



2012 Business Advocacy Legislative Agenda

State Legislative Agenda

2012 Legislative Session:

- **Amend the S.C. Pollution Control Act** to restore the intent to require permits only when a regulatory program applies to the activity and requires a permit is obtained.
In July 2011, the S.C. Supreme Court ruled on a case where a private land company had filled a 2/10 acre wetland without a permit after both the Army Corps of Engineers and S.C. DHEC told the company no permit was required. A private citizen sued the company and the S.C. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the citizen. The opinion affects more than wetlands, it opens up for potential law suit and therefore permit requirements for motor vehicle emissions, chemical applications to agriculture and any emission currently exempted from DHEC permitting.
- **S.C. Department of Transportation restructuring** – work to ensure that any restructuring efforts support expansion and maintenance of S.C.'s Highway Infrastructure.
The Chamber will support changes to the DOT structure that results in a more efficient operation and provides a system based on sound criteria for prioritizing and funding the state's transportation infrastructure needs.
- **Support passage of Bill Wylie Entrepreneurship Act of 2011** to create tax credits to support angel investors and growth of entrepreneurial activity in S.C.
The legislation specifically targets growth of entrepreneurial activity in areas including manufacturing, processing, warehousing, wholesaling, software development, information technology and research and development.
- **Support ban on synthetic drug products.**
"Spice" and "Ivory Wave" are brand names for new synthetic drugs sold openly on the market that mimic the effects of marijuana and cocaine and LSD. The effects of smoking, snorting, or injecting these synthetic drugs have caused people to become violently ill, caused seizures, brought about hallucinations, and in some cases have resulted in death.

Synthetic drugs have the potential to negatively impact our workforce and economy. These substances have presented serious problems for our local military community. The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control recently banned these products from being sold in the state. The S.C. General Assembly still must pass legislation to make the substances illegal to sell or purchase in the state.
- **Support enactment of H 3710** which would provide temporary licenses to certain professions and occupations to military spouse/dependents of up to six months while they are obtaining necessary licensing requirements under S.C. requirements.

Longer-term issues

- **Comprehensive Tax Reform**
The Chamber adamantly opposed the passage of Act 388 in 2008 which shifted the tax burden in the state to the business community by eliminating the school operations portion owner-occupied residential property to a one cent sales tax. The S.C. Tax Realignment Commission in 2010 released its study and recommendations to the General Assembly who promptly took no action. There is growing discussion that the state's tax system needs comprehensive reform. At the same time, there is acknowledgement that the issue is unlikely to move forward in the 2012 legislative session because the entire General Assembly is up for re-election in November 2012.

The Chamber will continue to advocate for comprehensive tax reform measures that ensure fairness, stability, predictability, accountability and compliance while equitably balancing income, property and sales tax levies based proportionally on necessary services and the ability to pay.

Federal Legislative Agenda

- **Secure funding for Harbor Deepening and a national strategy for investing in ports**

The Army Corps of Engineers initiated a study to determine the appropriate depth to deepen Charleston's harbor to accommodate larger cargo vessels in 2011. The Chamber will advocate expediting the study in order to move the project forward as fast as possible.

The Chamber also supports legislation Senator Lindsey Graham has proposed to develop a national strategy for which ports to invest in order to meet the nation's export initiatives benefitting the agricultural and manufacturing sectors; the current and projected population trends that distinguish regional ports and ports which are immediately adjacent to large population centers; and the environmental impacts resulting from the modernization of inland waterways and deep-draft ports.

- **Advocate for Reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank**

Reauthorization of the EX-IM Bank is critical to the ability of many U.S. exporters to compete on a level playing field in a commercial market where current and future competitors continue to enjoy aggressive support from their countries' export credit agencies

- **Advocate against a burdensome regulatory environment for business**

Federal regulations on business have become over burdensome and have resulted in the loss of jobs, closings of business and a reluctance by business to invest in operations. Examples include EPA, NLRB and the banking industry. The Chamber needs to continue to advocate against proposed regulations that will add additional burden and cost on business and industry. Additionally, the Chamber will work to both educate its members on these regulations as well as provide specific examples to the congressional delegation.

- **Relocation of Africa Command to Joint Base Charleston**

Africa Command is temporarily headquartered in Stuttgart Germany. The Department of Defense has indicated a study will be conducted in 2012 to determine the best location for a permanent headquarters. Africa Command is comprised of approximately 1,500 military and state department personnel. The total operation, including spouses and families is estimated at 5,000. The Chamber is proposing a site for the headquarters facility at Joint Base Charleston on the former Naval Weapons Station and is basing its proposal on the cost efficiency and mission capability the region would provide.

Local Issues

- **Completion of I-526**

The existing 19.26 mile half-circle around Charleston opened in 1992 and since its inception there have always been plans for the road to connect from Hwy 17 North in Mt. Pleasant to the James Island Connector. This is a crucial piece of needed regional infrastructure improvements – that will help to address safety, accessibility of transportation, and economic development.

A well-built and sufficient infrastructure system allows products to be delivered, services accessed and employees to come and go to work. It is vital to make the right investments the first time in needed area infrastructure, competencies and resources that are responsive to citizen and business needs. The 526 completion is a piece of the transportation puzzle that we must solve as we continue to see growth in our community.

- **Redevelopment of Union Pier and renovation of cruise ship passenger terminal**

The cruise industry has been part of our working waterfront for decades, bringing jobs and business to our area. The industry also represents a segment of the S.C. State Ports Authority's overall port operations. The redevelopment of the Union Pier and renovation of the cruise ship passenger terminal will provide a short-term economic boost to the local economy, the long-term redevelopment opportunity to the City of Charleston to open a segment of waterfront on the Peninsula to the public use and will provide the Ports Authority with needed revenue to invest into the development of additional cargo operations. The cruise industry currently is estimated to have an economic impact of more than \$37 million annually.