

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD POLICIES AND POSITIONS – FEDERAL ISSUES

ENERGY POLICY 2006 Board of Directors Approved February 22, 2006

Increasingly, Mobile-area businesses are concerned about energy availability and price. Specifically, wholesale natural gas prices are at record high levels. The extremely tight supply/demand situation and emotional trading volatility have produced record high gas prices. These high energy costs are having a harsh affect on the bottom line of existing area industry and business. Heavy users of natural gas are more carefully weighing expansion decisions, as are those companies considering an investment in our community.

Natural gas production from mature areas is declining and barely able to keep up with demand. New areas must be explored to produce more natural gas in an environmentally responsible manner. Conservation and energy efficiency are important and can help, but conservation will not be enough to reduce prices. Increased gas supplies are needed.

While America has abundant deposits of natural gas, access to them is restricted or denied altogether. The vast potential of new gas offshore cannot be realized when 85 percent of the Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) is under leasing moratoria and is off limits. Producers in the Intermountain West (between the Pacific and Rocky Mountain ranges), even when able to obtain leases, face long permitting delays, red tape and lawsuits from activists that effectively keep new supplies from the market.

To address this situation, the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce supports a comprehensive, federal energy policy to:

1. Increase the supply of energy in a manner that is safe and protective of the environment.
 - a. Give coastal states the option to allow natural gas production off their coasts by providing access to the Outer Continental Shelf for exploration and development.
 - b. Increase onshore access to oil and gas by allowing exploration and development of the North Slope of Alaska (ANWR).
 - c. Expedite permitting process for new energy source infrastructure, such as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants.
2. Improve the regulatory climate.
 - a. Encourage use of diverse fuels for generating electricity, including nuclear power, clean coal and renewable sources (i.e., solar and wind).

- b. Regulations should recognize and respect regional differences in the generation and delivery of energy, (i.e., don't raise rates in one region to subsidize another).
 - c. Congress should require the Commodity Futures Trading Commissions (CFTC) to strengthen its oversight of the New York Mercantile Exchanges (NYMEX) and its impact on natural gas pricing volatility.
 - d. Expedite the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process to allow for environmentally sound natural gas production, while retaining NEPA's environmental benefits.
3. Promote comprehensive energy conservation and encourage research and development of alternative energy sources.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM POLICY
Board of Directors Approved September 27, 2006

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce supports comprehensive immigration reform which strengthens our national security, including increased protection of our borders, while providing a supplemental workforce for American businesses and industry. Reform should:

- Overhaul the current procedures used to process immigrant applications, giving a priority to those already in the process attempting to gain a legal worker status. The current system is ineffective with lengthy delays which encourages immigrants to bypass the system.
- Provide an earned pathway to legalization for existing undocumented workers already contributing to our economy, provided that they are law-abiding and are prepared to embrace the obligations and values of our society.
- Create a monitored guest worker program to fill the growing gaps in America's workforce. In some cases permanent immigrant workers will be needed.
- Provide an effective, affordable and workable worker verification system that will not unduly burden employers.
- Ensure the continuity and expansion of H-1B, H-2B and L-1 visas for professionals and highly valued workers.

**POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING
INTERSTATE 10 CONGESTION
Board of Director Approved May 28, 2008**

The Mobile community continues to wrestle with growing congestion along I-10. Locally, there is no indication our economic growth will slow. Nationally, a study* of projected freight movements labeled the I-10 tunnel a major bottleneck that presents a threat to public safety as well as to the vitality of the local, regional and national economy. In fact, there were blockages in the tunnel once every three days during 2006.

Many years ago the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) began a project to address the situation. The purpose and need of the project was to:

- Alleviate existing and projected traffic congestion on I-10 corridor
- Improve highway safety and driving conditions
- Reduce hazardous materials traversing the Central Business District
- Provide transportation improvements that meet interstate standards

Initially, 14 potential, alternative bridge routes were identified. These were narrowed to five and presented for public input in 2005. Three routes were then identified for further study. These routes – labeled A, B and C – cross the Mobile River, just south of downtown Mobile.

In 2005 the Chamber wrote the Alabama Department of Transportation to emphasize four criteria for any potential bridge route:

- That the bridge not curtail and jeopardize maritime commerce and construction;
- That the bridge have the ability to move the most people and product possible;
- That the bridge have minimal environmental impact; and
- That the project is doable in a reasonable timeframe so that we do not reach the gridlock that will inevitably come our way if the bridge is not forthcoming.

Knowing the importance of the maritime industry to Mobile, and given concerns from Chamber members along the waterfront, Chamber leadership recently conducted interviews to determine an acceptable route that would meet the stated purpose and need and be least damaging to maritime interests.

From those interviews, we request officials eliminate the southernmost route C because of its impact on the maritime community. Further, we request ALDOT and the Federal Highway Administration review current data on the “northern route’s” capability to address the project’s stated purpose and need, especially given recent economic developments, including the pending openings of Mobile Container Terminal, ThyssenKrupp, Berg Steel and Northrop Grumman/EADS.

Finally, in the event the proposed “northern route” does not comply with the project’s purpose and need as defined above, then the Chamber supports a bridge route that passes no further north than route A and no further south than route B.