

# 2025 OZARKS REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

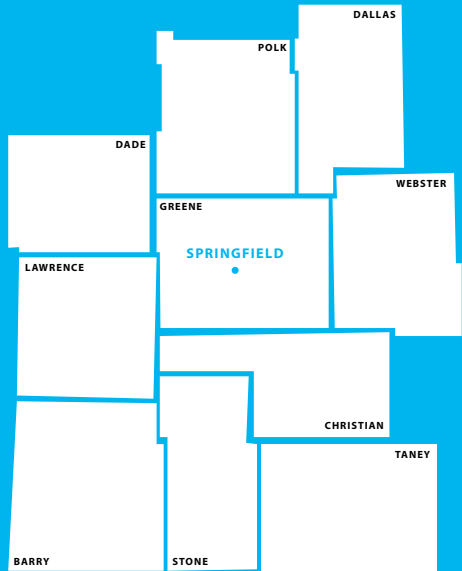


*Photo courtesy of Visit Springfield, Missouri*

# 2025 Ozarks Regional Legislative Priorities

A coalition of regional organizations has united to identify 10 key legislative priorities for the 2025 state legislative session, unified by a shared commitment to driving economic growth, enhancing regional competitiveness, and supporting the local and statewide business community.

These priorities address vital issues such as infrastructure investment, workforce training, childcare barriers, local funding and control, and policies that ensure our region and state remain a top choice for jobs and talent.



By advocating for these opportunities, our organizations aim to strengthen public-private partnerships, enhance the region's competitive edge, and create lasting initiatives for growth and prosperity across Southwest Missouri.

## Population<sup>1</sup>

**645,102**

6.3% GROWTH IN  
THE PAST 10 YEARS

**751,122**

PROJECTED POPULATION  
IN 2035, 16% GROWTH

<sup>1</sup> JobsEQ for the 10-county region

## Support Workforce Development Programs and Address Childcare Barriers

Programs like Fast Track, MoExcels, and the Upskilling Credential Training Program are critical for addressing the skills gap in Missouri's workforce. We support stable funding and enhancements to these programs, including raising the income threshold for Fast Track eligibility.

Addressing the shortage of affordable and quality childcare is also vital to workforce participation.

We support initiatives that increase access to affordable childcare options and bolster efforts to recruit and retain qualified childcare professionals.



## Fully Fund K-12 Education and Support Teacher Recruitment

Southwest Missouri's public schools and their ability to adequately train our future workforce are key to the competitiveness of our state and success of regional communities. We support full funding of the K-12 foundation formula to ensure students receive the education needed to succeed. Additionally, we advocate for innovative initiatives to recruit and retain teachers in the region and state.

## Strengthen Missouri's Competitiveness for Jobs and Talent

To maintain Missouri's competitive edge in the fight for jobs, talent and business investment, we support continued funding for economic development programs. These include existing attraction incentives and competitive tax credits, as well as innovative approaches to creating new competitive tax credits. We also encourage increased support through programs and funding for rural resources and the development of shovel-ready sites.

## Tackle Housing Availability Challenges

Housing availability and affordability continues to impact many communities within Southwest Missouri. A lack of accessible inventory is an impediment to community and workforce growth. We support innovative state-level initiatives aimed at addressing ongoing housing challenges and expanding affordable housing options.



## Invest in Strategic Infrastructure

Southwest Missouri's strategic location within the United States makes the region a key logistics hub and asset for Missouri. We support significant investments in transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, highways, broadband, and utilities, to enhance our regional logistics capabilities. This includes backing projects like Route MM improvements from I-44 to State Highway 360, which is ready for funding and implementation, and projects included in the Springfield-Branson National Airport Master Plan.

## Boost Tourism Funding to Drive Economic Growth

Tourism is a cornerstone of Southwest Missouri's economy, supporting jobs, economic development, and community vitality. We support increased funding for regional tourism capital assets, as well as increased funding to help local communities market their assets and economic opportunities.

## Labor Shed Patterns<sup>1</sup>



LABOR FORCE  
**311,067**



**12,148**

PEOPLE COMMUTED FOR  
WORK FROM \*ADJACENT  
COUNTIES IN 2024

<sup>1</sup> JobsEQ for the 10-county region; people employed

\* Adjacent counties: Benton, AR; Carroll, AR; Boone, AR; Marion, AR; Ozark, MO; Douglas, MO; Wright, MO; Laclede, MO; Camden, MO; Hickory, MO; St. Clair, MO; Cedar, MO; Barton, MO; Jasper, MO; Newton, MO; McDonald, MO



## Protect Local Control and Revenue Streams

Local leaders are best positioned to address their community's needs. We support the protection of local revenue streams like property and sales tax collections, which fund essential services. We also encourage the legislature to prioritize local control as it considers legislative proposals.

## Ensure Stable and Robust Funding for Higher Education

Higher education institutions in Southwest Missouri are pivotal to economic growth, workforce success, and community development. We support predictable and sustained funding for these institutions, recognizing their critical impact on the state and region.



## Top Industries<sup>1</sup>

1. HEALTH CARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE: 51,028
2. RETAIL TRADE: 37,319
3. ACCOMMODATION & FOOD SERVICES: 32,814
4. MANUFACTURING: 26,764
5. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES: 21,527

## Enhance Community Growth through Grant Funding

Grant funding is essential for driving community growth and making strategic investments that have a lasting impact. We support the establishment of a state fund dedicated to supporting the local matching components of state and federal grant opportunities.

## Support Access to Comprehensive Healthcare and Workforce Investments

With major healthcare employers serving Southwest Missouri, it's critical to have a robust and skilled healthcare workforce to provide comprehensive care to patients. We support targeted initiatives to train, recruit and retain healthcare professionals across the region, ensuring access to comprehensive care for both urban and rural populations.

## ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORT

academy  
OF HAIR DESIGN

Branson<sup>™</sup>  
MISSOURI  
★  
LAKES AREA

Central Bank  
Central Trust

NIXA

REPUBLIC  
MISSOURI

CITY OF  
Springfield

City  
Utilities  
Connecting Our Community

Commerce  
Bank<sup>™</sup>

COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
of the  
OZARKS  
Connecting passion to purpose.

COXHEALTH

ELLIOTT, ROBINSON  
& COMPANY, LLP  
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

HAMMONS  
BLACK  
WALNUTS  
THE BOLD, WILD WALNUT

JMARK

KEI

Liberty<sup>™</sup>

MAXON  
FINE JEWELRY

Missouri  
State  
UNIVERSITY

MONETT  
AREA  
Chamber of Commerce

O'Reilly  
AUTO PARTS<sup>®</sup>

Ozarks  
Coca-Cola  
DR PEPPER BOTTLING COMPANY

OZARKS  
TECH<sup>™</sup>

OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION

PARAGON  
ARCHITECTURE

SHOW ME  
CHRISTIAN COUNTY

Springfield  
Area Chamber of Commerce

Springfield  
Public  
Schools

SPRINGFIELD SIGN

Table Rock Lake  
Chamber of Commerce

Faney County  
Partnership

Trail  
liner

VISIT  
SPRING  
FIELD MO

For more information, please contact:  
Lauren Shantz, Vice President, Public Affairs  
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce  
lshantz@springfieldchamber.com