



2017 State Legislative & Policy Agenda

As the voice of business for Savannah and the Chatham County area, the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce is committed to keeping our region competitive and thriving. We advocate for legislation and policies which improve the business climate, help develop and retain an educated workforce and support the pillars of our regional economy. We also recognize that to best serve our coastal region, we must work to ensure that Georgia continues to grow, prosper and maintain our reputation as the #1 State for Business.

SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Defend against legislative measures that would negatively impact Savannah's business climate, appear discriminatory in nature, would harm the ability to create, attract, retain and expand jobs.
- Support Armstrong State University's Board of Regents' request for \$22.6 million for new construction and renovation of existing Health Professions facilities.
- Increase funding for statewide tourism marketing to make Georgia competitive with other Southeastern states.
- Support enhancement of Georgia's historic preservation incentives to encourage investment in rehabilitation of historic landmarks.
- Support the recommendations of the Georgia Military Affairs Study Committee in an effort to retain and grow this important statewide Economic Development Target Industry, including initiatives to attract and retain military veterans through tax and education incentives that encourage veterans to reside in Georgia.
- Support the passage of legislation to assure there is a level playing-field regarding the taxation of parts installed on large watercraft registered in other states. Making Georgia competitive for this work will directly lead to increased maritime repair and service jobs throughout the Georgia coast.
- Support initiatives to limit the unanticipated, large percentage swings of annual commercial property tax increases.

KEY PRO-BUSINESS POLICIES & POSITIONS

Business & Industry:

Encourage Economic Investment and Job Retention in the Coastal Region

- Advocate for economic development tools and incentives to start, recruit and retain businesses in our region.

Support Regional & Global Commerce

- Protect our State and Region's standing as a global hub for international commerce, including support for initiatives that enhance the growth and efficiency of Georgia's ports and airports.
- Encourage tax reform initiatives that keep Georgia the top state for doing business, while not jeopardizing its AAA bond rating that provides continued lower taxes for all citizens.

- Support State Small Business growth policies and renewal of the sales tax holiday set to expire this year.

- Update laws governing the Georgia International Maritime and Trade Center to modernize governance and improve their marketability.

Education & Workforce:

Grow, Retain and Attract an Educated Workforce

- Advocate for legislation and initiatives, such as HOPE, Move-On-When-Ready Apprenticeships, Georgia College & Career Academies and other efforts, that address early childhood, pre-K-12 and higher education to effectively prepare all students for the careers of the future and to provide a skilled workforce to support the region's employers. Advance policies that increase the retention of Georgia's post-secondary graduates and attract talent in high demand fields.

- Increase coordination of resources and alignment of curriculum between K-12 and higher education institutions to ensure the workforce needs of Georgia businesses and career needs of students are being met.
- Promote policies that support the growth, retention and attraction of talent needed by our high-tech, high-growth industry sectors.
- Support the promotion of STEM and Career & Technical education in K-12 and post-secondary education that will prepare students to become innovators, industry leaders and problem-solvers.

Promote Common Sense Education Reforms

- Support reform of the Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding formula to ensure Savannah Chatham County Public School students are competitive in the workforce and ready for post-secondary education.

Healthcare:

Improve Access and Affordability of Healthcare

- Support a Georgia based approach to expanded Healthcare coverage that will result in a healthier community and greater economic development.
- Support Policies sought by Savannah Area Hospitals, such as funding the expansion of graduate medical education programs to impact physician shortages in Southeast GA and funding a statewide trauma network.

Regulatory & Legal Environment:

Defend Against Regulatory Overreach

- Defend against environmental legislation and policies which unnecessarily increase the administrative burden and result in unnecessary regulations, project delays or make it cost prohibitive to businesses.

Parole and Pardons Transparency

- Reform transparency by requiring more thorough notifications and communication to allow local communities to have significantly greater knowledge and input when offenders are being considered for paroles and/or pardons.

Transportation:

Keep Transportation Projects Moving Forward

- Maintain funding under the Transportation Funding Act of 2015 to benefit growth, efficiency and the needs of our region.

Upgrade Existing Freight Networks

- Support the Port and logistics target industry by increasing freight capacity and safety on our existing interstates and rail networks. Maximize operational and regulatory efficiencies for movement of freight.

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