



HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mission Statement

Advance the common interests of our membership, stimulate the expanding regional economy and enhance the quality of life for all.

2017 Legislative Agenda

Education & Workforce

Facilitating and joining the conversation on building new schools in areas experiencing growth and transitioning current students into new zones.

Act 388: Advocate for reform of the current Education Funding Act formula that is based upon a tax paying ability index that was altered in the 2006 property tax restructuring act.

Support efforts to ensure that no school district receives less than 50 percent of the per student base allocation from the state each fiscal year and oppose any effort that does not fully fund public education on a fair and equitable basis for all children.

Support state legislation which would include average wage rates in the formula for calculating tax paying ability as used to determine state allocation for public education funding.

Monitor efforts and encourage growth of early childhood education initiatives.

Expand federal, state, and local support for our post-secondary education institutions.

To encourage funding of the Technical College of the Lowcountry for certificate programs related to job skills training in specialized areas.

Support parity funding for the University of South Carolina Beaufort. Bring USCB to the SC public comprehensive sector average funding per full time equivalent SC resident. Parity for USCB, USC Aiken and USC Upstate must occur before SC can implement a consistent "Fair Funding" model for its public universities.

Support the University of South Carolina Beaufort request for \$25M capital appropriation to construct the first new Academic Building constructed for USCB by the state of South Carolina. USCB's rapid enrollment growth serves South

Carolina families from the USCB square feet of academic facilities per student is below the state standard by 21% and below the comprehensive sector average by 32%.

To support the SC Department of Education during the 2017 implementation of its Consolidated Plan in compliance with the US Education Department's Every Student Succeeds Act, which repealed No Child Left Behind. (ESSA)

Coligny Redevelopment

Support the Town of Hilton Head's efforts to redevelop the Coligny Beach area as to create parking and green space for tourists, spur growth for retail in the area, all while being sensitive to the surrounding residential community on its desire for smart, planned growth.

Transportation/Infrastructure

To advocate for infrastructure improvement and investment on the local and state level for safety, as well as a driver for economic development. Investing in infrastructure should be matched with forecast business and population growth and measured in terms of potential economic growth and job development in certain focus areas. There is also support for reforms to the Department of Transportation and the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank for increased transparency and spending prioritization.

To monitor efforts on the federal level that would restore sources of income to the federal highway trust fund as a means for state infrastructure projects to continue forward.

Closely monitor the deepening and development of port facilities in Charleston and Jasper Counties as to the effects on economic development and the environment.

Airport Expansion, Air Service and Security

Support managed growth of the Hilton Head Island Airport that includes infrastructure improvements, recruitment of future air service and encouragement of existing, private use.

Strongly encourage swift action by the General Assembly (before the January 2018 deadline) to bring South Carolina into compliance with the federal *Real ID Act of 2005* which will allow for state issued drivers licenses to be used by Homeland Security at airports and federal institutions.

Property Taxes/Real Estate

Work to build our real estate market through the coordinated efforts of local professionals and public policy affecting the exchange of properties.

Work to attract new business, grow existing businesses, capital investment, infrastructure improvements as a way to increase property value, while easing property taxes through the growth of other programs that can contribute to revenue needs.

Business and Industry: Regulatory/Tax

Work with local governments to ensure that the business license is fair and equitable, and is not a disincentive to business investment. Also, to ensure process is streamlined and simplified for businesses and revenues are reinvested into efforts for economic development.

Monitor the newly proposed federal overtime regulations, effectively changing who is eligible to earn overtime compensation and forcing businesses to reclassify many employees from salaried, to hourly employees. We subsequently support the *Protecting Workplace Advancement and Opportunity Act* (S.2707 and H.R. 4773) to keep these regulations from taking effect and require the Department of Labor to further analyze the impact of changing the overtime threshold on small businesses, non-profits, regional economies and local governments in any succeeding proposed rule.

Economic Development

Alter the state's method of calculating award of economic incentives to counties from per capita income-based to average regional wage rate-based.

Support state legislation to allow Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs) access to state and local economic development incentives.

Work with municipalities and county to redevelop aging properties while equally balancing local character, environmental, and economic concerns.

Continue the F35 deployment at the Beaufort Marine Corps Air Station.

Support and enhance small business tax credits for job creation.

Participate and facilitate the conversation for fiber and IT connectivity in Southern Beaufort Country for business, tourism and educational needs.

Environment and Energy

Urge the federal and state governments to develop comprehensive energy policies that encourage the wise use and management of South Carolina's natural resources, ensures adequate energy supplies for the future that are reasonably priced and generated in an environmentally responsible manner, and promotes alternative energy production.

Support federal and state energy policy that modernizes energy infrastructure and reduces overly burdensome regulations that discourage investment and imperil business competitiveness.

To monitor new federal EPA requirements on emissions' reductions and work with local and state energy providers for clarity and positioning on the requirements.

To encourage a revision of federal legislation that allows for non-profit energy organizations (co-ops) to receive tax credits given to other energy providers to reduce tax liability.

Support state legislation to allow consideration of local sales tax funding by local referenda for established Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Programs, without predetermination of properties to be considered for acquisition, combined with a more comprehensive strategic plan for purchases.

Support the protection of the Okatie and May River and implementation of the May River Watershed Action Plan.

Health

Monitor the complex federal healthcare legislation as it pertains to business expense and the retention and recruitment of jobs. With continuous review, we encourage efficient implementation of new changes and the ability for businesses to find the most cost effective options while offering its employees quality of care and affordability.

Support federal legislation to allow small-to-medium sized business to join together in association health plans (AHPs).

Immigration

Join regional and national support for the JOLT Act which would ease visa requirements on those countries currently requiring a visa for travel. Critical to this effort is a focus on Brazil, a target market for our local destination.

Support comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level that strengthens federal immigration law by establishing clear, sensible laws that are effectively enforced, including a guest worker program that can meet local labor demands.

Support existing federal immigration programs, including the H-2B program, to guarantee that the programs are extended and have adequate capacity for our local labor force.

Encourage the reinstatement, as needed, of the H2B Returning Worker Exemption, allowing for the return of multi-year H2B workers who have experience and a desire to continue as part of the US workforce; To relax the cap on the number of workers allowed when needed.

Monitor the implementation of the state-level Illegal Immigration Reform Act, providing that the reform legislation does not impose unnecessary burden on the local business community and can be fairly enforced.

Monitor Beaufort County's enforcement of the Lawful Employment Ordinance to ensure business is treated fairly and objectively.

Insurance

Continuous monitoring of efforts to reform the *Biggert-Waters Act* that resulted in large premium rate hikes for federal Flood Insurance in 2014. While in a current moratorium, encourage Congress to proceed with a review of outdated maps and an impact study.

To encourage the state implementation of the Wind/Hail Insurance legislation for free market options, mitigation programs, affordability and expert risk assessment.

International Trade

Support Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) for the President and encourage Congress to pass pending and future trade agreements to open new markets for American goods, services, and agricultural products, and bring lower priced goods and expanded choices to American consumers.

To encourage the increased investment and use of the federal Export-Import Bank for the financing and credit provider of American products sold overseas.

Labor

To be the collaborative voice in the debate over efforts to raise the minimum wage as to give the consumer more buying power, but not affect job creation and costs for the business owner.

To monitor and oppose any legislation that repeals South Carolina as a Right To Work state and any supporting laws that would allow for union solicitation and workers' ability to voluntarily choose union membership.

Legal Reform

Urge the US Congress and the SC legislature to enact common sense legal reforms to ensure fairness in liability suits and ensure damage awards are fair and equitable, eliminate frivolous lawsuits, and enforce legal ethics rules.

Tax Policy

Support review and seek appropriate changes to the 2006-passed property tax restructuring act (Act 388) to improve the inequity between owner occupied and non-owner occupied property.

With the state-imposed cap on local governmental operating funds, monitor local effort to increase existing fees or implementing new fees that could increase the cost of business locally.

Support the review of all current sales tax exemptions in order to cause a comprehensive review on an individual basis.

To maintain the five year phase-in (through 2020) of individual income tax deductions for military retirement benefits, as to encourage military retirees to stay and invest in South Carolina after their service.

To urge the General Assembly to pass a SC Pension reform bill that provides for a solvent, fully funded system for retirees and protects against future dips into the fund for other purposes that do not provide a return on investment dollars.

Tourism Promotion and Funding

To continue efforts on the county level to revise the existing ordinance for ATAX and HTAX allocations to increase funding to the DMO.

Support expanding dedicated and recurring funding for destination tourism marketing and matching.

Pursue marketing funding from the county and municipalities and support Designated Marketing Organization (DMO) funding to help our destination compete nationally and internationally.

Support efforts to expand the 2-to-1 local match fund for state tourism grants. Continue to participate in the new public-private state tourism grants for marketing and product development.

Support examining the spending of state and local accommodations and hospitality taxes to ensure funds are used for tightly defined tourism purposes.

Support Brand USA and the international tourism fee imposed with the 2010 passage of the Travel Promotion Act and the Improving Public Diplomacy through International Travel Act in the US Congress.

Support both the local and state government efforts to collect appropriate accommodation taxes from individually rented home and villas through such online sites as Air BnB, VRBO and Craigslist.

Support recently passed state and local legislation requiring On-Line Travel Agencies to pay appropriate accommodations and sales taxes on their transactions.

Transportation

Advocate an increase in funding for the widening of Interstate 95. Adequate funding of roads and infrastructure is vital to the continued economic prosperity of the region, to ensure the safety and well-being of the people who visit the region each year, and to alleviate congestion on over-crowded highways and interstates.

Support completion of the Bluffton Parkway from the Hilton Head Island bridges through Bluffton, extending to Highway 278 to I-95.

Support a public-private partnership for landscape and maintenance of the Highway 278 corridor.

Support and advocate for the vitality and safety of both the Hilton Head Island Airport and the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport before federal, state, and local officials.

Water

Support the efforts of all public water utilities serving Hilton Head Island and Bluffton to replace public water supply lost as a result of the ongoing saltwater intrusion into the Upper Floridan Aquifer.

Support legislation that provides funding assistance for water and/or wastewater utilities faced with infrastructure relocation costs as the result of state, county and/or municipal roadwork projects.

Support more efficient processing of loans to public utilities through the State Revolving Fund Program for water and sewer infrastructure improvements.

Support the development of a non-regulatory State Water Plan for South Carolina.

Support SC DHEC's proposal to update its wastewater design and construction regulations to reflect significant reduction in per capita water use over the past 30 years