



2020-2021 Public Policy Agenda

Mission

The Chamber will serve our members by being a catalyst for economic growth, workforce and leadership development, and quality of life improvements in our community.

LOCAL

▪ **Economic Development & Business Growth**

- Regional Growth
 - The Chamber supports regional partnerships between local governments, the philanthropic and business communities, and the public for the purpose of fostering economic growth.
- Tourism, Sports & Entertainment
 - The Chamber supports local efforts to increase tourism.
- Cultural Arts
 - The arts being an important component of quality of life, the Chamber urges the continued availability of public and private funding for the arts and the continued support of public/private partnerships benefiting the arts.
- Housing
 - Our lack of quality housing stock is a major obstacle to talent attraction and retention. The Chamber supports local economic development incentives, such as Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), and pilot agreements for housing projects that meet the criteria laid out in our housing study to stimulate construction of quality and innovative single family and multifamily housing options.
 - Support Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) county wide and utilize them to the extent provided by Georgia law.
 - Support the mission of the Flooring Capital Development Corporation.
- Business Attraction
 - The Chamber supports competitive funding of local business attraction and retention efforts.
- Downtown Dalton
 - Downtown Dalton being critical to our talent attraction and retention efforts, the Chamber supports the implementation of the downtown master plan to ensure quality development.
 - The Chamber supports working with local authorities to support development opportunities.

- **Education & Workforce Development**

- Early Childhood Development
 - Recognizing that education begins at birth, the Chamber supports continuing current levels of funding for publicly funded pre-k programs.
 - The Chamber supports programs that teach parents best practices for birth through kindergarten.
- K-16 Education
 - The Chamber encourages local school administration and school boards to carefully and thoughtfully consider the allocation of funds to ensure that each dollar spent has a direct impact on improving the quality of instruction for children and adults.
 - The Chamber believes any decision regarding facilities must be guided by the community's insistence to lead to better educational outcomes for students and greater fiscal efficiency.
 - The Chamber supports increased funding for education programs that are responsive to the needs of industry in secondary and higher education institutions.
 - The Chamber supports the expansion of apprenticeships and career opportunities for high school students.
 - The Chamber supports transparency and accountability to local communities regarding student achievement.

- **Regulation & System Reform**

- Government Infrastructure
 - The Chamber strongly supports continued cooperation and collaboration between local elected and appointed officials within jurisdictions and across political boundaries.
 - The Chamber supports the exploration of opportunities to consolidate city and county services, such that consolidation enhances efficiency and improves quality of life.
- Taxation
 - The Chamber supports the utilization of Tax Allocation Districts to stimulate development of designated areas.
 - The Chamber supports Whitfield County moving to biennial property tax collections to improve the County's cash flow and reduce the reliance on Tax Allocation Notes.
 - The Chamber supports the sales tax exemption on energy used in manufacturing.

- **Infrastructure & Transportation**

- The Chamber supports responsible allocation of public funds to construct and maintain our public infrastructure including, but not necessarily limited to, roads, public safety, public buildings, public transportation, and parks.
- The Chamber will actively promote ride sharing and private transportation alternatives.

STATE

- **Economic Development & Business Growth**
 - State Economic Development Incentives
 - The Chamber supports the continuation or expansion of current state economic development incentive programs, and would oppose any efforts to curtail or eliminate any state economic development tools including financial, tax, and workforce development incentives and TAD financing currently available to local economic development entities or localities.
 - The Chamber supports the simplification of the processes necessary for companies to qualify for state economic development incentives.
 - Right to work
 - The Chamber opposes any legislative or regulatory efforts which substantially change the process by which employees unionize or threatens Georgia's right to work law.

- **Education & Workforce Development**
 - Early Childhood Development
 - Recognizing that education begins at birth, the Chamber supports increasing funding for high quality publicly funded pre-k programs.
 - K-12 Education
 - The Chamber supports the restoration of full K-12 education funding through the elimination of austerity cuts imposed during the Great Recession.
 - The Chamber supports more efficient and effective K-12 investments that improve student outcomes and increase transparency.
 - The Chamber supports college and career ready standards in K-12 education to promote a more globally competitive workforce.
 - Higher Education
 - The Chamber supports investments in higher education opportunities, particularly in programs that are responsive to industry needs.

- **Regulation & System Reform**
 - The Chamber supports the reduction or elimination of the state income tax in favor of increasing the sales tax to make up for the lost revenue.
 - The Chamber supports regulatory reform that strikes a balance between protecting the public welfare without being duplicative or overly burdensome on the public or industry.
 - The Chamber believes immigration is a federal policy issue, and generally opposes efforts to regulate or legislate immigration reform at the state level. The Chamber will evaluate state-level immigration issues for consistency with its positions on immigration issues in the Federal section of this document.

- **Environment and Sustainability**
 - We support and encourage actions in our communities that preserve and protect our valuable resources through conservation and energy efficiency efforts that:
 - preserve our natural resources and avoid a negative economic impact to the community
 - protect access to sustainable, reliable, and affordable energy
 - enhance access to high-quality, affordable water
 - ensures future water supply security for our communities and businesses.

- **Transportation & Infrastructure**

- Transportation
 - The Chamber supports a long term funding solution for the state’s transportation network. Any solution must take into consideration the increase in alternative fuel powered vehicles. Revenue sources should be indexed to inflation.
- Technology
 - The Chamber supports expanded access to quality broadband communications.

FEDERAL

- **Economic Development & Business Growth**

- Government Contracting
 - The Chamber supports acquisition and procurement reform initiatives that streamline the contracting and purchasing process and maximize the business opportunities for the private sector in the federal market.
- Labor Unions
 - The Chamber opposes any legislative or regulatory efforts which substantially change the process by which employees unionize or threatens Georgia’s right to work law.

- **Education & Workforce Development**

- Early Childhood Development
 - The Chamber supports necessary and adequate federal funding of Head Start and Early Head Start.
- Immigration
 - The Chamber supports border security and visa policies and procedures that are reasonable and carried out efficiently; and comprehensive immigration reform that recognizes the need for essential workers.
 - For essential workers, the Chamber encourages continued advancement of long-term immigration objectives to secure additional workers to counteract demographic trends and provide for the targeted earned legalization of those essential undocumented workers already in the U.S. The Chamber supports programs that give employers the ability to access and keep the talent necessary to compete in the global market.
 - The Chamber supports comprehensive immigration reform that establishes a temporary worker program and an earned pathway to work or citizenship for undocumented residents while also improving border security and employee verification systems.

▪ **Regulation & Systems Reform**

- Tort Reform
 - The Chamber encourages Congress to pass legislation that would cap punitive damage awards and establish proportional liability for businesses.
- Regulatory Reform
 - The Chamber supports regulatory reform that reduces duplicative and unnecessary regulatory burdens on business and industry.
- Affordable Care Act
 - The Chamber supports efforts to reform or replace the Affordable Care Act.
 - Any effort to reform or replace the Affordable Care Act should focus on reducing the cost of healthcare for business and the end user.
 - Recognizing that individual choices play a critical role in the cost of healthcare, the Chamber supports any efforts to encourage individuals to live a healthier lifestyle.

▪ **Transportation & Infrastructure**

- Energy & Public Utilities
 - The Chamber supports positive energy proposals to expand domestic nuclear, oil, coal, and on and offshore gas production; invest in alternative and clean energy technologies; and improve the energy infrastructure.
- Mass Transit & Public Transportation
 - The Chamber supports funding to create high speed rail from the Atlanta airport to Chattanooga.
- Transportation Funding
 - The Chamber urges Congress to pass a responsible long-term funding bill for the nation's transportation infrastructure.