



# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2020

Approved November 18, 2019

## **Chamber Background:**

The Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce is a 501 (c) (6) not for profit organization serving the business community and residents of Hobe Sound and the surrounding area with an emphasis on economic, civic, commercial, cultural, industrial and education interests of the area. With 500 members who privately invest in Chamber membership each year, we know that more than 90% are small businesses with five or fewer employees. The Chamber understands the different challenges small business owners face. The Chamber offers several monthly and annual programs and partners with multiple organizations to help address the growing needs of the entire membership.

## **Government Affairs Committee Vision:**

The Hobe Sound Chamber's Government Affairs Committee (GAC) was organized in 2017 to educate members on local and state legislative issues while creating a mechanism for the Chamber to advocate for the interests of business in government. The goal is to connect elected officials to the committee and encourage the business community to take an active role in understanding Government and how they may participate in the legislative process. Local and state governmental influences are largely affected by the input of the community they serve. The GAC committee will serve as a conduit to exchange ideas and priorities between the community we serve and those who represent us in the policy and decision-making process.

## **Guiding Principles:**

The Hobe Sound Chamber works with other Martin County business partners and agencies to advocate for projects of regional economic interest and legislation that reduces government burden that restricts the operation of private business. Working with partners, the Chamber educates and collectively messages the business community on legislative issues. The Hobe Sound Chamber supports policy that focuses on economic stability, diversification and innovation especially those that emphasize developing a ready workforce through advanced training and educational opportunities.

The Chamber understands that two of Martin County's primary industries, the Tourism and the Marine Industries, relies on a healthy, clean and sustainable water supply as well as a healthy Indian River Lagoon, Everglades and South Florida ecosystem which supports thousands of jobs and returns billions of dollars to our economy. The Hobe Sound Chamber advocates for the advancement of diverse, state-wide water quality projects. **The Hobe Sound Chamber believes "All Projects Count."**

## **Priorities:**

The Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce has identified a slate of issues important to our local community and specifically we have identified three (3) priorities for the 2020 Legislative Session:

- 1) Insurance and Retirement Co-Operatives- Support legislation that would allow for insurance co-ops and 401k programs for small businesses through a network of participating employers.
- 2) Support Vocational Education & Training. Develop Summer Youth Employment Programs to assist youth in obtaining on-the-job experiences to better prepare them for full employment.
- 3) Support Finishing current projects and expedite additional ones outlined in Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) for Lake Okeechobee such as water storage including north and south, repairing of the dike, all around the Lake, which will minimize harmful discharges to the east and west; Legacy Florida in Amendment 1.

We believe these three items collectively reflect opportunities for sustaining our small business climate through affordable cost share benefit programs, developing and nurturing trade apprenticeship programs and through regional trade and industry partnerships and applied learning at the Indian River State College. Maintaining the "All Projects Count" attitude for water quality projects will lead to a better quality of life for our residents and visitors that small businesses depend on for recreational and occupational activities on our waterways.

These positions are reflected in the following pages along with more detailed outlines of our areas of concern as a community.

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## Support

### **1. Water**

Support Public/ Private Partnerships as these projects can be accomplished quickly and keep properties on the tax roll.

Support Finishing current projects and expedite additional ones outlined in Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) for Lake Okeechobee such as water storage including north and south, repairing of the dike, all around the Lake, which will minimize harmful discharges to the east and west; Legacy Florida in Amendment 1.

Support the completion of the Everglades Agricultural Area Southern Storage Reservoir.

Support researching the viability of deep injection wells for water storage.

Support continued Federal funding of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

Strongly encourage septic-to-sewer conversion for communities located adjacent to impaired water bodies, and support State grant 50/50 matching program funding with priority given to communities within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed and Indian River Lagoon Estuary, the St. Lucie watershed and Loxahatchee River watershed.

Support funding for research and corrective measures for Red Tide.

Utilize 2014 Amendment 1 monies for reef management and restoration, Legacy Florida in Amendment 1.

Support funding to eliminate outfalls from Dade and Broward Counties.

### **2. Economic Development**

Business Rent Tax- Support continuing to incrementally lower the sales tax charged on commercial leases. It is currently at 5.5% and we support legislation to continue to reduce it.

Workforce Quality- Support projects that address talent gaps in the state, support trades training, internships, apprenticeships, and vocational training in high schools. We believe this is more important to statewide business development than traditional incentives. We support match funding for programs implemented on behalf of vocational and career development.

Community Redevelopment Areas- Support existing statutes which create a mechanism for counties and cities to establish, operate and fund Community Redevelopment Agencies. The Chamber would oppose legislation aimed at reducing funding for, limiting the creation of new and/or dismantling existing CRA's.

Visit Florida Funding- Support continuing budget allocations to fund Visit Florida at the current rate.

Enterprise Florida, Inc.- Support continuing budget allocations to fund EFI at the current rate.

Insurance and Retirement Co-Operatives- Support legislation that would allow for insurance co-ops and 401k programs for small businesses through a network of participating employers.

Minimum Wage- Support the longstanding autonomy of employers and employees to set and negotiate their respective salary rates—including for entry-level hires—free from any additional, undue government mandates.

### **3. Education/ Social Services**

Two-Generational Strategies for children and families- Develop more effective policies for families with young children in poverty by aligning targeted social services that support children’s development with workforce development services to increase family economic self-sufficiency.

Support Vocational Education & Training. Develop Summer Youth Employment Programs to assist youth in obtaining on-the-job experiences to better prepare them for full employment.

Early Learning Programs- Support increased investments in Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program for four-year-olds to evaluate and improve the benchmarks for successful kindergarten readiness and later school success.

Support a shift in the educational direction, less testing/assessment more teaching. Allowance for flexible institutional grading to recognize the value of vocational education.

IRSC Saint Lucie- Support for Indian River State College’s top legislative request to receive funding to construct the Treasure Coast Advanced Manufacturing Center. During the 2019 session IRSC requested \$14, 832,447 in Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funding to build this state- of-the-art, 55,000+ square foot training facility on its main campus. The \$23.3 million project has received a combined \$6.5 million in past legislative sessions and will have a local, private fund match of \$2 million from the IRSC Foundation. The Advanced Manufacturing Center will expand IRSC’s capacity to offer training in smart and additive manufacturing and will also serve as home to important industrial skills programs such as HVAC, Automotive Technology, Welding, Electrical Systems, and more. The endeavor will additionally provide new opportunities for industry partnerships, applied learning and apprenticeships, and K-12 engagement in Dual Enrollment, CAPE, and beyond.

### **4. Emergency Management**

Strengthen emphasis on local and state emergency management officials to assure business continuity in the event of a natural or man-made emergency through Florida Statute 252.

Support expedited permit reviews and resources to assess damages in non-residential buildings to promote recovery and assist impacted areas with power restoration.

#### **5. Powers of Local Government**

Support citizen driven municipal home rule. Maintaining county and municipal home-rule power, both administrative and fiscal, keeps government close to the citizens so they can play an active role in developing community-based solutions to local problems.

#### **Oppose**

1. Limiting powers of local governments.
2. Raising minimum wage for small business.

#### **Monitoring:**

The Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee will monitor legislation related to:

1. Government initiatives that increase the cost of doing business.
2. Legislation involving duplication of permitting processes.
3. Legislation raising workers compensation rates.
4. Developments of Regional Impact that affect service requirements and the operation of existing businesses.

Approved by the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors November 18, 2019