



PUBLIC
POLICY
AGENDA

2021



GROWING BUSINESS

Industrial and commercial property tax rates and the ease of doing business in the City of Columbia and Richland County must be competitive with other markets within South Carolina and in other states. This will enable the region to maximize economic growth by attracting more new business and helping more existing businesses expand. Additionally, it will allow for the development and retention of a talented workforce as new jobs are created.

Taxes & License Fees:

The Chamber supports comprehensive tax reform that encompasses local, state and education funding. Reform must provide for needed services and infrastructure while reducing businesses' tax burden by eliminating duplication of fees, encouraging consolidation of services and greater efficiency, and examining spending on nonessential services.

Furthermore, the Chamber believes the Property Tax Study commissioned by the City of Columbia in 2020 is an important step in advancing the region's work on tax reform. We support the study's efficacy and agree with its findings. The Chamber should participate on the City's Task Force being convened with leaders representing the City of Columbia, Richland County, Richland School Districts One and Two, other taxing authorities and key constituencies to work together to reduce the tax burden on our businesses and citizens. The Chamber believes the findings of the study and the solutions prescribed in the study should be implemented as part of tax reform for our region.

The Chamber believes tax reforms must be enacted that are developed collaboratively and provide data driven solutions that:

- Take into consideration the Tax Study and identified solutions.
- Make property tax rates more competitive and eliminate selective tax breaks.
- Coordinate school system finances to realize economic synergy across the region and districts.
- Identify and eliminate operational inefficiencies and duplicative services in our government.
- Limit spending to enhance savings realized as reforms are implemented.
- Revamp Act 388 and work with SC State Legislators to identify programmatic changes and identify phased-in approach to bring about tax reform.

Permitting Process:

The Chamber will work with business and government continuously to simplify and streamline permitting processes that will allow businesses to invest in their operations and achieve economic growth in a timely, efficient manner.

Regulations & Ordinances:

The Chamber will advocate for a regulatory environment that promotes business growth and reduces unnecessary costs.

Liability Protections

Protections should be provided to businesses or institutions, acting in good faith and following local, state, and/or federal guideline to prevent COVID exposure, should be protected from liability absent clear and convincing evidence of gross negligence.



EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Our region's businesses must have access to a well-educated workforce to meet market demands, and citizens must have meaningful employment opportunities that enable them to stay here and grow our community.

Educational Performance:

The Chamber:

- Encourages focusing on student success in the classroom by equipping teachers with the tools needed to help each student achieve positive results.
- Supports the modernization of the state's education funding model to make sure that every student is afforded a high-quality public education.
- Will work with the Legislature to make South Carolina teacher salaries more competitive regionally and nationally.
- Will continue efforts to have the Education Finance Act (EFA) fully funded as required by state law.

Talent Pipeline:

The Chamber:

- Will work with local education and business partners to develop programs that build skills, foster a strong work ethic, and create a talent pipeline that ensures our region has a qualified, capable workforce.
- Supports state funding for programs that foster more youth apprenticeships statewide.
- Supports the Higher Education Finance Act, increasing funding for state colleges and universities to relieve the tuition burden for South Carolina college students.

Talent Retention:

The Chamber will work with the local centers of educational excellence to ensure there are workplace opportunities for students and veterans to live, work and play in the Greater Columbia area.

Military Veteran Workforce:

The Chamber will work with community partners to identify opportunities to hire military spouses and to retain a qualified veteran workforce for the area.



MILITARY

The military has a \$6.8 billion economic impact on our region. Retaining and expanding the military's role here, through involvement with defense contractors and adjoining bases, is key to meeting the challenges of the military's changing landscape.



Military Retention:

The Chamber will actively engage with senior Department of Defense personnel and state and federal lawmakers to anticipate change and react accordingly to ensure the military community maintains its relevancy and is ready to respond.

Military Advocacy:

The Chamber will utilize its military outreach initiatives to liaise, advocate, and integrate activities between the military, its families and students, military support organizations, the Legislature, and the Midlands community to continuously promote and grow the mission.

Military Engagement, Expansion and Retention:

The Chamber will work with our military and community partners to enhance the military's values in the region to ensure the Greater Columbia community remains a "Great American Defense Community" well into the future.

The Chamber will work with state legislature to expand opportunities for transitioning military families to earn professional licenses in South Carolina.



The Columbia Chamber supports working together with all constituents of the local community to foster a superior quality of life and safe environment. We collaborate with elected officials and community partners to encourage transparency, inclusivity, economic development, the creation of new jobs and expansion of existing businesses.

PUBLIC POLICY **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Each year the Columbia Chamber Public Policy Committee takes a position regarding key issues that affect the business climate. Those positions are explained in this brochure.

- Support legislation and public policies that will help the region to attract new quality business, industry and jobs.
- Help entrepreneurs create new and expand existing businesses.
- Help the region retain, recruit and grow existing business and industry.



**PROMOTING A
BUSINESS
FRIENDLY
ENVIRONMENT**

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