



Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce Business Advocacy Guiding Principles

The following are standing positions taken through the Chamber's Business Advocacy process. All positions have been adopted by the Chamber's Board of Directors.

Business Creation, Recruitment, Retention and Expansion

The Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce supports legislation that will support the region's efforts to attract quality business, industry and jobs to the area and to expand existing business and industry.

- We support the implementation of Opportunity Next.
- We support changes to the current state incentives to attract film productions
- We support the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition and a robust International Affairs Budget at the national level.
- We support an open market system to enhance and increase world trade through free trade agreements.

Comprehensive Tax Reform

The Chamber will continue to advocate for comprehensive state-wide 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.

- We oppose relief efforts that merely shift the tax burden from one class of property at the expense of another.
- We support the elimination of sales tax exemptions, as long as their repeal does not put the State at a competitive disadvantage in terms of recruiting and retaining business and industry.
- We support the elimination of legislative mandates that result in increased property taxes.
- We support that any repeal, modification or elimination of a tax should be implemented by a constitutional amendment.
- Public education be held harmless in any tax relief effort.

Education and Workforce Development

Mobilizing the resources and leadership necessary to achieve excellence in academics and career preparation is one of the top priorities of the Chamber. The Chamber will continue to advocate the changes necessary in early childhood, K-12 and higher education to prepare all students for the careers of the future and to provide a skilled workforce to support the region's employers.

- We support reform of the current state funding formula for public education.
- We support state-wide universal 4-K program within the public education system.
- We support full funding of the SC Education and Economic Development Act/Personal Pathways.
- We support the recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education Action Plan for Higher Education in South Carolina.
- We support maintaining Lottery Tuition Assistance (LTA) for SC students to attend technical college.
- We support passage of legislation to provide the state's technical colleges and higher education institutions funding flexibility.
- We support charter schools as one option for school choice.
- We support one consolidated school system in Charleston County.
- We support the elimination of constituent school boards in Charleston County.
- We support that school board elections should continue to be nonpartisan.
- We support that the school districts must continue to have the fiscal autonomy.
- We support protection of secret ballot elections and support maintaining right-to-work legislation.



Environment and Energy

The Chamber must work to ensure that environmental regulation encourages and supports a growing economy while balancing and protecting the region's quality of life. Environmental legislation regulation should not unnecessarily increase the administrative burden, resulting in unnecessary regulations, project delays or become cost prohibitive to business.

- We support the development of a comprehensive energy policy at the state and federal level.
- We oppose State environmental regulations based on emotion and not science.
- We support that the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control have adequate state funding in order to expedite permitting.
- We support expansion of DHEC's expedited permitting process.

Healthcare

The rising cost of healthcare directly impacts business. One of the contributors to rising costs is the increased cost to the state's Medicaid system for providing healthcare to the uninsured. The Chamber will work to reduce healthcare costs for business.

- We support long-term efforts to improve quality measures and reduce cost in health care through greater accountability and efficiency at all levels (patient, providers, insurers, prescriptions)
- We oppose any legislation that includes employer mandates and surtaxes on small business.
- We support incentives for employers to create wellness plans
- We support medical liability/tort reform
- We support the ability to purchase insurance across state lines
- We support the adoption of information technologies to establish electronic medical records

Hospitality

Visitors are a multi-billion dollar business in the Charleston region and provide thousands of jobs – both directly and indirectly. In 2010, there were more than 4.2 million people who visited the region, contributing more than \$3 billion to the local economy. As one of the region's key economic engines, the continued vitality of the visitor industry is critical to support the thousands of hospitality-based businesses operating in the region. Additionally, the industry indirectly supports thousands of non-hospitality-based businesses through business and employee spending on goods and services.

- We support tourism marketing funding at the state level.
- We oppose legislation that would exempt online travel companies from paying occupancy taxes.
- We support employers hiring temporary, seasonal workers.

Military and Federal Facilities Retention and Expansion

The Chamber's Military/Federal Facilities Policy Council works closely with the entire South Carolina congressional delegation on retaining the 22,000 jobs associated with the region's military facilities. The Policy Council also works to expand the region's \$4.67 billion military/federal presence by seeking additional missions and expansion opportunities.

- We support the location of Africa Command headquarters on the Naval Weapons Station Charleston.
- We support that a flag officer should serve as Commander, Joint Base Charleston.
- We support the widening of Red Bank Road to serve the Naval Weapons Station Charleston, Nuclear Power Training Command and Nuclear Power Training School and the Navy Health Clinic.
- We support the adoption of recommendations of the newly updated Joint Land Use Study for the Charleston Air Force Base, Charleston International Airport and Charleston Naval Weapons Station.
- We support the widening of South Aviation Avenue to support Boeing if it does not violate Air Force and FAA runway criteria.



Port Development

The maritime industry and the Port have been a vital part of the region's economy since it was founded and an integral part in the attraction of business and industry to South Carolina. Today the Port and related activities are one of the major economic drivers of the region's economy. Throughout Charleston's history, when the Port has thrived, so has the overall economy of the region. A 2008 Economic Impact Study of the South Carolina State Ports Authority facilities estimated the impact of the Port to the State of South Carolina at more than \$44.8 billion. In the Charleston region, the impact is estimated at more than \$7 billion and an estimated 50,700 jobs in the region are directly and indirectly tied to port activity.

- We support the Port of Charleston and its expansion plans, particularly the development of a new terminal on the former Navy Base site.
- We support securing federal funding for the deepening Charleston harbor from the current level of 45 feet to at least 50 feet.
- We support the redevelopment of the passenger cruise terminal to support the cruise industry.
- We support an open market system to enhance and increase world trade through free trade agreements.

Regional Land Use Planning/Workforce Housing

The Chamber desires to change the attitude from one where growth is feared to one where growth is embraced. Our vision is to grow in a manner that improves the quality of life for all citizens in the metro area, including those yet to be born or move here. The Chamber will work to promote its Sustainable Growth Ethic which involves building on prosperity through the principles of Choice, Balance, and Stewardship.

- We support the BCD Council of Governments in the development of Our Region Our Plan.
- We support the development of a comprehensive regional housing plan that includes a focus on issues of housing supply, affordability, and quality to ensure that housing is available and affordable for families at all income levels in order to meet the objectives of the region's future workforce goals.

Regulatory

The Chamber advocates for a business climate that is conducive to business expansion. The regulatory environment of the state must be balanced and not burdensome for business.

- We support reform of South Carolina business license regulations to avoid ability for double taxation as well as develop a statewide appeals process.
- We oppose business license fees and regulations that are over burdensome to business.
- We support the consolidation of government services.
- We support all local governments holding municipal elections on the first Tuesday in November to encourage wider voter participation.
- We support the Chairman of Charleston County Council be elected as a countywide office.

Immigration Reform

The Chamber supports comprehensive immigration at the federal level to ensure a uniform approach. We need new immigration laws that are fair and balanced. These laws must meet the needs of our growing economy and the test of common sense. Only through this kind of comprehensive approach can an effective solution be reached. Securing the national borders is important, but it cannot be accomplished in isolation.

A comprehensive approach containing a set of principles that make sense and can work. Such legislation must:

- Promote national security interests by requiring thorough screening of foreign workers and creating strong disincentives for illegal immigration.
- Be comprehensive in nature, addressing both current and future economic needs for workers.
- Address the status of undocumented workers already in the United States by requiring them to earn their legal permanent residency.
- Strengthen the rule of law by establishing clear, sensible immigration laws that are effectively and vigorously enforced.
- Establish a guest worker program that ensures that U.S. workers are not displaced by foreign workers.
- Create an immigration system that functions efficiently for employers, workers, and government agencies.
- Ensure that all workers enjoy the same labor law protections as U.S. workers.



Transportation & Infrastructure

Modern, up-to-date infrastructure must be maintained for the region to effectively compete in the global marketplace. Without the ability to move goods and services to customers, businesses cannot compete and succeed.

- We support the development of a comprehensive funding solution for South Carolina roads that includes a dedicated, re-occurring funding source for new construction and highway and road maintenance.
- The Chamber supports the following as methods for increasing infrastructure funding:
 - Increase in the state's motor fuels tax and an annual indexing of the motor fuel tax based upon inflation.
 - Replacing the current statewide gas tax with a sales tax on gas and motor fuel.
 - Moving license tag fees from the General Fund to SC DOT
- We support the completion of I-526.
- We support the development of a comprehensive federal plan to address the infrastructure and transportation needs of the nation, to ensure the effective and efficient movement of commerce and to connect all modes of transportation including air, rail, roads and water and to plan for future increased capacity.