

2018 State Legislative Agenda

Public Policy and Organizational Priorities

The Public Policy and Organizational Priorities of the North Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce, CVB, support and advocate two distinct strategies:

1. Grow our North Myrtle Beach Visitor and Destination Market
2. Diversify the North Myrtle Beach Economy

The following position statements have been adopted by the Board of Directors of the North Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau to advance these strategies as priority issues of importance to the business members of this organization. These issues were determined important through the results of a member survey, briefings from statewide business associations, and research by staff and the Legislative Committee of the Public Policy Council of the chamber. This now becomes the 2018 State Legislative Agenda and will be presented to our state legislative delegation for support and assistance.

Tourism – Grow our Premier Destination Market

The Chamber strongly advocates recurring state funding to grow and market the tourism industry as an investment in the state's economy. The tourism / hospitality industry is the number one industry in South Carolina and in our region of the state. In terms of taxes generated to the state and the local community; the thousands of jobs created directly and indirectly; and the millions of visitors we attract, no other industry in the state has a bigger return on investment.

We support:

- Opposition to recurring proviso which allows for the redirecting of restricted A-Tax funding at the local level, or any new legislation that might allow the redirection of these funds specifically those 30% restricted funds for out-of-area marketing.
- Strengthening the powers and duties of the existing Tourism Expenditure Review Committee (TERC) as it relates to oversight of how A-Tax dollars are expended by municipalities and DMO's at the local level. Reporting of the committee's business should also be more frequent and timely.
- Dedicated matching funds to incentivize private funding for non-regional Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO's)
- New legislation that creates a State Beach Renourishment infrastructure bank that recognizes the importance of South Carolina's beaches and the economic value provided to our citizens which provides dollar for dollar matching funds to communities committed to ongoing maintenance to its beaches to help self-fund this maintenance and renourishment process. Communities which provide local funding for this purpose would be given a higher priority to receive matching funds from the State Renourishment Infrastructure Bank if approved.
- Recreation and Saltwater Fishing - see previous explanation under 'Economic Development.'
- Establishing a fair, level playing field for online taxation of transient rentals; oppose loophole(s) proposed by / for OTAs.
- The enforcement of current laws for the collection of all appropriate licenses and taxes from individuals or businesses who rent property commercially for more than 30 nights in a given calendar year.

Infrastructure / Transportation

Improving South Carolina's infrastructure is directly related to economic growth, safety, and quality of life for our citizens.

We support:

- A sustainable, long-term funding solution for our state’s roads and bridges.
- New legislation that creates a State Bank Renourishment Bank (see complete position under Tourism)
- Revenue options, including the removal of sales tax exemptions on motor fuel; raising sales tax exemption cap on vehicles; dedicating these funds directly to infrastructure.
- State funding of I-73/I-74, as well as the expansion of Highway 9 to four lanes connecting to I-95.
- Continued funding participation in beach renourishment to protect investment as visitor destination.
- Offshore storm water discharge improvements, in addition to addressing the flooding issues on Main Street and Ocean Boulevard as part of the city’s water outfall plan, under the auspices of public safety, environment and health with funding support from state and federal governments.

Economic Development

The Chamber supports legislation that will promote prosperity through economic development and the creation of a sustainable competitive business environment. In particular, we encourage efforts to improve our state, community, and region’s efforts to expand existing business and attract quality new jobs. South Carolina must continue to improve its overall business climate to create a competitive business environment while addressing the critical shortage of experienced workers due to those on the verge of retirement.

We support:

- Legislation to encourage and provide incentives for wind energy development including offshore wind farms off the coast of South Carolina and in particular North Myrtle Beach as part of its wind initiative to serve as a demonstration city in building the local economy and developing energy independence. And, legislation to offset renewable energy cost premiums incurred by companies with mandatory renewable energy standards wishing to relocate into a wind energy economic zone within our territory. (S. 166)
- Recreational and saltwater fishing which is vital to the coastal economy of South Carolina and employs thousands of local and state residents directly and indirectly. Although we are supportive of sound environmental measures which protect our most valuable natural resources we are opposed to the recent plans by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) to ignore the input gathered during 26 “port meetings” seeking stakeholder input into the long term plan known as the “Vision Project.” This input showed overwhelming opposition to catch shares, expensive vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and more no-fishing Marine Protected Areas (MPA’s).
- Our status as a “right to work” state, which is under assault due to our rapidly growing manufacturing sector.
- Standardizing the business licensing process statewide with uniform renewal dates and standard classifications and the ability to file online through the Secretary of State.

Workforce and Education – Workforce Development

The most pressing issue facing South Carolina’s business community, both now and over the long-term is workforce development and closing the skills gap. South Carolina’s business community needs targeted strategies that will increase the number of people with the right skills in the talent pipeline. The Chamber is committed to support the following initiatives and programs.

We support:

- Workforce development priorities identified by the SC State Chamber, including growing apprenticeship opportunities, focusing on becoming the home choice for veterans leaving the service by fully exempting military retirement benefits, expanding policies to reintegrate ex-offenders into the workplace, shrink the skills gap by working with K-12, higher education and other partners, focus on soft skills development for students, and address the growing prescription drug and opioid epidemic.
- Apprenticeship participation growth
- Expansion of Career and Technology Education
- 0% State income tax rate for military retirement benefits
- Ex-offender workforce integration programs
- Tuition support for non-credit bearing State Licensed or Industry Recognized credentials for critical needs jobs
- Re-establishment of the Education and Economic Development Coordinating Council.

Environment / Energy – Assure a Sustainable Economy

As a major factor in our community's and region's sustainable development, the chamber encourages legislation to ensure that environmental regulations support a growing economy while balancing and protecting the community's and regions' quality of life. Environmental legislation and regulations should not necessarily increase the administrative burden resulting in unnecessary rules, regulations, or project delays becoming cost prohibitive to business. 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.

We support:

- Ensure sufficient protections are in place for ratepayers.
- Alternative energy research and development, in particular wind and solar.
- State guidelines and regulations to support and provide incentives for the North Myrtle Beach community-based wind energy program and sustainable energy plan including offshore wind farms.
- Expanding and increasing existing tax credits for renewable energy equipment to include wind.
- Ensuring state regulations are no more stringent than the federal government, specifically dealing with the issuance of permits, unless there is significant justification.
- 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.

Healthcare

The rising cost of healthcare is becoming the number one concern for business especially small business which leads the state in job creation. The chamber is committed to supporting and encouraging legislation which will help to relieve this cost burden to business.

We support:

- An increase in the state's cigarette / tobacco tax to the southeastern average, using the revenue to provide premium assistance and small business tax credits, while addressing the high risk pool with residual dollars from the credits.
- Support the fully funded expansion of Medicaid in South Carolina; funds from the federal government would provide 100% funding of Medicaid for SC residents with incomes up to 138% of federal poverty level (about \$31,000 for a family of 4)

- Statewide smoke-free legislation for all workplaces.

Tax Policy / Taxes – Make our tax system more competitive

Tax policy is critical to companies deciding to open, expand, or locate in South Carolina. Decisions are based largely on competitive rates, predictability, and stability.

We support:

- Modernizing the state’s tax code to reflect a tax strategy that is competitive and that supports a vision of long-term economic prosperity, including mechanisms for funding critical needs such as education, infrastructure, etc.
- The business license fee structure should be reformed so rates are standardized and consistent statewide. One form, one expiration date, and ability to file online.
- Establishing a fair, level playing field for online taxation of transient rentals; oppose loophole(s) proposed by / for OTAs.
- The enforcement of current laws for the collection of all appropriate licenses and taxes from individuals or businesses who rent property commercially for more than 30 nights in a given calendar year.
- Lower property taxes for businesses (currently some of highest in the nation)
- Reducing income tax burden on state’s workforce making us more competitive in the Southeast.
- Streamline the business license fee system and make process more uniform while minimizing fiscal impacts to municipalities.

Good Government

Many of the problems faced at the local, state, and federal levels, stem from a lack of qualified, experienced, and/or committed candidates willing to seek public office. We believe, as a premier chamber of commerce, that we have a responsibility to help change this by providing non-partisan educational and training opportunities to identify and support qualified candidates at all levels. We also believe in our right and duty to advocate responsibly on behalf of our business members and the community we serve.

We support:

- Aggressive role in candidate recruitment to attract pro-business candidates with general election appeal.
- Opposition towards any attempt to limit business community engagement in the electoral and policymaking arenas at the local, federal and state levels.