

Business Revitalization Task Force

Recommendation: Pass A Hawaii Business Competitiveness Act

Hawaii currently ranks 50th out of 50 states in CNBC's America's Top States for Business ranking, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive economic reform. The State Legislature should pass the Hawaii Business Competitiveness Act, establishing mandatory targets to improve Hawaii's business climate ranking to:

40th or better by 2028

30th or better by 2030

20th or better by 2032

10th or better by 2035.

Implementation Structure:

The Legislature shall establish a Hawaii Business Competitiveness Office with dedicated funding and staff to:

- Analyze Hawaii's performance across all CNBC ranking categories
- Develop actionable improvement strategies in consultation with business groups, labor unions, community organizations, and county governments
- Submit annual progress reports to the Legislature with specific policy recommendations
- Coordinate with state departments to align agency goals with competitiveness objectives

The Legislature commits to prioritizing legislation and budget allocations that advance these competitiveness goals, using the CNBC ranking as the primary progress metric while fostering an environment where businesses can establish, expand, and thrive in Hawaii.

Background:

Multiple national rankings consistently place Hawaii among the least business-friendly states. The Task Force selected the CNBC America's Top States for Business ranking as the preferred benchmark because it:

- Provides the most comprehensive assessment of actual business conditions through 128 metrics
- Offers annual updates enabling consistent progress tracking
- Maintains objectivity without anti-tax or small-government ideological bias
- Serves as the most widely recognized and cited state business ranking

The ranking evaluates critical areas including economic performance, business costs, innovation capacity, quality of life, workforce development, regulatory environment, and infrastructure—providing a roadmap for Hawaii's economic transformation.