



Chair's Message

BY KATIE K. WILKINSON

IT IS REFRESHING to see and feel the energy of a new year and a new decade in our state. Business owners are optimistic about the future and have buckled down to execute on their strategies for success in 2020 and beyond.

During his 2020 State of the State Address, Governor John

Carney shared that we have more Delawareans working right now than at any other point in our history. More than half of our workforce in Delaware is employed at small businesses across the state. This is truly something to celebrate.

Having said that, we still have work to do. Workforce development must continue to be at the forefront of any and all initiatives. For years we have encouraged Delaware high school students to follow a college track – touting that this was the “best” way to find employment and a career.

Despite our best intentions, we continued this encouragement at the ultimate expense of the trades and other career pathways in

Delaware. We are working hard to shift that today. Our real estate and construction businesses across the state are desperately in need of qualified trades employees as the current rate of retirements far exceed the rate of incoming apprentices.

Continued momentum of the Ready in 6 initiative is also important to our construction industry and our economic growth going forward. If we can improve the approval process for new projects, properly staff our construction firms with sufficient trade employees, and expand and support workforce training, we will be better positioned to attract new businesses and new industries to our state.

In addition, we are working hard to ensure that Delaware high school students have career options while incentivizing them to either stay or return to Delaware as contributing members of our economy and communities.

To quote Governor Carney in his State of the State Address – we want companies to “Start Here; Stay Here; Grow Here.”

Delaware has so much to offer to the next generation, and I’m optimistic that our work at the Delaware State Chamber will continue to have a positive impact on our economy in 2020 and the future!

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