

MOBILE CHAMBER



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2024



The Mobile Chamber has served as the Mobile area's leading business advocate for 188 years. Mobile connects Alabama to the world, and the Chamber advocates for legislation that grows Mobile and Alabama's influence in the region, across the country and around the world.

2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AT A GLANCE:



Transportation Infrastructure: Prioritizing key roadway projects like the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and securing final funding for Mobile's commercial terminal at the Mobile International Airport to support economic growth and safety.

Education: Advocating for increased funding for education at various levels, from pre-kindergarten to university, aiming for higher student achievement and workforce preparedness.

Healthcare: Addressing the opioid crisis, seeking federal funds for an Alabama-driven approach to close the coverage gap and expanding mental health programs to enhance overall community well-being.

Feel free to reach out to our Government Affairs team at the Mobile Chamber.



NANCY HEWSTON

Vice President
Communications & Advocacy
(703) 585-8796
nhewston@mobilechamber.com



LAYTON LITTLE

Director of Government Affairs
(662) 418-5431
llittle@mobilechamber.com

Career Tech and STEM: Promoting STEM education, providing access to higher education for all and investing in modernizing career-tech centers to align with industry standards.

Business Support: Protecting businesses from frivolous lawsuits, advocating for a business-friendly environment and supporting infrastructure projects like the I-10 Mobile River Bridge.

Cultural and Economic Development: Supporting the film and music industry, increased funding for historical tax credits, and encouraging growth in key sectors like aerospace, manufacturing and tourism.

Legal Reforms: Seeking tort law reforms, property acquisition streamlining and advocating for a fair civil justice system.

Workforce Development: Supporting demand-driven workforce training, reentry programs for non-violent offenders and advocating for essential support services like public transportation and childcare.

Natural Resources: Advocating for federal payments to support coastal restoration and infrastructure to mitigate damage from future storms.

International Competitiveness: Supporting military contracts, free and fair trade policies, and reducing trade barriers to benefit local families, businesses and workers.



Dear Mobile Chamber Member,

Challenges and opportunities have been the defining features of Mobile's post-pandemic economy. Fortunately, state policymakers have been proactive in helping employers overcome these challenges and capitalize on opportunities, but there is more work to be done.

The Mobile Chamber's 2024 Legislative Agenda offers a policy roadmap for how we build on this momentum. The Chamber's priorities were determined by business leaders across the region through meetings, surveys and research and were vetted and approved by our Government Affairs Committee and Board of Directors. They serve as the agenda for the governmental affairs team as we advocate on behalf of our membership.

As the voice of Mobile's business community in Montgomery, the Chamber looks forward to another successful session in support of employers and job creators.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Byrne".

Bradley Byrne
*President and CEO
Mobile Chamber*



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Cross".

Melissa Cross
*Chamber Board Chairman
President and Owner
McAleer's Office Furniture*

Your Involvement Matters!

The Mobile Chamber coordinates government affairs efforts on behalf of its members and the Mobile business community. The Chamber's member-driven government affairs program includes establishing positions on issues that impact our members and the economic advancement of the region, educating elected officials about these issues and encouraging membership involvement in the Chamber's advocacy efforts.

The Chamber's non-partisan Government Affairs Committee is comprised of members from diverse industries. This committee is responsible for helping to guide the Chamber's advocacy efforts by reviewing pending legislation and regulations for their impact on the membership, developing positions that will enhance economic growth and developing programs that inform and encourage members to participate in the Chamber's government affairs initiatives.

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 \$20 million annual cap and return the qualifying age from 75 years to 60 years for certified historic structures. For the Alabama historic tax credit program, 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 waitlisted with 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.

The Mobile Chamber supports a statewide-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 a fiscal year 2024 state supplemental funding request for the Dauphin Island Sea Lab to fund the construction of a new dormitory designed to 1) house in-residence graduate students displaced from on-campus housing by Hurricane Sally, 2) increase housing for summer-term undergraduates that would allow for the increased diversification of academic programs, and 3) support course requirements of new bachelor marine science degrees at the University of South Alabama and University of Alabama via a new spring term.

The Mobile Chamber supports and encourages 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.

The Mobile Chamber supports reforms of Alabama's tort laws and other civil justice reforms in order to strike an appropriate balance between protecting consumer and business interests, building a stronger business climate, and creating a fairer civil justice system for all.

The Mobile Chamber supports a reduced redemption period allowing local governments or land banks to acquire tax delinquent properties not purchased at auction, streamlining the process for community development initiatives.

TRAINING & ADVANCING ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE

Continue 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 increased funding for dual enrollment programs for high school students, rapid skill training programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials, for-credit certificates, 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, and aviation training programs such as FlightPath9, Bishop State's aviation manufacturing partnership with Airbus.

Mobile Chamber supports additional access to public higher education for individuals without a social security number in Alabama to cultivate a diverse and skilled workforce and create an opportunity for all aspiring learners.

The Mobile Chamber supports additional funding to renovate and modernize Mobile County's high school career-tech centers, which is imperative to ensuring that students have access to state-of-the-art facilities, fostering a conducive learning environment in line with industry standards, better equipping students with the practical skills needed to excel in a rapidly changing job market and contributing to the long-term economic development of this region.

Support the fiscal year 2025 state budget appropriation for the Alabama School of Math and Science to enhance the facilities, equipment, and educational offerings at the state's only 100-percent public and 100-percent residential school that is exceeding state averages – including a 100-percent graduation rate, an average ACT score of 30 – with 75 percent of its graduates attending college in the state and 65 percent working in state.



MADE IN MOBILE, FOR AMERICA & THE WORLD

Support 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.

A HEALTHY ALABAMA

Support 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 to close the coverage gap 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.

The Mobile Chamber supports 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

Support 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.



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 that there will always be a gap between state resources and infrastructure needs, particularly with regard to the development of new projects. The Chamber believes it is critical to invest state resources in roadways that spur economic growth and increase public safety, namely the I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project, the US 90/98 Causeway, U.S. HWY 45, the West Alabama Corridor (HWY 43), State Route 158 from Mobile to the Mississippi line, improvements to I-65 and I-10, and Baldwin County Beach Express Extension.

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 2025 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 state investment of one-time and ongoing education funding to enhance the facilities and equipment at all four campuses of Bishop State Community College, focused around improving student support services and workforce development training opportunities to meet regional occupational demand.

The Mobile Chamber supports 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.

The Mobile Chamber continues to support an industrial or research enterprise's right to appeal the fair market valuation of its property and equipment while continuing to consider obsolescence as part of its fair market value calculation.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES, AMERICA'S LARGEST EMPLOYER

Preserve 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.

The Mobile Chamber supports extending the notification period for insurance policy cancellations, aiming to provide individuals and businesses with increased time to prepare for any potential changes or to seek alternative coverage. This adjustment would offer more stability and assistance to policyholders in navigating insurance transitions.



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