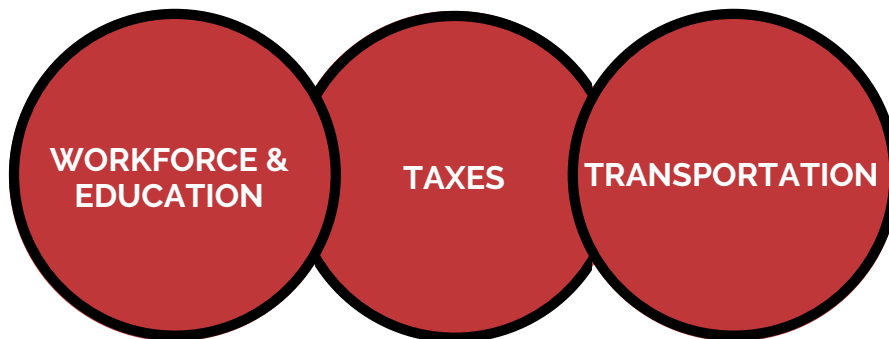


An aerial photograph of Opelika, Alabama, showing a large red brick building with a white dome and columns, surrounded by other buildings and streets. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

# PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

MARCH 2023

Advocacy is a key part of what we do here at the Opelika Chamber. We value the importance of keeping our community informed. Our Public Policy Committee has been working diligently on a Joint Legislative Agenda in recent months. We're ready to distribute and make sure the East Alabama business voice is HEARD. As a reminder, we surveyed our membership last month. The results were clear. Our business community has three top priorities:



The state of Alabama is officially in session and our legislators are hard at work! Last week, the state legislature returned to regular session after concluding a special session to allocate pandemic relief funds and retire debt owed to the Alabama Trust Fund. Lawmakers were in Montgomery for a three-day work week, where they introduced 192 bills – 111 in the House and 81 in the Senate.

To learn what's happening in all things governmental relations at the state and federal level, read on!

# 2023 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

We have crafted the below Public Policy Agenda to represent the East Alabama region, and it will be published on our website, distributed via email, and printed and provided to our local, state, and federal elected officials. Thank you to our Public Policy Committee and Board of Directors for helping us make headway on this major initiative. This will enable our community to become stronger and more efficient from an advocacy standpoint.

## East Alabama Region - 2023 Policy Agenda

The East Alabama Chamber and Opelika Chamber are membership organizations serving close to 30,000 working men and women through nearly 1,400 business enterprises, civic organizations, and educational institutions. Our mission is to strengthen our community as the champion of business. This document serves as a summary of priorities and public affairs & legislative initiatives of the East Alabama Region for 2023.



### 2023 Legislative Priorities:

#### Workforce & Education

- Improve labor laws to allow teenagers to work more flexible hours, specifically adjustments to allow them to work after 7PM on weekdays and 9PM on weekends, and more than 20 hours/week.
- Enhance efforts to create legislation that assists undocumented people work legally (example: easier access to proper documentation or work visa expansion programs).
- Support expansion and funding of career coaches to advise students of various potential career paths based on ability and aptitude, creating an accountability framework for career coaches.
- Advocate for state agencies to maximize state and federal dollars to address key workforce issues such as expansion of quality childcare and workforce transportation, including the removal of excessive red tape affiliated with new business creation of childcare facilities.
- Support of a comprehensive youth apprenticeship model for students under the age of 18 who are currently constrained by state workers' compensation and insurance regulations which may limit access to on-site industrial training.
- Remove red-tape related to access to WIOA (Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act) funds.
- Encourage incentive programs to keep graduates in the State of Alabama.
- Enhance efforts to prepare the previously incarcerated to rejoin the workforce and support and fund the development of an effective state-wide "second chance" program for diversion.
- Increase efforts to provide full funding for voluntary pre-kindergarten ("Pre-K") educational programs administered by certifiably trained staff and ensuring that the programs demonstrate student academic preparedness for kindergarten through required appropriate accountability measures as advocated for by the Business Education Alliance.
- Oppose Immigration laws that impose additional burdens on or otherwise penalize Alabama employers.
- Advocate the Department of Human Resources where and how federal funds are deployed across the State into the childcare industry.
- Improve rural access to high-speed internet in the state of Alabama

# 2023 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

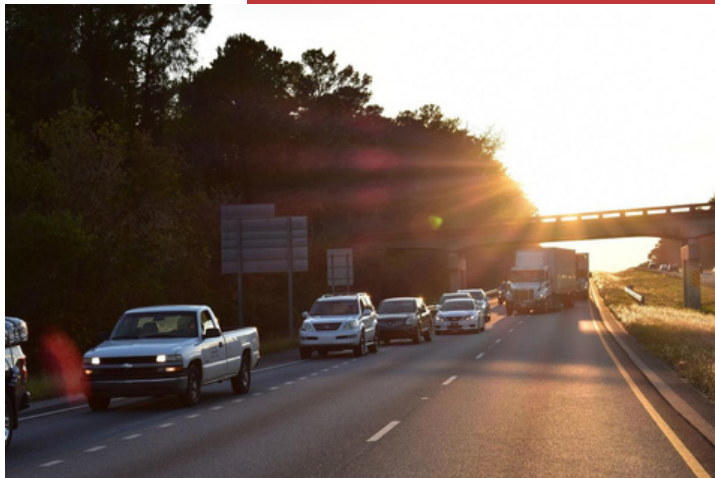
## Taxes

- Implement a unified audit process to stop businesses from being audited by the Alabama Department of Revenue, and then by cities, counties, and private auditing firms for the same tax and same tax periods.
- Reform the state-county business license statutes to provide a simpler and more uniform process for businesses to apply for and receive a business license.
- Legislation that provides local government the authority to eliminate the local sales tax placed on purchases of food.
- Legislation to increase SSUT tax rate to be consistent with the average rate collected by brick-and-mortar retailers.
- Efforts to clarify the exemption from the Alabama business privilege tax for any limited liability company that is wholly owned by a tax-exempt organization.
- Encourage legislation that streamlines the process by which non-profit organizations that are exempt from paying sales and use taxes receive their certificate of exemption from the Alabama Department of Revenue and reduces the burdens imposed under new information return reporting requirements.

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## Transportation

- Continued advocacy to support legislation that would increase access and availability to public and mass transit among our state and local communities.
- Advocate for the Alabama Department of Transportation to allocate dollars to address the increasing challenges of workforce transportation in rural counties in the State.
- Support funding for the following projects:
  - Loop Road from Exit 66 to Hwy 431 and ultimately to Hwy 280
  - Loop Road from Exit 66 to 280 East
  - Veterans Extension – Veterans to Airport Road to Cunningham at Thomaston/Gateway
  - Connector between Hwy 431 to the Sportsplex Road with bridge over the Railroad.



## 2023 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MONTGOMERY

#### Updates From our Friends at the Business Council of Alabama Legislative Priorities

**Why it matters:** March 12 marked the fourth anniversary of Rebuild Alabama, possibly the most monumental legislation ever passed in Alabama's history. Since its enactment, Rebuild Alabama has accounted for record investment across our state. Those investments are represented by 234 projects in all 67 counties, 400 miles of resurfaced roadways, and more than \$170 million in state transportation funding awarded to cities and counties. Four years after Rebuild Alabama's enactment, the state of Alabama has only just begun. More projects are underway and under development, and more transformative announcements will be made in the coming months and years.



**Big picture:** As promised, projects of local interest are being prioritized by those who know their county and municipality the best. Local officials are checking off needed projects that simply would not be possible without revenues provided by Rebuild Alabama. That means their citizens will have safer, more efficient routes to school and to work; drives to the grocery store or to visit family are quicker and smoother; and critical healthcare is more accessible.

**READ MORE ON IVEY'S FOUR YEARS OF REBUILDING ALABAMA [HERE](#)**

## 2023 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MONTGOMERY

#### Updates From our Friends at the Business Council of Alabama Legislative Priorities

**Why it matters:** Governor Kay Ivey has clearly established economic development as a top priority for her administration since her first day as Governor, and we've certainly seen the return on this investment. Alabama's economy is strong, industries are thriving, jobs abound, and more businesses than ever want to locate and grow here. With Gov. Ivey announcing her economic "Game Plan," the Alabama legislature now has the responsibility and opportunity to accelerate this upward momentum by passing legislation to enhance and renew the Alabama Jobs Act and Growing Alabama Credit. These incentives have proven to be extremely impactful to Alabama's economy. From the Port of Mobile to the Shoals, nearly every corner of our state has benefitted from these incentives since their passage in 2015.



**Big picture:** During the 2023 session, lawmakers will consider legislation to renew and modify the Alabama Jobs Act and Growing Alabama Credit to be even more effective for more people, industries and areas of the state. The passage of this legislation will sustain Alabama's economic growth by stimulating the creation of high-paying jobs, sparking growth in rural areas and supporting small businesses.

**READ MORE ON POOLE INVESTING IN ALABAMA'S INNOVATION ECONOMY [HERE](#)**

## 2023 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MONTGOMERY

#### Updates From our Friends at the Business Council of Alabama Legislative Priorities

**Why it matters:** Under current law, every business in Alabama that generates a monthly average of \$5,000 or more in sales taxes must make estimated monthly tax payments the following year. A new bill sponsored by Rep. Danny Garrett, R-Trussville, would raise that cap to \$20,000, reducing both costs and paperwork for an estimated 3,100 small businesses.

Businesses in Alabama first began making monthly sales tax payments in 1983. Last year, lawmakers raised the threshold cap from \$2,500 to \$5,000, meaning businesses that see

approximately \$1.5 million or less in annual sales are not required to make estimated monthly sales tax payments. That increased threshold affected around 2,500 businesses.



**Big picture:** Businesses in Alabama first began making estimated monthly sales tax payments in 1983. Last year, lawmakers raised the threshold cap from \$2,500 to \$5,000, meaning businesses that see approximately \$1.5 million or less in annual sales are not required to make the monthly payments. That increased threshold affected around 2,500 businesses. "We've now come back to basically increase that threshold from \$5,000 to \$20,000, and that would mean that an additional 3,100 sales tax licensees would no longer have to make monthly estimated sales tax payments," Garrett said during a House Ways and Means Education Committee meeting last week. "There's no revenue net effect, it's a bureaucratic-type thing, it would eliminate some red tape and would help." The bill ultimately received a unanimous favorable report from the committee, and will go on to be further reviewed after lawmakers return from break next week.

**READ MORE ON HOW A NEW BILL COULD REDUCE 'RED TAPE' FOR MORE THAN 3,000 SMALL BUSINESSES [HERE](#)**

## 2023 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WASHINGTON

#### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

As Alabama's voice on the Senate Armed Services, Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs, and HELP Committees, Senator Tuberville is committed to fighting for Alabama's values and best interests.

Earlier this year, he was named as the Ranking Member on the AG Rural Development and Energy Subcommittee, which will position him to best advocate for Alabama's farming and rural communities as we look to the 2023 Farm Bill, including promoting rural broadband expansion.

Additionally, Senator Tuberville is fighting for Alabama's service members and defense industries during drafting of the 2024 national defense bill to ensure our state remains at the forefront of national security and defense. He is working to ensure our

Senator Tuberville recently led a congressional delegation trip to U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) in Miami and various sites in Panama, where he met with military leaders, diplomatic officials, and trade experts about securing America's southern border, countering China's growing influence in the region, and stopping human trafficking and drug smuggling facilitated by Transnational Crime Organizations (TCOs). As a former educator, coach, and mentor for more than 40 years, Senator Tuberville is committed to preserving equal protections for female athletes afforded to them through Title IX. He reintroduced the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act to stop biological males from competing in girls' and women's sports.

Earlier this month, Senator Tuberville also led a virtual roundtable to raise awareness about the dangers of fentanyl during National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week. He was grateful to be joined by Alabama leaders who are on the frontlines of combatting the fentanyl crisis in Alabama, including Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones.



**FOR ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, REACH OUT TO  
SENATOR TUBERVILLE'S OFFICE AT 202.224.4124.**