



2014 COMPETITIVENESS AGENDA

The *Competitiveness Agenda* is the business community's annual list of legislative priorities

INFRASTRUCTURE

The 2013 legislative session achieved the first significant increase in infrastructure funding since 1987. With other states focused on financing infrastructure to drive economic development, South Carolina policy makers must continue to make infrastructure funding the top priority in 2014. Investing in infrastructure is a core function of government responsibility and will drive economic growth and job creation.

The South Carolina Chamber supports

- Finding a sustainable, recurring funding solution for the state's roads and bridges, specifically prioritizing interstate improvements as well as secondary road maintenance as outlined in the *Road Map to the Future*.

HEALTH CARE

Health care costs remain one of the highest costs for businesses after payroll.

The South Carolina Chamber continues to gather information and work with interested parties to find a Medicaid reform package that will be a viable solution for South Carolina.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Developing a highly-skilled and well-educated workforce is integral to increased job opportunities and security with dynamic companies doing business in South Carolina. South Carolina must start now, and the business community supports initiatives that will transform (TransformSC) the current education system to achieve that goal. The private and public sectors must work together to ensure workforce needs are addressed and strategies are successfully implemented.

The South Carolina Chamber supports

- Continued funding for the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) certificate program at all technical colleges to educate and prepare a portion of the workforce for entry-level positions in manufacturing
- Continuing support for the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA)
- Funding for Quick Jobs, a fast paced job training program provided by technical colleges
- Addressing early childhood education, including third grade reading proficiency and four-year-old kindergarten
- Funding for readySC to ensure companies considering locating or expanding in the state have access to a skilled workforce
- Strengthening Work Ready SC
- Funding for SmartState – SC Centers for Economic Excellence
- Moving the Regional Education Centers (RECs) to the SC Department of Commerce to better connect business, education and workforce development partners
- Ensuring higher education is affordable for South Carolinians



SOUTH CAROLINA
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

COMPREHENSIVE TAX REFORM

Tax policy is critical to existing business and potential companies deciding to locate or expand in South Carolina. Decisions are based largely on competitiveness, predictability and sustainability. South Carolina manufacturers currently pay the highest industrial property taxes in the country, while all other business properties pay the 7th highest property taxes.

The South Carolina Chamber supports

- Modernizing the state's tax code to reflect a tax strategy that is competitive and supports a vision of long-term economic prosperity, including mechanisms for funding critical needs such as education, infrastructure, etc.
- Finding a viable solution to prevent the continued transfer of property tax burden to businesses as a result of Act 388, particularly small businesses
- Reforming the business license fee structure so rates are competitive and allow companies to grow. Standardization, complexity and appeals across localities should also be considered.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

South Carolina must continue to improve its overall business climate to create a competitive business environment. In 2013, *Forbes* released a list of best states for businesses, measuring six categories: costs, labor supply, regulatory environment, current economic climate, growth prospects and quality of life. South Carolina ranked 28th, while Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia all ranked in the top 10. Tax reform, workforce development, entrepreneurship and other key issues must be addressed to encourage expanded economic development opportunities.

The South Carolina Chamber supports

- Adopting initiatives to improve South Carolina's civil litigation climate
- Funding for the South Carolina Department of Commerce, including Closing Fund appropriations
- Passing legislation to help spur economic growth, in particular access to capital for small businesses
- Strengthening intellectual property rights of employers
- Addressing utility and infrastructure needs to ensure economic development sites are prepared for relocation and/or expansion activities
- Providing dedicated dollars for broad state marketing to include tourism, agribusiness and other efforts

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

In today's global economy, business investment is largely driven by how timely a project can be permitted, built and operational. South Carolina's regulatory permitting process must be efficient and based on the rule of law as it relates to the timely issuance of permits.

The South Carolina Chamber supports

- Ensuring state regulations are no more stringent than the federal government, specifically dealing with the issuance of permits, unless there is significant justification
- Finding a legislative solution that allows private and public companies to fairly compete in the waste disposal business
- Streamlining the regulatory process so regulatory agencies deliver an estimate of time within which a permit decision will be made, provided the applicant has given all the necessary information needed for the decision
- Developing equitable solutions to renewable energy initiatives in South Carolina
- Ensuring businesses are not subject to frivolous lawsuits under the Pollution Control Act

FEDERAL ISSUES

South Carolina must advocate for issues at the federal level to ensure South Carolina's business climate prospers and creates jobs.

The South Carolina Chamber supports

- Funding for the Port of Charleston deepening project
- Reauthorizing the Export-Import Bank
- Ensuring that federal regulations are not overly burdensome to business from agencies such as the NLRB, EPA and OSHA
- Funding to maintain operations at the Savannah River Site & the Savannah River National Laboratory
- Reforming immigration policy on border control, guest worker programs, e-Verify and legal pathways to citizenship
- Finding energy and environment solutions to offshore drilling exploration and the XL Pipeline

