

# PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

— APRIL 21, 2023 —

Advocacy is a key part of what we do here at the Opelika Chamber. We value the importance of keeping our community informed. Here's a glimpse of what you'll find in this edition of our Public Policy Update:

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WASHINGTON

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MONTGOMERY

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OPELIKA



# 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

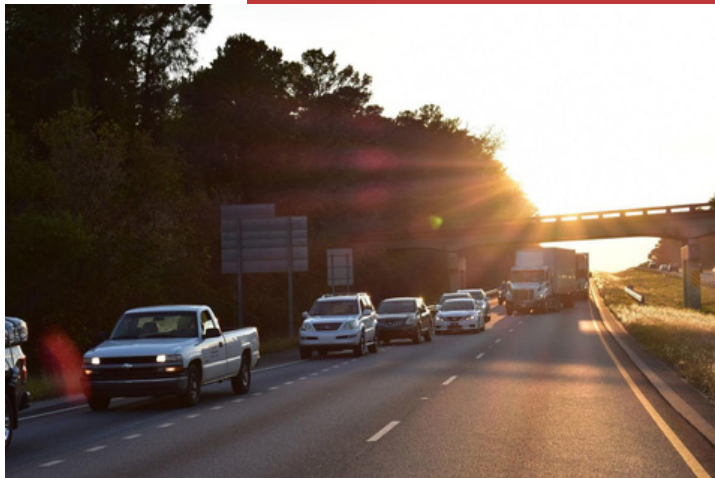
## Taxes

- 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 WASHINGTON LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM SENATOR KATIE BRITT

Last week marked my **100th day in office** as your U.S. Senator. Representing the people of Alabama is truly the honor of a lifetime, and I continue to be humbled by the prayers and support that we've received from every corner of our great state. While I'm proud to report that we've hit the ground running, these last few months have made it clear that we have much work ahead of us.

My mission is to ensure that Alabama has the best possible seat at the table and serving on three critical committees – Appropriations, Banking, and Rules – gives our state a strong voice in the discussions about the future direction of our country.

On the Appropriations Committee, we're fighting to stop the out-of-control government spending that has fueled inflation and working to finally address the burden of our growing national debt. I've also used my position on the committee to hold the Biden Administration accountable, directly demanding answers from officials such as Attorney General Garland and Homeland Secretary Mayorkas in our hearings.

In addition, as the Ranking Member of the Homeland Security Subcommittee, I've not only pushed back against the disastrous policies at our southern border, I've visited three times to get a firsthand look at the ongoing national security and humanitarian crisis and hear from the boots-on-the-ground law enforcement officers and courageous survivors of the cartels' human and drug trafficking.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM SENATOR KATIE BRITT CONTINUED

The Banking Committee has had our hands full with recent events, but I've remained focused on combating the President's misguided economic policies and bringing the concerns of working Alabamians to the forefront. Since President Biden took office, inflation has risen by 15.4%, while the average family paid an extra \$10,000 just to make ends meet. We're pushing to reverse these trends and working to put more dollars back in your pocket.

While the work in Washington keeps me busy, I've also been able to travel across our great state in these past few months, hearing from local elected officials, community leaders, and business owners in every corner of Alabama. I believe that good leaders should listen, not lecture, and your feedback is essential to my work in the Senate. Please know that I want to be a partner to you in growing opportunity in your communities and across our state, so every child in Alabama can live the American Dream. Do not hesitate to reach out if my office can ever be of assistance. We're here to serve you.



**FOR ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, REACH OUT TO  
SENATOR BRITT'S OFFICE [HERE](#).**

## 2023 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MONTGOMERY

Update From the Office of Governor Kay Ivey

#### GOVERNOR IVEY SIGNS 'THE GAME PLAN' LEGISLATION, STRENGTHENING ALABAMA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

Governor Kay Ivey today signed four economic growth bills that she has coined as The Game Plan. The package of bills, designed to secure Alabama's economic future into law, received overwhelming approval from the Legislature.

At a ceremony this afternoon, Governor Ivey thanked lawmakers for their bipartisan support of The Game Plan, saying the strategic package will strengthen the state's competitiveness for job-creating projects that add economic vitality to families and communities.

"The Game Plan will give Alabama's team the tools it needs to extend our winning record in economic development and help us unleash a new wave of growth and innovation across the state," said Governor Ivey. "From our rural areas to our big cities, this is going to benefit every corner of Alabama."





## GAME PLAN LEGISLATION CONINUED

The Game Plan includes four bills — or “plays” — that focus on economic development issues such as incentives, site development, small business support and transparency.

**Play 1:** The Enhancing Alabama's Economic Progress Act renews the Alabama Jobs Act and the Growing Alabama program and extends their sunset dates to 2028 while adding strategic enhancements to increase their effectiveness. The Jobs Act is the state's primary incentives platform while Growing Alabama primarily speeds development of shovel-ready sites.

**Play 2:** The Site Evaluation and Economic Development Strategy Act (SEEDS) will allow the State Industrial Development Authority to accelerate the development of industry-ready sites at a time when available sites are scarce and other states are expanding their site programs.

**Play 3:** The Innovation and Small Business Act aims to supercharge growth in Alabama's innovation economy and support underrepresented businesses and enterprises in rural areas, transforming the state into a hub for technology and innovation.

**Play 4:** The Enhancing Transparency Act will amend the Jobs Act to require the Alabama Department of Commerce to publish certain incentivized project information on its website. Transparency around important information related to companies receiving incentives will serve a valid public service and increase confidence in the process.

## 2023 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MONTGOMERY

Updates From our Friends at the Business Council of Alabama

#### LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

**Why it matters:** Economic development in Alabama generated \$10.1 billion in new capital investment during 2022, a new record and another indicator of strength in the state's economy. Gov. Kay Ivey announced that the 2022 Alabama Economic Development Impact Report, compiled by the Alabama Department of Commerce, shows investment topped the previous record of \$8.7 billion, set in 2018.

"Strategic economic development has been a top priority of my administration since I first became governor because I fully understand the impact it can have on our citizens, their families and their communities," she said. "This success is blatant evidence that our efforts are producing a brighter future for the great state of Alabama."

**Big picture:** Growth projects announced in 2022 generated 13,078 job commitments across the state, according to the Department of Commerce's comprehensive annual report, released Thursday. That figure tops the previous year's total of 10,190 jobs. Many of the new jobs are in key industrial sectors, according to the report. This includes more than 2,800 positions in the automotive industry, nearly 1,900 in the metals and advanced materials sector, and more than 1,500 in aerospace, aviation and, defense.



**READ MORE ON ALABAMA'S 2022 PROJECTS TO INJECT RECORD \$10.1 BILLION IN NEW INVESTMENT [HERE](#)**



## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES CONTINUED

**Why it matters:** Governor Kay Ivey announced Wednesday that more than \$5.1 million in state funding is being awarded to cities and counties for various road and bridge projects. The funding is made available through the Annual Grant Program, a program created under the Rebuild Alabama Act. The Rebuild Alabama Act, overwhelmingly passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Ivey in 2019, requires the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) to establish an annual program setting aside \$10 million off the top of the state's share of new gas tax revenue for local projects.



**Big picture:** "Just recently, we marked the fourth anniversary of Rebuild Alabama, and it has continued to show it produces nothing less than real, tangible results. With this grant, 21 new projects will be underway and under development, ready to benefit folks in all corners of the state," said Governor Ivey. "I'm proud of Rebuild Alabama's success, and I look forward to seeing how it continues to improve such critical infrastructure. Alabama's roads and bridges are making substantial progress, and we look forward to this continuing."

**[READ MORE ON GOVERNOR IVEY'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON REBUILD ALABAMA FUNDS MORE LOCAL PROJECTS HERE](#)**

## 2023 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OPELIKA

#### Updates From our Friends at the Opelika Economic Development Office

During the 1st quarter of 2023, Opelika Economic Development has announced two expansions of existing industries, Hanwha Advanced Materials and Cumberland Plastics, with a capital investment of \$22.5 million and the addition of 41 jobs.

They also announced a new company, STI Alabama, which will invest \$4 million into the city and create 10 new jobs.

Two new companies were announced last year: Hanwha Cimmaron and Niagara Bottling. Both companies are nearing completion of their facilities and are currently hiring.

The office of Opelika Economic Development is also celebrating Golden State Foods on receiving their company's Chairman Award for the 2nd straight year. Read more about their award [here!](#)



**FOR ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, REACH OUT TO THE OPELIKA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE AT (334) 705-5115.**