

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

EDUCATION FUNDING POLICY STATEMENT Board of Directors Approved December 10, 2001

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce has long worked to improve the quality and funding of public education because of their critical link to the quality of life for all citizens.

The Chamber recognizes Alabama's education budget faces proration in the current fiscal year. Alabama cannot afford to suffer through another year of proration.

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce believes:

- Alabama business should be taxed at a level that is fair, equitable and allows our state to create and attract new jobs;
- The Alabama Legislature should not adopt funding solutions that are one-time, band-aid approaches to education funding. A comprehensive, long-term view of our tax structure and expenditures should be a part of any solution to prevent future proration;
- Alabama should establish a "rainy-day" contingency fund and use the previous year's actual revenues in budgeting, rather than relying on projections to prevent future proration.

The Chamber calls on the Governor and the Alabama Legislature to adopt a more equitable, permanent proration prevention plan that will help our schools and will continue to bring jobs and businesses to our state.

**POLICY STATEMENT REGARDING
PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING IN ALABAMA
Board of Directors Approved January 29, 2003**

WHEREAS, we believe there is a direct correlation between the level of education and an increase in earnings, strengthened job security, and overall economic and personal growth for Alabama citizens;

WHEREAS, we believe a stronger public education system from pre-kindergarten through post-graduate studies will enable companies to achieve higher productivity and cost savings afforded by a skilled and stable workforce;

WHEREAS, we believe today's students will be the future skilled workforce needed to advance Alabama's economic development, industrial recruitment and job growth;

WHEREAS, we believe there is no stronger contributor to fostering economic development, industry growth, and increased personal incomes than the proper education and continued skill attainment of our current and future workforce;

WHEREAS, we believe preparing an educated workforce extends beyond a K-12 public education system to include those technical skills acquired through post-secondary colleges and professional skills attained through institutions of higher education;

WHEREAS, we believe new revenue for public education is needed and that sound measures to ensure proper accountability should be in place to administer and monitor public education funding;

WHEREAS, we believe all individuals and corporations doing business within the state of Alabama should be willing to pay an equitable share of the total investment needed to advance statewide educational excellence;

WHEREAS, we wish to partner with other advocates of education in Alabama to promote the value of excellence in education at all levels and for all students, regardless of the public education system in which they are enrolled, their race, their economic level or their county of residency;

WHEREAS, we support the Alabama Department of Education, the Campaign for Alabama, and other advocacy groups in their efforts to gain the public support essential for improving education in Alabama;

WHEREAS, we believe Alabama's school children deserve a high quality education supported with comparable resources to Alabama's peer states in the Southeast (Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and West Virginia).

NOW, THEREFORE, THE MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE calls upon the Governor and Legislature of the state of Alabama to take immediate action to reform education spending in ways necessary to maximize public trust and to secure sufficient additional revenues for high quality education in Alabama from pre-kindergarten through post secondary education. Such reforms should be based on the following principles:

- 1) Accountability in the education funding process will maximize public trust, and public trust must be enhanced before additional funding can be secured;
- 2) The effort to properly fund public education, including pre-school, K-12 and higher education, must be pursued within the context of improving tax fairness in Alabama;
- 3) Increased revenue for education must be provided with a proper balance among revenue sources (income taxes, property taxes, sales taxes, etc.) and a proper balance between state and local sources.

**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.

**RESOLUTION of SUPPORT
for PROTECTION and RE-AUTHORIZATION of FOREVER WILD
Board of Directors Approved September 22, 2010**

WHEREAS, in the past 17 years of its existence, the Forever Wild Program has been managed by a diverse Board of Trustees that represents the broad interests of Alabama's citizens;

WHEREAS, through the assistance of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), the program has received outstanding fiscal stewardship, and has served as a model for effective government administration;

WHEREAS, these state lands provide an enhancement to the quality of life for the citizens of Greater Mobile and Coastal Alabama, as recreational lands and habitat for Alabama's natural heritage of plants and animals;

WHEREAS, these Forever Wild lands maintain open space that provides for clean air and water necessary for a healthy environment;

WHEREAS, the funds supporting land acquisition by the Forever Wild Program are derived from the sale of Alabama's natural gas resources, thereby re-investing one natural resource into another, all without an increase in taxes;

WHEREAS, these lands support the state's tourism industry, and serve as an asset of the State of Alabama benefiting our collective economies;

WHEREAS, the State of Alabama acting through the Forever Wild Program has secured over 75,000 acres of land in the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, along the Perdido River, at Grand Bay Savanna, Splinter Hill Bog, the Weeks Bay Reserve, Lillian Swamp and Bayou Sara, all of which lie within close proximity to the citizens of Greater Mobile and Coastal Alabama;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors supports the protection and re-authorization of the Forever Wild Program under Constitutional Amendment 543, thereby extending the Forever Wild Program's funding through legislative act, as presently provided under Constitutional Amendment 543, to support the purchase of additional conservation lands within Alabama.

**REQUEST FOR ACTION BY THE MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CONCERNING METAL THEFT ISSUE IMPACTING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY
September 22, 2011**

The widespread theft of metals occurring across our community and state continues to cost area businesses, utilities, schools, local governments and others thousands in replacement and repair costs as well as lost staff and operations time. In an effort to curb this specific crime plaguing the community, both the Mayor's Office and Mobile County have considered new laws or ordinances to address the issue. However, without a state-wide law to reach all areas of Alabama, those selling stolen metal simply travel to a different city or county. Both Mississippi and Georgia have passed secondary metal sales laws, pushing much of the crime and illegal sales into Alabama where very little regulation currently exists.

Members of the Chamber's State Governmental Affairs subcommittee came together in August with the Mobile County Sheriff's office, the City of Mobile, the Mobile Police Department and members of the business community to discuss possible crime deterrents and community solutions that would effectively reduce this costly crime, without placing undue hardship on the secondary metal sales industry. Out of a series of discussions came a list of possible new regulations on the sale of secondary metals that would assist law enforcement officials in tracing stolen metals and tracking repeat offenders. Chamber lobbyist Beth Marietta Lyons prepared the bill and Senator Ben Brooks has agreed to introduce and push for support of the bill in the 2012 regular Legislative Session. Senate Bill 35 was pre-filed on Aug 18, 2011. A summary of the proposed regulations are attached.

It is requested that the Board endorse the following statement to be included in the Chamber's 2012 Community Legislative Agenda: *Support legislation establishing more accountability for the sale of metal products to secondary metal recyclers.*