

## Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce & Visit Savannah 2019 Legislative Overview

### 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 and investments.
  - SB 221 provided for the protection of religious freedom.
    - Didn't pass this year.
- Support efforts to obtain the necessary funding to begin the building phase of the Savannah Convention Center expansion project.
  - HB 525 Changes the name of the Georgia International and Maritime Trade Center to the Savannah-Georgia Convention Center Authority. Among other things, the Authority will consist of eleven members six appointed by the Governor, three by the Chatham County state legislative delegation also SEDA Visit Savannah president will be ex officio voting members.
    - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor
  - Significant funding included in the budget
- Support efforts to streamline the deployment of technology to make wireless broadband more easily accessible.
  - SB 66, the Streamlining Wireless Facilities and Antennas Act
    - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor
- Support proactive military legislation that seeks to protect and expand Georgia's military installations and grow this important statewide economic development target industry.
  - HB 59, allows military students to enroll in a public school based on official military orders prior to physically establishing residency
    - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor
- Support initiatives to attract and retain military veterans and retirees through tax and education incentives that encourage veterans to reside in Georgia and seek employment from Georgia companies.
  - HB 7, would exempt from state income tax certain income received by taxpayers as retirement benefits from military service in the Armed Forces of the United States of the Reserves.
    - Didn't pass this year.
- Support initiatives to limit the unanticipated, large percentage swings of annual commercial property tax increases/decreases.
  - HR 238, a constitutional amendment that would provide that the assessed value of commercial property within the City of Savannah for all ad valorem purposes shall not increase by any amount that exceeds 8 percent over the prior year's assessed value
    - Didn't pass this year.
- Support funding and state policies that will have a positive impact on the healthcare for the citizens in Georgia. Without top quality healthcare, businesses in Georgia will suffer and it will be difficult to attract economic development opportunities to the

state. Support policies that positively impact medical education, access to healthcare throughout the State of Georgia and adequate funding of Medicaid and the State Health Benefit Plan.

- SB 106, Patients First Act, allows Gov. Kemp to request a Medicaid waiver and an ACA insurance market waiver from the federal government.
  - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor
- Support Georgia Southern University's Board of Regents' request for \$5.2 million in equipment funding for the new Center for Engineering and Research Building on the Statesboro campus.
  - Included in the budget
- Support Georgia Southern University's Board of Regents' request for \$5 million to convert existing under-utilized space into Student Success and Mentoring Centers for students on the Armstrong and Statesboro campuses.
  - Included in the Budget
- Support the expansion of hospitality and culinary training at Savannah Technical College to address the critical shortage of skilled workers for the hospitality industry.
  - Not in the budget
- Support enhancement of Georgia's historic preservation incentives to encourage investment in rehabilitation of historic landmarks.
  - No bill proposed
- Support legislation that would allow state funds to be used to establish or enhance local pre-K programs.
  - No bill proposed
- Support the UGA Skidaway Institute of Oceanography's efforts to obtain \$450,000 for the design and engineering phase of the mid-life refit for the Research Vessel Savannah.
  - Not in the budget

**Other items of local interest:**

- HB 29, City of Skidaway Island incorporation.
  - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor.
- HB 31, 2020 State Budget
  - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor
  - \$400,000 to create Savannah Logistics Technology Corridor
  - \$4.1 million to fund construction of campus storm water and electrical distribution infrastructure at Savannah State University
  - \$3,000 teacher pay raise
- HB 447, Jet fuel tax exemption
  - Didn't pass this year
- HB 481, Living Infants Fairness and Equality (LIFE) Act
  - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor
- HB 511 Allows for county wide Transit Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (up to \$.01 for up to 30 years), among other things.
  - Didn't pass this year

- HB 591, Increases Tybee Island Hotel/Motel tax to 7%.
  - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor
- HB 710, City of Chatham Islands incorporation.
  - Didn't pass this year
- HR 48, Georgia's Coastal Tourism and Fisheries
  - Passed the House
- SB 15, Keeping Georgia Schools Safe Act
  - Passed the House and Senate, signed by the Governor