkansas in 2023. Toni was also named one of Arkansas Money & Politics' 2023 Power Women. The State Chamber/AIA is also proud to recognize Toni for becoming a 2023 graduate of the FBI Citizen's Academy. Congratulations, Toni!

### Marcus Turley

Marcus Turley has earned first place for "Total Dollar Value Raised" in the State Chamber/AIA's qualifying competitive category with the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, a national competition for chamber of commerce professionals. Congratulations, Marcus!

### Candice Lawrence

The State Chamber/AIA is proud to recognize Candice Lawrence for being named one of Arkansas Money & Politics' 2023 Achievers in Their Forties. Congratulations, Candice!

### Deb Mathis

Deb Mathis, an invaluable asset to the State Chamber/AIA who served in many different capacities over the past 22 years, retired at the end of 2023. Thank you for your decades of friendship and loyal service to the State Chamber/AIA, Deb. Best wishes on your retirement!

### Kenny Hall

The State Chamber/AIA is proud to recognize Kenny Hall for his years of service and dedication to the State Chamber/AIA. Kenny celebrated 25 years of service to the State Chamber/AIA. Over the course of his 25 years at the State Chamber/AIA, Kenny has served as president of the Arkansas Society of Association Executives and the Arkansas Society of Professional Lobbyists, and he has received several commendations including the Bronze Quill award, accolades from the Arkansas Society for Human Resources Management, and recognition from the Arkansas Environmental Federation. Congratulations, Kenny!



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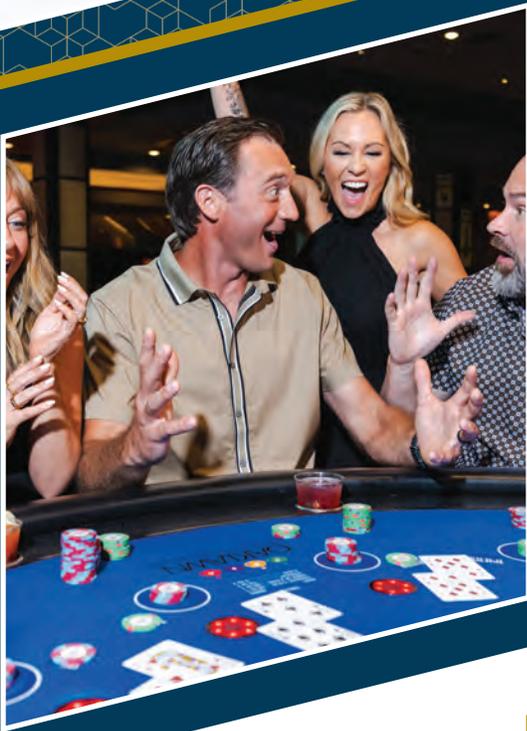
Bentonville

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