

# 2018 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

This Legislative Agenda is driven by results from a membership-wide survey and reflects the Greer business community's 2018 legislative priorities. The Public Policy committee will meet monthly to monitor and address the issues as they arise.

## Education and Workforce Development

With the local unemployment rate under 5 percent, tens of thousands of jobs are going unfilled – and half of those jobs do not require college degrees. We need a fully funded education system from pre-kindergarten to post-college job training so we can train workers for 21st Century jobs. We also need to challenge the status quo and look at innovative ways to expand the workforce from within.

- a. **EFA Funding:** The Greater Greer Chamber and Upstate Chamber Coalition urges the General Assembly to fully fund the Education Finance Act, and will support efforts to reduce the gap between the amount required by state law and what is actually funded.
- b. **Expungement:** We support the expansion of expungement for one-time, non-violent offenders to expand our workforce.
- c. **Licensing:** There are over 7,000 readily, willing and able workers in South Carolina who are permitted to work under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. With a shortage of workers across the state, the General Assembly needs to allow these students to receive state licenses for licensed professionals.

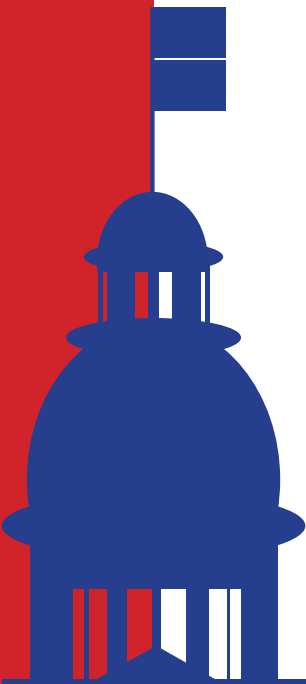
## Infrastructure

The Upstate is the best place to locate a business with access to an expanding port and 95 million people within a day's drive. We scored a major victory in 2017 with the passage of comprehensive infrastructure funding legislation. While we continue the implementation of that road funding plan, it is important that we recognize that infrastructure is no longer simply lane miles and asphalt. We need to turn our attention to the rest of our infrastructure so we may continue to power our economy.

- a. **Capital Projects:** If the state will not act, the General Assembly must give municipalities the ability to enact capital projects sales taxes by referendum – the same power currently given to counties.
- b. **Mass Transit:** Transit is not a social service; it is an economic development and retention imperative. As the Amazon HQ2 project clearly stated, functioning mass transit is important to business. If our state and region are going to attract headquarter companies, and compete with larger metropolitan areas for jobs, it is critical that the General Assembly begin increasing state support for mass transit in our metro areas.
- c. **Commercial Aviation:** The General Assembly should create a Statewide Commercial Service Airport funding program to assist our state's airports in making key capital improvement to support economic development. We suggest a steady, dedicated stream of funding, such as the tax on rental cars, be allocated to this program.

## Taxes and Regulation

The Greater Greer Chamber and Upstate Chamber Coalition will work at the state and local levels to cut red tape for small business, make our region more economically competitive, and lower the barriers to entry for local entrepreneurs.



- a. **Headquarters tax credits:** Only one Fortune 500 headquarters is located in our state. We need to re-assess and expand our efforts to attract corporate headquarters to the Upstate.
- b. **High-impact company incentives:** South Carolina is aggressive in attracting manufacturing jobs – and we must continue to do so. However, we need to re-vamp our corporate incentive programs to focus on the high-impact companies which do not qualify for traditional incentive packages that focus on costly infrastructure.
- c. **Business license fees:** The Greater Greer Chamber and Upstate Chamber Coalition support streamlining and standardizing the business license fee process. We oppose intentional efforts to negatively impact municipal revenue since cities do not have full taxing authority. We will also aggressively seek compromise on which entity manages an online payment portal.
- d. **Angel Investor Tax Credit Expansion:** The General Assembly needs to reauthorize the successful Angel Investor Tax Credit program that encourages South Carolinians to fund our own high-impact start-up companies.

## Tort Reform

South Carolina is consistently rated in the bottom half of states for legal climate. While the General Assembly has undertaken some landmark reforms over the past decade, we need to undertake several reforms to make our legal system fairer to the business community.

- a. **Joint and Several:** The General Assembly needs to re-institute “joint and several” protections for businesses to reasonably reflect fault in tort actions- not simply penalize small businesses
- b. **Nuisance Lawsuits:** The Greater Greer Chamber and Upstate Chamber Coalition support H.3653, legislation that will protect existing, permitted manufacturing. This bill will lower legal costs and create more certainty for our manufacturers and homeowners.
- c. **Automatic Stay:** The Greater Greer Chamber and Upstate Chamber Coalition support S.105, legislation that will create a timeline for automatic stays in pending lawsuits against development projects. Currently, there is no timeline and many stays are essentially indefinite.

## Pension Crisis

Our state’s unfunded public pension liability is a fiscal crisis that could dramatically increase costs for the business community. Reforms made in 2017 relieved some pressure on the system so that the General Assembly may tackle the system’s systemic problems. The General Assembly needs to tackle the issue in 2018 with realistic assumptions that will minimize the impact on the private sector. Failure to address this crisis will mean fewer resources to apply to education, infrastructure and public safety.

## Other Items to Watch

- a. Tax Study Committee
- b. Market-Based Medicaid Reform Study
- c. Local Government Fund
- d. Workforce Housing
- e. Federal Import/Export Bank
- f. Public Trust



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