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Subject: S.C. Chamber Announces 2016 Competitiveness Agenda



SOUTH CAROLINA
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

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S.C. Chamber Announces 2016 Competitiveness Agenda

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The South Carolina Chamber of Commerce today announced its 2016 Competitiveness Agenda. The Agenda is formed through a survey of Chamber members along with input through Grassroots Meetings held throughout the state where South Carolina Chamber representatives listen to local business concerns. The issues of concern are compiled by the South Carolina Chamber and taken to the Chamber Board to be vetted, developed, and placed on the agenda for the upcoming legislative session. While the South Carolina Chamber addresses numerous items every legislative session, we do focus our efforts on a specific Competitiveness Agenda during the session. This year's agenda items include Infrastructure Funding, Workforce Development, and Business Licensing Reform.

INFRASTRUCTURE ACCOUNTABILITY AND FUNDING

Improving South Carolina's infrastructure is directly related to economic growth, safety, and quality of life for our citizens. The Chamber supports reforming government to increase accountability and a recurring funding mechanism to maintain and repair roads and bridges.

I. Accountability in Government

The South Carolina Chamber calls on the General Assembly to make the Department of Transportation accountable to the Governor in order to ensure public trust in government. Additionally, the South Carolina Chamber calls for the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank (STIB) to be reformed for increased government transparency. The South Carolina Chamber will advocate for the General Assembly to set and require the STIB to follow the current prioritization system for allocation of funding.

II. Funding Infrastructure

The South Carolina Chamber calls on the General Assembly to dedicate at least \$600 million dollars of additional revenue annually to maintain and improve our state's roads and bridges. We will advocate for the General Assembly to diversify the revenue stream in order to create a sustainable long-term funding

mechanism instead of one that is excessively dependent on the gas tax.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The most pressing issue facing South Carolina's business community, both now and over the long-term, is workforce development and closing the skills gap. The South Carolina Chamber reaffirms its position that workforce development is critical to the success of our state. We will continue to push for the necessary changes and improvements to ensure a capable, productive, and sustainable workforce.

I. Clear/Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Workforce Development

The South Carolina Chamber supports a plan that includes financial support for critical skills training, enhanced collaboration and resource sharing between Technical Colleges and Career and Technology Centers, and expansion of dual credit courses and improved articulation from high school to higher education.

II. Consolidated Governing Body Over State Workforce Development Initiatives

The South Carolina Chamber supports legislation that clearly identifies one agency, or a council, that will continue strategic statewide planning for future workforce needs and implement the recommendations from Proviso 117.127.

III. Early Childhood Education

The South Carolina Chamber will work to ensure a statewide initiative for early childhood development for all students that is better defined.

BUSINESS LICENSING REFORM

The South Carolina Chamber calls on the General Assembly to standardize the business licensing process statewide with a uniform application, renewal dates and standard classifications.

I. Make Business Licensing More Business Friendly

The South Carolina Chamber calls on the General Assembly to standardize the business licensing process statewide with uniform renewal dates and standard classifications.

Quotes of Support:

Ted Pitts, President and CEO of the South Carolina Chamber said, "The business community is committed to advancing the State of South Carolina. After months of traveling the state and listening to businesses of all sizes, the Chamber Board agrees with what we heard at our Grassroots meetings. We need our elected officials to focus on finding solutions to the two most important issues facing the business community: unreliable infrastructure and the skills gap. In addition to those two items, our members believe that statewide standardized business licensing will ensure South Carolina remains competitive. These three items will be the focus of the Chamber's legislative efforts this year."

John Uprichard, Chairman of the South Carolina Chamber and President of Find Great People said, "In addition to improving infrastructure and reforming business licensing, the Chamber calls on the General Assembly to prioritize workforce development. Specifically, the Chamber supports streamlining workforce development programs so we can better address the skills gap South Carolina is facing. While the Chamber

will continue to promote pro-business, pro-growth policies this legislative session, we have placed priority on workforce and infrastructure. The future of South Carolina is dependent upon a strong infrastructure and a steady workforce and we call on our state's elected leaders to work with us for solutions."

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The South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, the nation's first state chamber Accredited with Distinction by the U.S. Chamber, is the state's largest statewide broad-based business and industry trade association representing more than 18,000 businesses and more than one million employees. As the unified voice for business and industry, the Chamber is a catalyst for increasing wealth and enhancing the state's global competitiveness in order to improve the quality of life for all South Carolinians.

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