



# 2026 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

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## Mission

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization serving more than 800 businesses, industries, civic organizations and educational institutions. Our mission is to promote business and commerce for the Decatur-Morgan County area through volunteer leadership in economic, political and social development.

## Public Policy Agenda

As the voice of business, the Chamber is committed to keeping our area competitive and strengthening the business climate. One of the most effective ways we fulfill this role is through the legislative process.

The Chamber's Public Policy Agenda is developed through input provided by our members and provides a clear foundation for the positions we take throughout the year. As we interact with elected officials, this agenda ensures alignment with the needs of those we serve, while guiding our efforts in engaging, understanding, advocating and promoting initiatives and partnerships that support a business-friendly environment free of obstacles to growth and development at all levels of government.

We encourage businesses to use this document as a resource when discussing key concerns, and we welcome additional issues that may arise throughout the year.

# ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce believes in supporting small business growth through business-friendly initiatives and expanded access to services; fostering a community culture of responsibility and accountability that enhances quality of life; and encouraging sustainable development along the Tennessee River, including recreational, educational, commercial and residential opportunities.

## THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

### FEDERAL - STATE - LOCAL

- The mission of the Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DDRA) to implement the Envision Decatur plan updated in the One Decatur plan and urges funding for its projects updated in the most recent DDRA Five Year Strategic Plan.
- Funding for projects, initiatives, programs and agencies that enhance an arts-based economy and all aspects of the quality of life for residents of Decatur-Morgan County.
- Policies that promote enhanced access to affordable broadband for our citizens and businesses; encourage new investment, jobs and technology development and deployment across our community; and promote increased competition and options for consumers and businesses. We support public policy that leads to the promotion of investment in deploying broadband facilities to the greatest extent and avoids unnecessary government intervention and regulation of the internet, which will inevitably drive-up costs for businesses and consumers.
- The “Singing River Trail”, a 200-plus-mile greenway system strengthening regional bonds and creating new health and wellness, educational, economic, tourism and entrepreneurial opportunities for the people and communities throughout North Alabama.
- The proposed City Harbor project and urges TVA to fast-track its approval. Necessary improvements, including addressing residential deed restrictions based on elevations for condominiums and any other impediments requiring TVA coordination, should be prioritized by our elected officials to ensure this economic development project moves forward expeditiously.
- The protection of the Tennessee River from any economic development project that produces hazardous materials, poses potential environmental threats or negatively affects our community’s quality of life.

- Funding for public libraries as vital community places that fulfill the informational, educational, cultural and recreational interests for residents of Decatur and Morgan County.

## FEDERAL - STATE

- The extension of safe-harbor legislation to limit legal liability for those businesses, churches, hospitals and other organizations that have properly followed all employee, customer and visitor guidance and protocols.
- The Governor seeking federal approval for the transfer of unutilized opportunity zones to more promising eligible census tracts under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 while also supporting adjustments to existing boundaries and the addition of new opportunity zones.

## STATE - LOCAL

- All initiatives aimed at establishing and funding a Civil Rights District within Decatur-Morgan County. This district would encompass the Decatur Scottsboro Boys Civil Rights Museum and the Judge J. Horton Legal Learning Center located in Old Town, offering invaluable educational opportunities and training, all with the objective of integrating it into the Alabama Civil Rights Trail.
- Efforts to evaluate the need for expansion of Point Mallard Park.
- Funding a master plan for Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge.
- The Launch Regional Partnership to strengthen regional collaboration, align economic development priorities and advocate with one voice for critical infrastructure needs.
- The Flawless Delivery training program to strengthen customer service excellence across the community and state.
- The continuation of Alabama Tourism Department Legislative Grants benefiting local community events.

## FEDERAL

- Ongoing funding for the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge—a national and regional treasure—for improvements outlined in the One Decatur comprehensive plan, as well as additional support for adequate staffing.
- The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) infilling space vacated by the Federal Courts with new federal services to bring people and jobs, maintain the property and increase available parking at the U.S. Post Office building in Decatur.

- Maintaining the National Scenic Byways program with an appropriation of at least \$25 million. Alabama has four National Scenic Byways: Alabama's Coastal Connection, the Natchez Trace Parkway, Selma to Montgomery Historic Trail and the Talladega Scenic Drive.
- Congress strengthening enforcement mechanisms against unfair trade, including such practices as dumping, currency manipulation, closed markets and anti-competitive industrial policies. The Chamber recognizes a limited rationale for government intervention, based on legitimate national security concerns and unilateral efforts to level the trade playing field.
- Congressional oversight and accountability in the evaluation of trade agreements such as the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA).

## STATE

- Policies and funding to encourage small business development, entrepreneurship and business lending programs throughout Alabama.
- Regional collaboration among economic development agencies.
- Catalyst, the state's comprehensive economic development plan and the mission of the state to diversify its economic development efforts and steer Alabama towards technology-focused, skills-based jobs that result in lasting opportunities for Alabama citizens.
- The renewal and continuous improvements to Alabama's statutory and discretionary incentive programs to assist in recruiting, retaining and sustaining new and existing businesses.
- The development of public-private partnerships especially in cases where public funds are not available for worthwhile projects.
- The privatization of the state-run ABC stores.
- Our state legislature interceding on behalf of business and economic growth to create a streamlined process for permitting access to state highways.
- State building codes being adopted and enforced uniformly across the state.
- The efforts of the Morgan County Economic Development Association (MCEDA) in locating, evaluating and developing new industrial sites for continued investment and job creation in Morgan County. The Chamber also supports MCEDA applying for site evaluation and development grants utilizing the state of Alabama's new Site Evaluation and Economic Development Strategy Act (SEEDS) program that will allow the State Industrial Development Authority to invest in and accelerate the development of industry-ready sites at a time when available sites are scarce.

- Tax legislation to create tax incentives for tourism product development, which is any facility or attraction that is used for tourism or travel purposes.
- The Film and Music Tax Credit Bill.
- Funding of the Alabama Tourism Department and their work to promote tourism in Alabama.
- The retention of funding in the state budget for the Alabama Bass Trail.
- The efforts of the Alabama Trails Commission to encourage all types of trails as outdoor recreation, thus boosting tourism and promoting a network of trails as an economic resource.
- The continued enforcement of short-term rental property owners paying the state lodging tax.
- The State of Alabama establishing and funding an annual grant program that supports strategic infrastructure improvements for the state's vital inland ports and waterways system.

## LOCAL

- The One Decatur comprehensive plan and its full funding and implementation by all responsible parties on the time schedule outlined in the plan.
- The City of Decatur's efforts to advance a growth strategy that prioritizes continued progress on the One Decatur comprehensive plan and a thorough evaluation of all strategies that promote intentional, sustainable development.
- The City of Decatur maintaining dedicated resources that can be readily allocated to viable economic development opportunities as they arise.
- Legislation to amend the Decatur Utilities Charter to allow participation in sewer and infrastructure expansion projects that support economic growth.

## Annexation

- The City of Decatur exploring the viability of annexation of property whose owners enjoy a benefit from city services and adjoining boundaries of Decatur.
- The annual adequate funding of the City of Decatur, Decatur Utilities Revolving Development Fund, along with the enforcement of our sewer annexation policy and a disciplined, consistent approach to dedicating funds to support future annexation into our community.
- The continued annexation of land for development and redevelopment adjacent to active rail lines to recruit new business and/or business expansion opportunities.
- The annexation of land north of the Tennessee River along the north Highway 31 corridor and advocates for an overall master plan.

## Beautification

- The city educating and encouraging the public to care for our outdoor spaces while discouraging litter of any type.
- Efforts to improve and beautify all of Decatur's major entryways. Such efforts should include expanding the installation of lighting, extending the burial of utilities along the causeways including local projects and the coordination of grant-funded projects in support of the Sixth Avenue Enhancement Plan.

## Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority

- Expanded residential development, including lofts, in downtown Decatur.
- Exploring the development of "Quiet Zones" at the Moulton St. and 2<sup>nd</sup> St. railroad crossings downtown.
- Officials from the City of Decatur developing a plan to expand and update wayfinding signage and to maximize pedestrian activity in conjunction with all downtown development efforts.
- The efforts of DDRA to attract unique dining options downtown and encourages city leaders to collaborate and explore incentives beyond sales tax abatements.
- The Historic Building Tax Credit that incentivizes preservation and redevelopment of historic properties.

## Business and Residential Development

- The Decatur City Council and Morgan County Commission working with the Chamber to develop small business, retail and light industrial incentives for new and existing businesses.
- County and municipal efforts for the continued improvements of the Morgan Center Business Park located adjacent to I-65 in Hartselle and additional areas throughout Morgan County for future industrial growth.
- The Decatur City Council, the Morgan County Commission and local school systems requesting, whenever possible, that local businesses, vendors and professional services be utilized for any projects by agencies receiving municipal and/or county funding.
- City planners maximizing riverfront property for public usage including recreational, residential and retail opportunities.

- The development of upscale apartments and other high-quality living properties to include single-family home developments to attract new residents to Decatur and Morgan County. We also encourage the building of sidewalks within the complete radius where school bus service is not provided.
- The regulation of short-term or transient rentals by the City of Decatur to ensure the appropriate collection of taxes and fees.
- The city's adoption of a long-term residential rental registration and inspection ordinance.
- The adoption of current building codes, provided they do not impose an excessive financial burden.
- The development/expansion of fiber networking for residential and commercial entities.
- The mission of and continued municipal and county funding for the Morgan County Economic Development Association (MCEDA).
- Continued collaboration with neighboring county economic development organizations to develop new industrial sites and continued recruitment of new investment and job creation in adjacent and annexed areas of those counties.
- The mission of and continued municipal and county funding for the Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center and the Hartselle E-Center.

## Tourism

- Tourism as an important revenue-producing industry in Decatur and Morgan County and urges support from the Decatur City Council and Morgan County Commission for tourism product promotion and development.
- The continued development of parks and sporting venues that are consistent with the quality standards established that will bring new events and tournament opportunities to the city and county that increase lodging tax collections.
- Projects that promote and recognize the artistic, cultural and historical resources of the city and county which are necessary to the growth of a well-rounded community.
- The mission of and continued municipal and county funding for Decatur Morgan County Tourism.

## THE CHAMBER OPPOSES:

### FEDERAL

- Burdensome government regulations that impose costly, unfunded mandates and time-consuming restraints on businesses. We also oppose any legislation that prevents new and existing companies from competing in the global economy. We support results-driven programs that encourage U.S. location advantages, increased entrepreneurship and support of the free enterprise system to help grow our economy.
- Any tariffs that place an undue or unintended burden on any sector of our local economy.

### STATE

- Tax increases on the tourism industry as a means to generate income.

# EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce believes in education and workforce policies that expand the area's skilled talent pipeline and enhance the Pre-K–16 experience, along with immigration policies that meet workforce needs without excessive mandates on employers.

## THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

### FEDERAL - STATE - LOCAL

- Funding for marketing and economic recruitment efforts and expansion of all phases of the Alabama Robotics Technology Park and encourages cooperation with area schools, colleges, universities and businesses to develop appropriate curriculum and degrees.
- Funding to increase the number of career coaches based on enrollment numbers to assist students with career preparation.
- The continued growth of the Alabama Center for the Arts, including robust student recruitment, increased community engagement, dual enrollment and student housing. These initiatives, in addition to the Cook Museum of Natural Science, will advance efforts to establish a STEAM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) economy in downtown Decatur.
- Continued funding for programs aimed at increasing the level of highly skilled, highly trained individuals. Specifically, the Chamber urges funding of Calhoun Community College's workforce development training programs and advanced workforce skills at four-year universities.
- Continued funding and expansion of workforce development initiatives including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT), Alabama Training Network (ATN) and the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) Innovation Center to strengthen skills and opportunities across the region.

### STATE - LOCAL

- The critical need for advanced workforce development in colleges and universities to equip students with skills necessary to meet the evolving demands of industries and ensure long-term economic growth and competitiveness.

- The mission of the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship and increased incentives for companies to train youth apprentices and work-based learning in high school. We also support the efforts of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) to expand quick-start pre-apprenticeship programs that lead to nationally recognized certifications that prepare residents for in-depth apprenticeships or entry-level jobs in manufacturing and short-term apprenticeship programs that place residents in one of several high-wage, in-demand occupations. We also encourage incorporating industry recognized credentials into these programs.
- The need for life-long learning and continuous education and skills development, particularly for individuals who are pursuing new career paths in the changing job market.
- The important role of partnerships between higher education institutions and industry that create internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning and other types of experiential learning opportunities that benefit current and future advanced workforce needs.
- The ongoing development of baccalaureate and postbaccalaureate degree programs in relevant and high-demand occupations.
- Public high schools and institutions of higher education implementing personal financial management programs and accountability measures.
- A strong technical education to set students on a path to high demand STEM fields and supports public high schools and institutions of higher education promoting greater understanding of 21st century skills that are transferable across all industry sectors to include interview skills, social media acumen and email etiquette.
- The Craft Academy in Morgan County teaching construction trades to high school students.
- The training and employment of AIDB (Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind) students at the campus in Decatur.

## FEDERAL

- Federal funding for high-quality early education opportunities (including head start, Pre-K, early education, professional development for personnel and more), with ample flexibility for local authority in implementation.
- The Childcare Availability and Affordability Act to expand access to affordable, high-quality child care and strengthen workforce participation.

- The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). We believe funding for this act is vital to public libraries to continue to meet community needs, provide enhanced technology and reach underserved populations across the nation.
- Federal investment in higher education and workforce development through continued grant funding from organizations like the Alabama Community College System, U.S. Department of Education and Labor, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Economic Development Administration, Small Business Administration, the National Science Foundation and ADECA (Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs). These resources are essential for building a highly skilled workforce, fostering innovation and driving long-term economic competitiveness for both our community and the nation.
- Increasing the Pell Grant eligibility threshold or establishing an additional scholarship program to support students who have exhausted Pell Grant funding. Expanded financial support is essential to help all students, especially those pursuing baccalaureate and advanced degrees, achieve their educational goals.
- Legislation that prohibits the National Labor Relations Board from ordering any employer to close, relocate or transfer employment under any circumstance.
- Legislation that would ensure the continuation of right-to-work statutes.
- Legislation that would immediately modify the Davis-Bacon Act to create an equal opportunity for all workers and reduce inflated construction costs by billions annually.
- Updating the salary level provided in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for exempt employees. However, the Chamber does not support large increases because of the challenges it presents to small businesses, retail, restaurants and non-profits.
- Congress passing comprehensive immigration reform that should include strengthening the security of the United States borders, more stringent penalties against employers who employ illegal or undocumented workers and expanding access to foreign labor visa programs to ensure businesses can maintain an adequate workforce.

## STATE

- The continuation of the highest standards possible to ensure student success and growth.
- The necessary investment for improved state test scores for students in both math and reading and supports the Literacy Act and the Numeracy Act.

- Increasing the number of National Board Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALT), National Board Certified teachers and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Certified educators in our state.
- Post-secondary training for teachers in math, science, computer science literacy and English as a second language (ESL).
- The Alabama Legislature continuing to make funding for statewide Pre-Kindergarten and a plan for sustainable, quality early education in childcare programs and facilities a priority in the 2026 regular legislative session.
- The development of quality corporate childcare models to create and provide services through private/public partnerships and state support. Providing attainable childcare for Alabama's workforce continues to be essential for workforce retention and growth.
- The Governor and the Legislature of the State of Alabama increasing student-centered funding to maximize public trust and to secure sufficient additional revenues for high quality education from pre-kindergarten through post-secondary education.
- A graduation rate formula that is based on the number of students who complete their high school program, allows special education students who complete their Individual Education Plan (IEP) to be counted as graduates, recognizes General Education Diploma (GED) as a diploma option and does not penalize schools for creating "drop-back-in" options.
- Increasing the weight on the school A-F Report Card for the College and Career Ready Indicator over the Graduation Rate Indicator.
- The promotion of positive instructional methods and the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within a secure, closed platform that fosters meaningful connections between students, teachers, counselors and parents.
- Continued funding for technology, robotics and distance learning in all Alabama school systems.
- Continuing to increase funding for dual enrollment.
- Continued expansion of Calhoun Community College, Athens State University and the growth of higher education institutions.
- The funding of Alabama's two-year college (ACCS) system based on regional needs.
- Calhoun Community College's Airframe and Powerplant program to strengthen industry in North Alabama.

- The Business Education Alliance (BEA). This alliance was created through the Business Council of Alabama (BCA) to assist in providing the best education opportunities and skills training available for Alabama's public school students.
- Reforming teacher certification requirements to allow experienced professionals with a bachelor's degree in career and technical fields to qualify to teach relevant subjects without additional coursework. Simplifying certification would help address teacher shortages by enabling skilled professionals to share their expertise directly with students.
- Increasing the earning potential for retired teachers from \$37,000 to \$52,000 annually while they continue to receive retirement (RSA) benefits, aligning Alabama with similar provisions in surrounding states. This initiative aims to address staffing shortages by attracting experienced educators back into the workforce.
- Continued grant funding for workforce development and education improvement programs through the Department of Education, the Alabama Community College System, the Alabama Workforce Council and the Economic Development Administration.

## LOCAL

- The priority placed on public education and encourages continued municipal and county funding for school systems in Decatur-Morgan County.
- A long-range growth plan for Decatur City School System facilities as more rooftops are being built in the city.
- The school systems of Decatur-Morgan County proactively promoting their successes in all types of media.
- The ongoing efforts of all school systems in Decatur-Morgan County to improve student achievement including test scores and graduation rates.
- K-12 and higher education funding for the development of partnerships between Calhoun Community College, other higher education institutions and business and industry, focused on creating pathways for individual attainment of post-secondary education and skillsets, to achieve completion rates above the national average.
- The expansion of career and trade education opportunities within all school systems in Morgan County along with strong partnerships with businesses and industries in our area. We also urge all school systems to collaborate and expand opportunities with Calhoun Community College's dual-enrollment program and utilize other early college credit opportunities for high school students.

- The Best and Brightest Initiative (incentive package for STEM, education and nursing graduates) and the Decatur Morgan CEO Program (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities for high school students).
- Local officials complying with and enforcing existing laws addressing illegal immigration in as efficient a manner as possible.

## **THE CHAMBER OPPOSES:**

### **FEDERAL**

- Any legislation that would enhance union organizing or bargaining rights over what is currently allowed by the National Labor Relations Act or other current legal or regulatory guidelines.
- Any legislation that would infringe upon private property rights by mandating that unions have access to an employer's property during union campaigns.
- Any proposed rule that makes it more difficult for employers to educate employees about unions and unionization prior to a vote.

# TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce believes in transportation and infrastructure initiatives that support economic growth through the safe, effective and efficient movement of products, goods, services and people across all modes of transportation, as well as responsible environmental and energy policy that includes research, development and investment.

## THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

### FEDERAL - STATE - LOCAL

- The completion of several transportation projects that benefit travel and commerce including:
  - Continued funding for improvements on U.S. Alt 72/U.S. Hwy 31/state Route Hwy 20 to create a limited access roadway from the I65/ I565 interchange to Hwy 31/Hwy 20/Wilson Street intersection.
  - The funding and construction of a third regional Tennessee River Bridge in Decatur.
  - Widening Hwy 31 south on the causeway from two lanes to three with a new three-lane bridge to provide continual free-flowing west bound traffic on Hwy 20.
  - Funding for the expansion of state Route Hwy 67 from two to four lanes from Priceville to the state Route Hwy 36 intersection.
  - Improvements to the state Route Hwy 67/ Interstate 65 Interchange to improve traffic flow, safety and commute times.
  - The construction of a City of Hartselle bypass from Interstate 65 / Bethel Road (including a new interchange) to U.S. Highway 31.
- The addition of electric vehicle charging stations throughout Decatur-Morgan County.
- The inland port in Decatur, recognizing its economic impact, while advocating for an efficient, sustainable design that addresses adverse traffic impacts.
- Any federal, state, regional or private efforts designed to resolve issues and provide low cost, reliable rail service to our members.
- TVA's efforts to increase its portfolio of TVA-owned generation in support of power supply reliability, resiliency and economic development activities.

## FEDERAL - STATE

- Investing in Alabama's infrastructure to protect its citizens, generate economic growth and improve quality of life. We support and encourage Congress and the legislature to fully fund and facilitate this effort.
- Funding for the growth of the Pryor Field Airport Authority, Huntsville International Airport and for the continued state funding of the 'Alabama Airport Economic and Infrastructure Program' at a minimum of \$25 million to ensure Alabama airports can meet infrastructure demands.

## STATE - LOCAL

- The completion of transportation projects that benefit travel and commerce including:
  - The study and recommendation for improvements along U.S. Alt 72/Hwy 20 from the Wilson Street intersection to the Morgan/Lawrence County line.
  - Improvements at the Interstate 65 / state Route 36 Interchange in the City of Hartselle to improve traffic congestion, safety and travel times.
  - The enhancement of all modes of freight movement in the region to allow for maximum safety and efficiency.
- The prioritization and yearly pursuit of quality-of life funding specifically through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) which provides funding for on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, including sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, downtown streetscape, historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities and other projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- The construction of other safe, low-cost projects that could be completed to enhance bicycle and pedestrian usage in the downtown areas as well as connecting residential areas with commercial centers, parks, schools and other public and private services. These projects should connect to current trails in the Decatur, Hartselle, Priceville and Trinity areas and Wheeler Wildlife Refuge. This includes funding to continue construction, maintenance and rehabilitation as well as adding greenways to the Dr. Bill Sims Bicycle Trail that provides transportation alternatives and recreational opportunities throughout Decatur-Morgan County.

## FEDERAL

- Reauthorization of the National Transportation Bill that provides adequate funding for transportation projects that improve safety and mobility, reduce travel times and enhance economic prosperity throughout the north Alabama region.

- The creation of a federal highway building program for major regional transportation projects.
- The completion of several transportation projects that facilitate travel and commerce on our roadways, waterways and in the air. To this end, we ask Congress to support Decatur-Morgan County by preserving equity in highway funding back to the Alabama Department of Transportation. We believe decision-making about the building and improvement of our transportation infrastructure should be driven by need, including the promotion of safety and the facilitation of economic development.
- Continued funding for the new Chickamauga Lock, located on the Tennessee River near Chattanooga, Tennessee, until the project is completed.
- Funding to permanently repair the guide wall at Wilson Dam Lock, located on the Tennessee River in Lauderdale County. Repairing, restoring and maintenance to the lock and dam is vital to our supply chains, ensures safety, expedites commerce and supports the local and U.S. economy, as well as national security.
- The further development of advanced electric power generation and transmission grid improvements that allow for sustainable growth while delivering low cost, reliable power for industrial, commercial and residential customers. Specifically, we support adding Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), Storage Integration and a Regional Grid Transformation (RGT) to protect our region from power disruption.
- Amending the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Act to require that TVA Board members come from each state served by TVA in order to ensure that Alabama has adequate and consistent representation.
- A U.S. energy policy that provides defined environmental standards and restores balance to U.S. energy markets by promoting a diverse, flexible energy supply at globally competitive prices. Furthermore, we support the removal of unintentional regulatory barriers to safe, clean, reliable energy, especially electricity supplied by co-generation technology.

## STATE

- Widening I-65 to a minimum of six lanes throughout the state.

## LOCAL

- The City of Decatur's investment in constructing new roads, enhancing existing transportation corridors and advancing both current and planned sewer infrastructure improvements.

- The Morgan County Commission and municipalities within Morgan County establishing reserve accounts for transportation improvement projects. The Chamber also encourages that the allocation of funds for these accounts be made annual budget priorities.
- The continued financial support of public transportation by local governments including the study of expanded services within the Decatur metropolitan area.

## **THE CHAMBER OPPOSES:**

### **FEDERAL - STATE**

- Any inter-basin transfer of the Tennessee River and we urge the Alabama Legislature to pass statewide water-usage legislation. Navigation should be a key component of such a plan.

### **FEDERAL**

- Any efforts to limit or eliminate tax-exempt municipal bonds given the adverse impact on our public power utility companies and their customers.

# HEALTHCARE

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce believes in healthcare initiatives promoting personal accountability, increased access to and effectiveness in healthcare while controlling costs and mitigating mandates on employers.

## THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

### FEDERAL - STATE - LOCAL

- Any group home meeting all applicable guidelines, with zoning and restrictions satisfied prior to certification or funding and strictly enforced by the appropriate entities.

### FEDERAL - STATE

- Legislation that provides funding/incentives for community mental health centers—nationally and locally—to ensure they provide a full range of mental health services, including a civil commitment facility in crisis, 24-hour crisis care, increased integration of physical, mental and substance abuse treatment and expanded support for families of individuals living with mental health issues.

### FEDERAL

- Legislation that would provide meaningful Medicare/Medicaid reform including:
  - Reach an equitable resolution on the Medicare wage index issue so that hospitals and other healthcare providers in the region will be fairly reimbursed for the services they provide to the Medicare population.
  - Establish initiatives that ensure businesses, particularly small and mid-sized businesses, are able to continue to provide affordable health coverage for their employees.
  - Bring about meaningful medical malpractice reform.
  - Continue enhancements to the Alternative Payment Models to ensure physicians are incentivized to create open practice models so that patients will have expanded access to preventive healthcare.
  - Address the redundant and ineffectual costs associated with the implementation of the Recovery Audit Program (RAC) and its application in the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

- Allow for intrastate selling of insurance to increase competition and lower costs.
- Legislation for and the recruitment of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), which strive to help meet the needs of underserved areas and populations.

## STATE

- Efforts that will ensure any legislation seeking to establish the operating guidelines for an Alabama Health Insurance Exchange and encourage competition within the market, includes appropriate business and provider representatives within the oversight structure, avoids duplication of regulatory authority and ensures the stability of the state's healthcare delivery system.
- Increasing choices for employers in purchasing affordable healthcare and supports health benefit programs based on free market competition without government interference.
- Exploring a workable Medicaid expansion in the State of Alabama to ensure adequate healthcare for Medicaid recipients and to ensure adequate reimbursement for hospitals, physicians, nursing homes, EMS and hospice agencies for providing care.
- Legislation that will help reduce the burden placed on Alabama businesses due to excessive worker's compensation costs.

## THE CHAMBER OPPOSES:

### FEDERAL

- Legislative or regulatory changes to federal funding formulas, including the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), that would negatively affect the state-federal Medicaid program, healthcare providers in the Medicare program or Medicare reimbursement rates.

# TAX AND FISCAL POLICY

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce believes in public finance and tax policy having a positive impact upon commerce and economic development.

## THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

### STATE - LOCAL

- Destination sourcing or a comparable solution to address the current Simplified Sellers Use Tax (SSUT) program, which allocates only a fraction of online sales tax revenue to local municipalities and indirectly impacts schools. Ensuring fair distribution is essential to sustaining local services.

### FEDERAL

- Replacing the current tax code with a new system that is simple, stable and eliminates multiple-taxation and is tied to governmental accountability and responsible spending.
- Elimination of the Federal Unemployment Surplus and returning Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) revenues to the states.
- The permanent repeal of the estate tax.
- Adjustments to or the elimination of the alternative minimum tax.
- Lowering the corporate tax rate to increase worldwide opportunities for U.S. companies.

### STATE

- Efforts to create a fair and simple tax structure in the state.
- The continued efforts to streamline governmental procedures and cut costs to include replacing print public notifications with online public notifications.
- Adequate funding for all state agencies and the reduction of Alabama's excessive percentage of earmarks.
- A reduction of our state income tax on defined contribution retirement withdrawals in an effort to attract and retain retirees.
- Reducing the state income tax level to be competitive with nearby states.

## LOCAL

- The use of tax abatements and incentives when accompanied by a measurable plan for new capital investment, job creation, job preservation, revenue generation, revitalization and economic development in all municipalities of Morgan County. We encourage companies and developers receiving tax abatements and incentives to continue reinvestment in the local community by utilizing Decatur and Morgan County based vendors and suppliers in addition to our talented workforce and strongly promote living in Decatur-Morgan County.
- City and county departments as they continue to evaluate and streamline business guidelines to promote a more efficient and business-friendly atmosphere. We also encourage the City of Decatur and the Morgan County Commission to compare local business licenses, taxes and fees with those of surrounding cities to ensure our community remains competitive and positioned for sustained economic growth.

## THE CHAMBER OPPOSES:

### LOCAL

- Retail sales tax increases to generate municipal revenue.

## DEFENSE

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce believes in national security and defense initiatives that promote the sustainable expansion of the military, space and defense industry locally.

### THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

#### FEDERAL

- The National Drone Advanced Air Mobility Act which promotes domestic production and deployment of unmanned aircraft systems (drones) and advanced air mobility technology. It also bolsters research and development of University of Alabama Huntsville (UAH) and Alabama Agriculture and Mechanical University (AAMU) by providing funding and creating an initiative to coordinate research across federal agencies.
- The Protecting America's Agricultural Land from Foreign Harm Act of 2023 which prohibits the purchase or lease of U.S. agricultural land by individuals associated with the governments of China and other foreign adversaries.
- Domestically produced steel instead of imported steel. Steel plays a significant role in national security and our economy. America's steel-related manufacturing has been moved offshore which creates a dangerous dependency upon foreign sources of steel supply and demand.
- Monitoring the installation and impact the solar panel industry has on the local economy, land usage and will continue to support the Farmland Protection Policy Act which is intended to minimize the impact Federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Additionally, the Chamber advocates for the use of American-made products such as First Solar panels and wind power technologies, to promote domestic manufacturing and energy innovation.
- Predictable annual funding legislation that will avoid government shutdowns.
- NASA's ambitious and exciting new direction in space exploration and fully supports the nearby NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.
- Legislation and funding that ensures Alabama's active military and space facilities, as well as its reserve and guard units, are maintained at a competitive level.

- Continued federal funding for infrastructure throughout north Alabama, particularly in the area of transportation improvements. The Chamber recognizes the valuable role military activities based in north Alabama play in the defense of our nation. The prospect of future rounds of Base Realignment and Closure, however, makes infrastructure improvements a continuing top priority for the community.
- United Launch Alliance (ULA) and urges Congress to take certain requirements into consideration when ensuring a smooth transition into the next phase of the National Security Space Launch program. The Chamber urges Congress to:
  - Require U.S. launch providers to meet all critical mission requirements to protect from adversary threats and provide assured access to space.
  - Continue to purchase launches through block buys which stabilizes the industrial base and provides for the lowest possible prices.
  - Build upon the unprecedented success and flexibility established in the National Security Space Launch Phase 3 program and ensure that contracts for launches of national security payloads are awarded within the National Security Space Launch.
  - Maintain the highest standards for our nation's critical capabilities and ensure robust mission assurance remains a top priority, while also advancing our space industrial base.
- Continued efforts to relocate the Space Command headquarters to Huntsville, Alabama.

## STATE

- Continued backing from the Governor and Alabama Legislature for Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)-related infrastructure needs. The Chamber feels strongly that Redstone Arsenal offers an ideal location for the military to further consolidate activities for the good of the services.
- Continued participation in the Alabama Aerospace and Defense Council through Manufacture Alabama. This council aims to develop and advocate for policies, legislative and regulatory initiatives that promote growth and enhance the competitiveness of Alabama's aerospace and defense industries. Additionally, it serves as a communication and educational resource, developing and disseminating statistics and information related to industry activity.

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