



Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2009

TOP PRIORITY

Northern Beltline

Continue annual appropriations for Corridor X-1 (Northern Beltline/I-959). Funding should be provided both through the Appalachian Development Highway System program and other federal sources in order to ensure timely completion of the project. Support completion of the I-59 to I-20 extension.

LABOR

Support a worker's right to confidentially decide whether to unionize. To this end, the Chamber will oppose the so-called "Employee Free Choice Act."

LAWSUIT REFORM

Fight to preserve the availability of arbitration and other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

TRANSPORTATION-GENERAL

- Address the expected Highway Trust Fund shortfall.
- Ensure timely enactment of the next surface transportation reauthorization bill (currently known as SAFETEA-LU) by September 30, 2009.
- Advocate for an increase in federal investment in transportation infrastructure in order to ensure improvement of our region's highways and transit systems.

TRANSPORTATION - TRANSIT

- **In-Town Transit Partnership**
Support efforts to design and construct the "In-Town Transit Partnership" Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Neighborhood Connectors project. This project connects Five Points South, the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex and many Birmingham neighborhoods to UAB, the Intermodal Center and the downtown business district.
- **Bus Replacement/Expansion**
Provide \$32M in multi-year funding from Section 5309 FTA funds to replace the existing bus fleet of the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA) for routes identified in the Transit Development Program (TDP).
- **Transit Bus Maintenance Facility**
Support the upgrade and expansion of a bus maintenance facility.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES - HIGHWAYS

- **Corridor X/I-22**
Provide continued funding for the timely completion of Corridor X.
- **I-65 HOV Lanes**
Support the I-65/U.S. 31 Mobility Matters project which will study High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system and other options to increase mobility and reduce congestion along the I-65/US 31 corridor from Valleydale Road to the City Center/UAB area.

WATER RESOURCES

- Ensure that Alabama has adequate infrastructure and water quantity to meet the state's needs for municipal and industrial water supply, navigation, energy production, economic development, irrigation and recreational uses.

HEALTHCARE ISSUES

- **The University of Alabama at Birmingham/Southern Research Institute**
UAB requests \$4 million to form a drug discovery institute in partnership with the Southern Research Institute to close the critical time-gap between the discovery of life-saving research findings and the development of drugs to test and make available to the public.
- **Medicaid**
Support legislation that would block current and future federal rules from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that would negatively impact Alabama Medicaid. One such proposed rule would change the definition of "unit of government", which further limits the state's ability to obtain federal Medicaid matching funds.
- **Graduate Medical Education**
Support continued funding at the current level for both adult and pediatric graduate medical education ("GME") programs. GME funds play a key role training physicians and ensure the medical needs of the Birmingham region and the state are met.
- **Medicare**
Oppose any attempts to reduce Medicare reimbursements to the Medicare provider community. The Chamber supports legislative efforts to provide fair Medicare reimbursement to physicians who provide Medicare services. Furthermore, the Chamber supports efforts to reach an equitable resolution on the Medicare wage index issue so that hospitals in the region will be fairly reimbursed for the services they provide to the Medicare population.

FEDERAL TAX ISSUES

- **Business Activity Tax Simplification Act (BATSA)**
Support passage of BATSA—a bill that would modernize current law and provide definite, specific standards to govern when states may impose a business activity tax.
- **Estate and Gift Tax Sunset Extension**
Make permanent the federal Estate and Gift Tax law that is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2010. In the alternative, set the lifetime exclusion at no less than \$3.5M for estate and gift taxes and keep the estate tax rate at no more than 45%.
- **Streamlined Sales Tax**
Support passage of the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Fairness Act.
- **Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)**
Permanently repeal the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT).
- **Long-Term Capital Gains and Qualified Dividend Income**
Make permanent the reduced tax rate for long-term capital gains and for qualified dividend income.
- **Oppose Revenue Offsets**
Prevent back-door tax increases on business through the imposition of revenue offsets made more likely by Congress' re-imposition of PAYGO (pay-as-you-go) rules designed to offset the financial impact of new spending initiatives or tax cuts.

- **Domestic Production Deduction**

Oppose efforts to eliminate the Section 199 domestic production deduction for oil and gas production. The deduction encourages domestic energy production, which is extensive in Alabama and helps reduce our country's dependence on foreign oil and gas.

OTHER

- **Sloss Furnaces National Historic Monument**

Provide \$5M toward a \$15M campaign to support restoration of the Historic Sloss Furnaces, build a visitor's center and improve public access to the site. Additional \$10M to be raised locally from private/public sources.

- **Alabama School of Fine Arts Foundation**

Provide \$3M toward construction of a \$12 million performing arts center – “The Performance Network” (estimated annual economic impact of \$3.4 million). Additional project funding of \$6 million has already been secured. The remaining \$3 million will be secured from other public and private sources.

- **Farmer's Market Renewal**

Provide \$3 million for Phase I renovation/restoration of the historic Alabama Farmer's Market on Finley Boulevard. Private and public funds will add an additional \$700,000. The market presently supports more than 200 farm families by providing an outlet for their products to central Alabama consumers.

- **Federal Clean Water Act Sewer Impact**

Assist the Jefferson County Commission in efforts to control rising sewer utility rates due to compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act and the 1996 Federal Consent Decree. If sewer rates increase as projected, Jefferson County could lose its ability to recruit and retain businesses and industry in the area.

- **U.S.- Colombia Free Trade Agreement**

Support efforts to ratify the U.S. – Colombia Free Trade Agreement and other pro-business free trade agreements. Currently, 90% of imports from Colombia enter duty-free. The pending free trade agreement would give reciprocal treatment to U.S. products exported to Colombia.