



## **No Small Change**

By Todd Sanders, President & CEO, Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce

From Boston to Baton Rouge, and, yes, from Phoenix to Flagstaff, citizens are clamoring for change in government. Not the mere replacement of one ideology with another every two, four or six years, but a meaningful revision in the way we do things to secure a prosperous future for our nation and our state.

Before we can get the government we want, we must ask what we want from our government.

Government should support and cultivate the production side of the economy— not shackle it. It should advocate a pro-business environment, one that creates jobs and fosters the growth of existing Arizona businesses, while attracting the headquarters of nationally and internationally-known companies, keeping Arizona competitive regionally and globally.

It should nourish an effective K-12 education system that delivers a qualified workforce and an informed electorate. And, rather than simply expecting that additional funding alone will improve educational outcomes, policy makers should reward initiative, foster creativity and demand accountability.

Like the rest of us, government must learn to live within its means; it should spend only what it takes in, and be mindful not to establish ongoing spending obligations predicated upon one-time dollars. Conversely, our tax system, the product of incremental changes over the years, simply does not add up to a thoughtful, comprehensive approach for encouraging economic vitality. Arizona deserves a tax structure that is equitable, makes our state regionally competitive and promotes job creation. New jobs and additional investment in our state will mean higher revenues to appropriately fund education, healthcare and public safety.

What should we do as a business community? We must speak up and become part of the solution. This year's budget deficit still approaches \$1.4 billion; next year the number could reach a staggering \$3.2 billion. Closing the gap on these deficits is going to be an extraordinary challenge which will require additional deep cuts, an infusion of new revenues and, most of all, a recognition that nothing is truly off the table. The Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce is strongly committed to working with lawmakers and the Governor to right our fiscal ship, recognizing that the business community must do its part for the Arizona we want.

Too often what is right takes a backseat to what is politically expedient. Governor Brewer is right when she says “To do the right thing means doing the hard thing.” We need to make decisions today based not on how they can help us in 2010, but what they will mean in 2020, 2040 and beyond.

A common refrain is that we get the government we deserve. We believe Arizona deserves better. It’s time we – and our leaders – started working towards a system that makes sense today, tomorrow and in the future.

The opportunity is here. We need to seize it.