

MOBILE CHAMBER

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA *2023*



**Mobile
Chamber**

The Mobile Chamber has served as the Mobile area's progressive business advocate since 1836. Mobile connects Alabama to the world, and the Chamber is here to advocate for legislation that grows Mobile and Alabama's influence in the region, across the country and around the world.

FUNDAMENTAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ALABAMA

The Mobile Chamber supports increasing Alabama's investment in transportation infrastructure to sustain and promote economic growth, job creation, quality of life and public safety. The Chamber recognizes there is a gap between current state resources and what is required to address the highway, bridge, and other road maintenance and capital needs in Alabama today and in the future, specifically for critical needs such as building the I-10 Mobile River bridge and completing the four-laning of U.S. Highway 98 from Mobile's city-limits to the Mississippi state line.

Work in support of the Mobile Airport Authority's efforts to secure final funding of Mobile's commercial terminal at the Mobile International Airport.

Advocate for adequately funding Alabama's Education budget, including Alabama's first-class pre-kindergarten, career tech, dual enrollment and other innovative programs, in order to ensure a competitive increase in student scoring, higher graduation rates and competitive college and career ready graduates; maintain high academic standards and expectations for all Alabama students.

Support a fiscal year 2024 state budget appropriation for the University of South Alabama that reflects the institution's positive impact on its students, community and our region, along with additional funding to support USA Health in recognition of its unique mission as the region's only academic health care provider with a Level One Trauma Center, Burn Unit and Neonatal Intensive Care facility.

Support efforts to expand and maintain a comprehensive statewide veterans assistance program to ensure Alabama is the best state for military families and personnel (active and retired) to live and work.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES, AMERICA'S LARGEST EMPLOYER

The Mobile Chamber supports preserving jobs and economic growth in all sectors through the reduction of overly burdensome regulations that increase the cost of doing business, create uncertainty and have the potential to stifle growth.

Encourage the representation and engagement of the Alabama Innovation Commission and the Alabama STEM Council to improve the creation and growth of small businesses and entrepreneurial development in Alabama as well as workforce development opportunities across the state.

Support the growth and development of Mobile's entrepreneurial community and Innovation Portal's mapping of entrepreneurial talent to meet the growing technological needs of industry with state funding opportunities. Promote efforts to provide much-needed programming, skills training and funding for entrepreneurial clients, as well as enable the engagement of local industry to identify technological solutions to small business challenges.

As a member of the I-10 Gulf Coast Chamber Coalition, the Mobile Chamber supports the collaborative efforts to develop collective responses to shared challenges – such as FEMA response, flood insurance, infrastructure, oil and gas leasing, and coastal protection.

A HEALTHY ALABAMA

The Mobile Chamber supports strong effective measures to address the growing opioid and fentanyl crisis in Alabama that has detrimental effects on the availability of a qualified workforce, workplace safety, public safety, and overall community health.

Support and encourage the state leadership to pursue the estimated \$2 billion annually in federal funds available to create an Alabama-driven approach for Medicaid expansion which will return Alabama tax dollars to the state. Additionally, the chamber supports innovative approaches to reforming Alabama's current Medicaid program that includes the participation of the Alabama healthcare community to ensure access to care, cost control, and limit potential detrimental impacts to the Medicaid program.

Support efforts to expand mental and behavioral health programs to increase access to mental healthcare, increase diagnoses, and reduce suicide rates.

GOOD STEWARDSHIP OF ALABAMA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

The Mobile Chamber supports the continuation of federal payments to Alabama, specifically Mobile and Baldwin counties, from the 2006 Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA). Under GOMESA, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas receive a share of the revenue from oil and gas drilling in federal waters, which helps address coastal restoration, hurricane protection, and watershed management programs in coastal Alabama.

Advocate for investments in climate-resilient infrastructure like a new I-10 bridge in an effort to mitigate damage from future storms.

KEEPING ALABAMA OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The Mobile Chamber continues to advocate for the protection of businesses, both large and small, from legislation that would open the door to frivolous lawsuits.

Advocate for legislation that protects existing business infrastructure and creates an attractive environment for economic development, ensuring Alabama is widely known as a business-friendly state.

Support the funding and construction of the proposed I-10 Mobile River Bridge and partner with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Alabama Department of Transportation to actively seek construction funding through federal grants and other sources.

Support all efforts to increase the \$20M annual cap for the Alabama historic tax credit program for certified historic structures. The program is a proven incentive for bringing more investment capital into projects that positively impact job creation and sustained economic activity and is in such demand that it is oversubscribed with waitlisted projects across the state.

Support growth in the film and music industry in the State of Alabama by advocating for raising the incentive cap.

Continue support to fund the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mobile District Civil Works program in support of the deepening and widening and the annual operations and maintenance dredging of the Mobile Ship Channel; maintain necessary funding for the operation and maintenance of Alabama's commerce waterways, including the deepening of the Bayou la Batre and Coden ship channels.

Support reauthorization and extension of the Alabama Jobs Act (expiring 7/31/2023) and the Growing Alabama Tax Credit (expiring 7/31/2023) which have proved to be economic drivers in the State of Alabama.

Support the consolidation of the Mobile Area Water and Sewer System and the Mobile County Water and Sewer system, abolishing their respective Boards, and establishing a new board for sustained economic development success.

Support a state-vote on gaming which includes but is not limited to an education lottery, sportsbook, casino-style games at designated locations, a regulatory body, and a compact with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

Support the fiscal year 2023 state supplemental funding request for the redevelopment and modernization of the Alabama Aquarium at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, as a means of increasing tourism and educational opportunities in south Mobile County.

Support and encourage ongoing conversations between the City of Mobile and freight/passenger rail entities to limit trains from obstructing any public street, road, or highway crossing-at-grade within a Class 2 municipality in Mobile County.

TRAINING & ADVANCING ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE

The Mobile Chamber continues to identify needs and support demand-driven strategic workforce training initiatives in south Alabama's key economic growth sectors, including aerospace, maritime, advanced manufacturing, tourism, healthcare, and supply chain.

Work to meet the need for all citizens in our region by advocating for reentry and job skills training programs for those currently in correctional facilities, serving sentences for non-violent crimes. Promote and support apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities in partnership with key industry sector employers and community colleges in southwest Alabama.

Advocate for the investment in essential support services, including public transportation and childcare, the two most significant barriers to employment and training.

Promote and support scholarships and other funding opportunities to prepare existing and prospective students to earn credentials through Bishop State Community College's state-of-the-art Advanced Manufacturing Center, preparing individuals to enter high-demand, high-wage manufacturing occupations.

Promote and support programs offered by Bishop State Community College, including dual enrollment programs for high school students, rapid skill training programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials, for-credit certificate, and degree programs, and adult education programs.

Support and promote the integration of STEM curriculum and career exploration for K-12 students at an early age in elementary and middle school.

MADE BY ALABAMA, FOR AMERICA & THE WORLD

The Mobile Chamber supports current and future federal military contracts with Mobile-area employers, particularly the Navy's shipbuilding blueprint for the future which includes current and future small surface combatants and auxiliary ships to incorporate autonomous and unmanned surface vehicles, Expeditionary Fast Transports, and medical ships.

Support free and fair trade and investment policies that expand access to international markets, reduce trade barriers, and increase foreign direct investment creating a level playing field to put Mobile area families, businesses, and workers first and improving the overall international competitiveness of Alabama exporters.