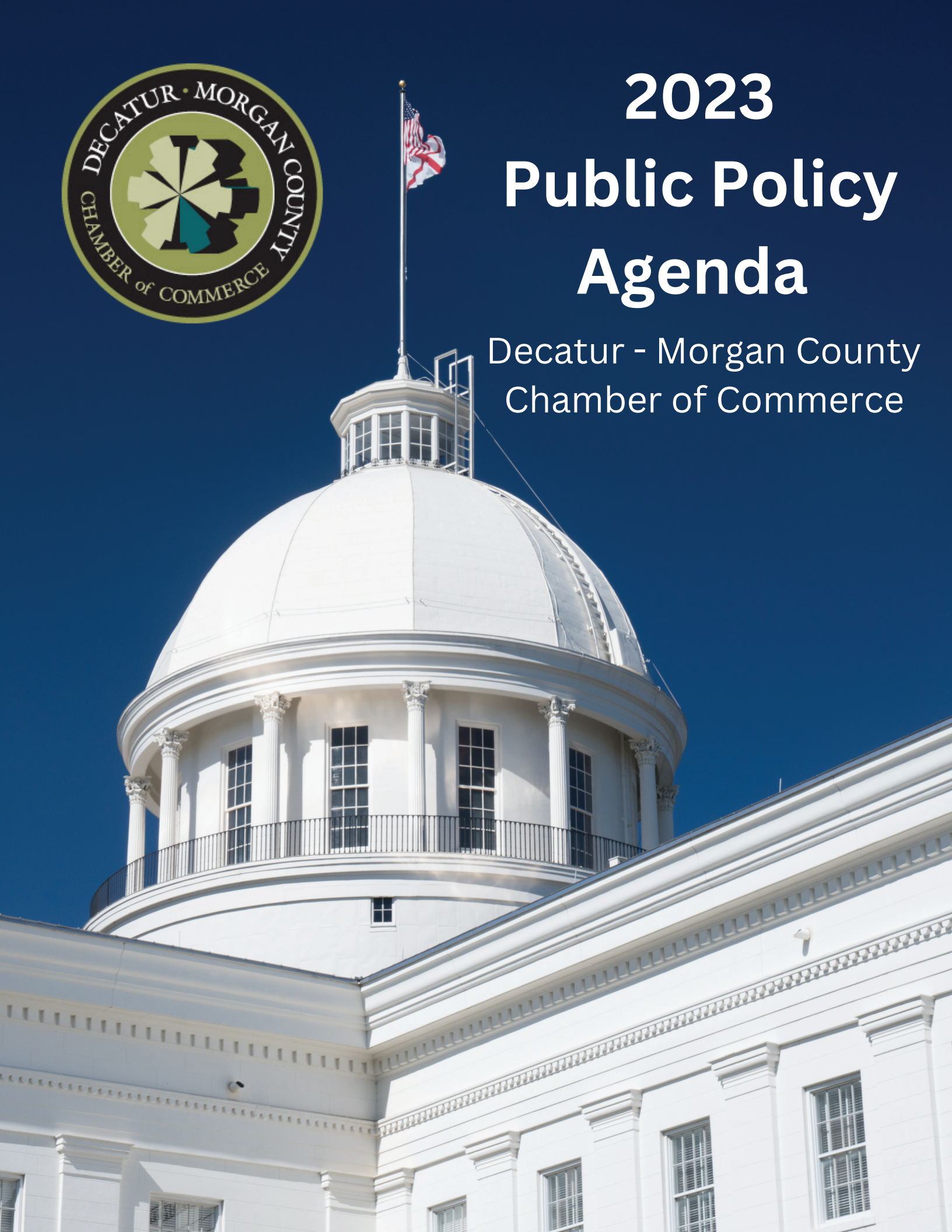




2023 Public Policy Agenda

Decatur - Morgan County
Chamber of Commerce



INTRODUCTION

As the voice of business in the Decatur metro area, the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce is committed to keeping our area competitive and improving the business climate. One of the best ways we can achieve this goal is through the legislative process. The Chamber is proud to work on behalf of our members to advocate policies and legislation that contribute to the growth and prosperity of our region.

During the last few months, the Chamber held a series of meetings, open to all members, to develop agendas for local, state and federal issues. Why are these agendas important? Every day, as Chamber members

and citizens of the Decatur-Morgan County area, we have opportunities to speak out in support of economic development and community growth. In an effort to ensure that we have a consistent message, the Chamber created these agendas. As we do our work throughout the year – i.e. visits to city council and county commission meetings, trips to Montgomery and Washington D.C. – we now have a clear agenda stating where we stand as a Chamber on each issue. The Chamber encourages our members to use this resource when discussing key business concerns. In the event that issues arise during the year that are not addressed here, please bring them to our attention.



DECATUR-MORGAN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote business and commerce for the Decatur-Morgan County area through volunteer leadership in economic, political, and social development.

OBJECTIVES

To overcome barriers to future economic development and to create a healthy, positive business climate.

To improve the region's ability to expand and enhance employment opportunities.

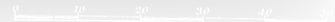
To improve the overall quality of life and standard of living for the total community.

To encourage development of the rich human, natural, and technological resources of the Decatur-Morgan County region to further enhance economic opportunities.

To provide support services and systems to benefit the members of the Chamber and consistently represent and advocate the best interests of the members of the organization.

ALABAMA

SCALE OF MILES



Public Policy influences business success, workforce development, economic growth and, therefore, quality of life. The Chamber engages in initiatives to preserve, protect and promote a business friendly environment free of obstacles to growth and development.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce supports legislative action consistent with the following principles:

We believe in... **Public Finance and Tax Policy** having a positive impact upon commerce and economic development.

We believe in... **National Security and Defense** initiatives to promote the sustainable expansion of the military, space and defense industry locally.

We believe in... **Workforce Development and Education** policy to grow the area's skilled workforce and to enhance the Pre K-16 experience.

We believe in... **Small Business** growth and development through advocacy of business friendly initiatives and regulation, and improving access to information and services.

We believe in... **Business Advocacy** by engaging, understanding, advocating and promoting initiatives and partnerships that support a business friendly environment free of obstacles to growth and development at all levels of government.

We believe in... **Healthcare** initiatives promoting personal accountability, increased access to, and effectiveness in healthcare while controlling costs and mitigating mandates on employers.

We believe in... **Transportation and Infrastructure** initiatives to support economic growth through the safe, effective and efficient movement of products, goods, services and people inclusive of all modes of transportation.

We believe in... responsible **Environmental and Energy** policy inclusive of research, development and investment.

We believe in... **Modernization of Government** processes through initiatives to improve efficiency, accountability and transparency of government operations.

We believe in... **Immigration** policies providing for the workforce needs of business while enforcing the laws of the federal, state and local governments without excessive mandates and penalties imposed upon employers.

We believe in... sustainable development along the **Tennessee River** including recreational, educational, commercial and residential opportunities.

We believe in... a **Community Culture** based on individual responsibility and accountability, and dedicated to improving the quality of life for all.



DECATUR-MORGAN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2022 - 2023 Board of Directors

Ray Hardin – Chairman of the Board
Decatur Utilities

Jamie Reeves – Chairwoman of the Board-Elect
MeritHouse Realty

Jeffrey S. Brown – Past Chairman of the Board
Harris, Caddell, Shanks, P.C.

Terry Welch – Vice Chairman
Development
Contractor Service & Fabrication, Inc.

Bo Weinman – Vice Chairman
Leadership & Networking
Peck-Glasgow Agency, Inc.

John Holley – Vice Chairman
Talent Development & Education
Calhoun Community College

Noel Lovelace – Vice Chairwoman
Community Building
Decatur Morgan Hospital

Kent Lawrence – Treasurer
TVW Electrical Suppliers, Inc.

Cindy Anderson – *Community Action
Partnership of North Alabama
(President of Decatur Women's Chamber)*

Lindsey Faulkner – *Hopscotch Products, LLC*

Leif Founds – *Corporate Billing, LLC*

Keith Jackson – *Jackson Plumbing, Heating & Cooling*

Kadie Long – *(President of Decatur Jaycees)*

Lori McNutt – *Redstone Federal Credit Union*

Chrystal Morgan – *The Boeing Company*

Sam Mozeb – *Access Real Estate*

Arthur Orr – *Alabama State Senate
(Chairman of Morgan County Economic
Development Association)*

Victor Pacheco – *Bunge Corporation*

Iris Pettus – *DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
Decatur Riverfront*

Linda Schoo – *Marco's Pizza*

Cindy Smith – *Edward Jones*

Michele Terry – *Indorama Ventures*

Stuart Tubb – *United Community Bank*

Mark Waters – *Valley Rubber, LLC*

Seddrick Williams – *Renasant Bank*

Sean Zintel – *Magnolia River Services, Inc.*

Wade Weaver – Chairman of Public Policy Committee
Adams Beverages



DECATUR-MORGAN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2023 - 2024 Board of Directors

Jamie Reeves – Chairwoman of the Board
MeritHouse Realty

Dewayne Eddy – *LPL Financial*

John Holley – Chairman of the Board -Elect
Calhoun Community College

Keith Jackson – *Jackson Plumbing, Heating & Cooling*

Jeni Jordan – *TTL, Inc.*

Ray Hardin – Past Chairman of the Board
Decatur Utilities

Kadie Long – (*President of Decatur Jaycees*)

Lorri McNutt – *Redstone Federal Credit Union*

Linda Schoo – Vice Chairwoman
Development
Marco's Pizza

Chrystal Morgan – *The Boeing Company*

Sam Mozeb – *Access Real Estate*

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Noel Lovelace – Vice Chairwoman
Community Building
Decatur Morgan Hospital

Iris Pettus – *DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
Decatur Riverfront*

Dede Quarry – *Miss Muldrew's & Tess' Place*

Kent Lawrence – Treasurer
TVW Electrical Suppliers, Inc.

Cindy Smith – *Edward Jones*

Cindy Anderson – *Community Action Partnership of
North Alabama*
(*President of Decatur Women's Chamber*)

Michele Terry – *Indorama Ventures*

Stuart Tubb – *United Community Bank*

Leifje Dighton – *GE Appliances, a Haier Company*

Seddrick Williams – *Renasant Bank*

Sean Zintel – *Magnolia River Services, Inc.*

Wade Weaver – Chairman of Public Policy Committee
Adams Beverages



2023 FEDERAL AGENDA

QUALITY OF LIFE

- ★ The Chamber supports federal funding for projects, initiatives, programs and agencies that enhance the cultural arts and all aspects of the quality of life for residents of Decatur and Morgan County.
- ★ The Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is a national and regional treasure that has lacked the proper federal funding for necessary updates for optimum access and use by the community. The Chamber urges Congress to continue to invest the funds for necessary improvements to the grounds and facilities including those projects outlined in the One Decatur comprehensive plan.



REGULATION

- ★ The Chamber opposes burdensome government regulations that impose costly, unfunded mandates and time-consuming restraints on businesses. We also oppose any legislation that prevents new and existing companies from competing in the global economy. We support results-driven programs that encourage U.S. location advantages, increased entrepreneurship and support of the free enterprise system to help grow our economy.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- ★ The Chamber supports reauthorization of the National Transportation Bill that provides adequate funding for transportation projects that improve safety and mobility, reduce travel times and enhance economic prosperity throughout the north Alabama region.
- ★ The Chamber supports the creation of a federal highway building program for major regional transportation projects.
- ★ The Chamber believes investing in Alabama's infrastructure will protect its citizens, generate economic growth and improve quality of life. We support and encourage Congress to fully fund and facilitate this effort.

★ The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce understands the importance and economic value of inland ports with facilities already in operation in other southeastern states. The proper identification and ultimate construction of a new inland port facility would not only improve the transportation infrastructure for our existing industries, but it would certainly be attractive to new companies looking to locate in our community.

★ The Chamber continues to support the completion of several transportation projects that facilitate travel and commerce on our roadways, waterways and in the air. To this end, we ask Congress to support Decatur-Morgan County by preserving equity in highway funding back to the Alabama Department of Transportation. We believe decision making about the building and improvement of our transportation infrastructure should be driven by need, including the promotion of safety and the facilitation of economic development. Major Decatur-Morgan County transportation and infrastructure priorities include:

- To continue funding for improvements and a completed corridor study along U.S. Alt 72/U.S. Hwy 31/state Route Hwy 20 to create a limited access roadway from the I65/I565 interchange to U.S. Hwy 31/SR 20/Wilson Street intersection.
- The construction of a third regional Tennessee River Bridge to connect Decatur-Morgan County to Huntsville and the Shoals.
- Widening Hwy 31 south on the causeway from two lanes to three with a new three-lane bridge to provide continual free-flowing west bound traffic on Hwy 20.
- Funding for the expansion of state Route Hwy 67 from two to four lanes from Priceville to the state Route Hwy 36 intersection.
- Continued financial support and funding for the growth of the Pryor Field Regional Airport.
- Continued financial support of the Huntsville International Airport.

★ The Chamber supports federal funding for the new Chickamauga Lock, which is located on the Tennessee River near Chattanooga, Tennessee and continued annual funding until the project is completed.

★ The Chamber strongly opposes any inter-basin transfer of the Tennessee River.

★ The Chamber strongly supports the protection of the Tennessee River from any economic development project that produces hazardous materials, poses potential environmental threats or negatively affects the community's quality of life.

★ The Chamber supports any federal, state, regional or private efforts designed to resolve issues and provide low cost, reliable rail service to our members.

★ The Chamber supports the addition of electric vehicle charging stations throughout Decatur-Morgan County.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

★ The Chamber strongly supports the funding for marketing, economic recruitment efforts and expansions of all phases of the Alabama Robotics Technology Park.

★ The Chamber strongly supports the continuance of funding for programs aimed at increasing the level of highly skilled, highly trained individuals. Specifically, the Chamber urges funding of Calhoun Community College's workforce development solutions/training programs.

★ The Chamber strongly supports federal funding to increase the number of career coaches based on enrollment numbers.

★ The Chamber supports federal funding for high-quality early education opportunities (including head start, Pre-K, early education, professional development for personnel and more), with ample flexibility for local authority in implementation.

★ The Chamber supports the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) and funding for the Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) initiative as well as the Alabama Technology Network (ATN).

- ★ The Chamber supports the programs and services funded by the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) administered by the Alabama Career Center System.
- ★ The Chamber supports the *Library Services and Technology Act* (LSTA). We believe funding for this act is vital to public libraries to continue to meet community needs, provide enhanced technology and reach underserved populations across the nation.
- ★ We support continued grant funding for workforce development and education improvement programs through: the Alabama Community College System, Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Economic Development Administration, Small Business Administration, the National Science Foundation and ADECA (Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs) grants.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

- ★ The Chamber urges Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform. Such reform should include strengthening the security of the United States borders and more stringent penalties against employers who employ illegal or undocumented workers.

HEALTHCARE

- ★ The Chamber supports legislation that would provide meaningful Medicare/Medicaid reform including:
 - Reach an equitable resolution on the Medicare wage index issue so that hospitals and other healthcare providers in the region will be fairly reimbursed for the services they provide to the Medicare population.
 - Establish initiatives that ensure businesses, particularly small and mid-sized businesses, are able to continue to provide affordable health coverage for their employees.

- Bring about meaningful medical malpractice reform.
- Continue enhancements to the Alternative Payment Models to ensure physicians are incentivized to create open practice models so that patients will have expanded access to preventive health.
- Address the redundant and ineffectual cost associated with the implementation of the Recovery Audit Program (RAC) and its application in the Medicare and Medicaid programs.
- We also support the long-term solution of a federal block grant program for Medicaid that would allow the state to operate its Medicaid program with few or no federal mandates and controls.
- Allow for intrastate selling of insurance to increase competition and lower costs.
- ★ The Chamber supports legislation for and the recruitment of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), which strive to help meet the needs of underserved areas and populations.
- ★ The Chamber supports legislation that provides funding/incentives to our nation's community mental health centers to ensure the centers cover a broad range of mental health services including: 24-hour crisis care, increased integration of physical, mental and substance abuse treatment and expanded support for families of people living with mental health issues.
- ★ The Chamber opposes change, through legislation or regulation to the federal funding formula that would negatively impact the state-federal Medicaid program (FMAP).
 - The Chamber opposes change, through legislation or regulation, the federal funding formula that would negatively impact health care providers of the federal Medicare program or reduce Medicare reimbursements to Medicare providers.
 - The Chamber opposes legislation that would establish a national single-payer system of health care coverage, particularly one tied to Medicaid or Medicare reimbursement levels.

ENERGY POLICY

- ★ The Chamber supports the further development of advanced electric power generation and transmission grid improvements that allow for sustainable growth while delivering low cost, reliable power for industrial, commercial and residential customers. Specifically Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), Storage Integration and a Regional Grid Transformation (RGT) to protect our region from power disruption.
- ★ The Chamber believes that the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Act should be amended to require that TVA Board Members come from each state served by TVA in order to ensure that Alabama has adequate and consistent representation.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports a U.S. energy policy that provides defined environmental standards and restores balance to U.S. energy markets by promoting a diverse, flexible energy supply at globally competitive prices. Furthermore, we support the removal of unintentional regulatory barriers to safe, clean, reliable energy, especially electricity supplied from co-generation technology.
- ★ The Chamber opposes any efforts to limit or eliminate tax-exempt municipal bonds given the adverse impact on our public power utility companies and their customers.

TAX ISSUES

- ★ The Chamber supports:
 - Replacing the current tax code with a new system that is simple, stable and eliminates multiple-taxation, and is tied to governmental accountability and responsible spending.
 - Elimination of the Federal Unemployment Surtax and returning Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) revenues to the states.
 - The permanent repeal of the estate tax.
 - Adjustments to or the elimination of the alternative minimum tax.
 - Lowering the corporate tax rate in order to increase worldwide opportunities for U.S. companies.

SPACE AND DEFENSE

- ★ The Chamber strongly supports NASA's ambitious and exciting new direction in space exploration and fully supports the nearby NASA Marshall Space Flight Center.
- ★ The Chamber supports legislation and funding that ensures Alabama's active military and space facilities, as well as its reserve and guard units, are maintained at a competitive level. This should include funding the Alabama National Guard's *Readiness Center Transformation Master Plan (RCTMP)*.
- ★ The Chamber recognizes the valuable role military activities based in north Alabama play in the defense of our nation. The prospect of future rounds of Base Realignment and Closure however, make infrastructure improvements a continuing top priority for the community. We urge Congress to continue federal funding for infrastructure throughout north Alabama, particularly in the area of transportation improvements.
- ★ The Chamber fully supports United Launch Alliance (ULA) and urges Congress to take certain requirements into consideration when ensuring a smooth transition into the next phase of the National Security Space Launch program. The Chamber urges Congress to require U.S. launch providers to meet all critical mission requirements to protect from adversary threats and provide assured access to space; continue to purchase launches through block buys which stabilizes the industrial base; and build upon the unprecedented success and flexibility established in the National Security Space Launch Phase 2 program and ensure that contracts for launches of national security payloads are awarded within the National Security Space Launch. We encourage Congress to maintain the highest standards for our nation's critical capabilities and ensure robust mission assurance remains a top priority, while also advancing our space industrial base.

TRADE

- ★ The Chamber urges Congress to strengthen enforcement mechanisms against unfair trade, including such practices as dumping, currency manipulation, closed markets and anti-competitive industrial policies. The Chamber recognizes a limited rationale for governmental interventionism, based on legitimate national security concerns and unilateral efforts to level the trade playing field.

LABOR RELATIONS

- ★ The Chamber opposes any legislation that would enhance union organizing or bargaining rights over what is currently allowed by the *National Labor Relations Act* or other current legal or regulatory guidelines.
- ★ The Chamber also opposes any legislation that would infringe upon private property rights by mandating that unions have access to an employer's property during union campaigns.
- ★ The Chamber supports legislation that prohibits the National Labor Relations Board from ordering any employer to close, relocate or transfer employment under any circumstance.
- ★ The Chamber supports legislation that would ensure the continuation of right-to-work statutes.
- ★ The Chamber supports legislation that would immediately modify the Davis-Bacon Act in an effort to create an equal opportunity for all workers and reduce inflated construction costs by billions annually.
- ★ The Chamber understands the need to update the salary level provided in the *Fair Labor Standards Act* (FLSA) for exempt employees. However, the Chamber does not support large increases due to presenting challenges to small businesses, retail, restaurants and non-profits where managers often complete exempt and non-exempt work concurrently and salaries tend to be lower. Many organizations may lose workplace flexibility and be forced to reduce headcount. Automatic increases in the salary threshold are also problematic due to variations in economic conditions and geographic locations.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the mission of the Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DDRA) to implement the Envision Decatur plan updated in the One Decatur plan and urges federal funding for its projects.
- ★ The Chamber supports the continued growth of the Alabama Center for the Arts and other higher education projects in Decatur. These projects, in addition to the Cook Museum of Natural Science, will further the initiative of establishing a STEAM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) economy in downtown Decatur.
- ★ The Chamber urges the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) to infill space vacated by the Federal Courts with new federal services and increase available parking at the U.S. Post Office building in Decatur.
- ★ The Chamber supports policies that promote enhanced access to affordable broadband for all our citizens and businesses; encourages new investment, jobs and technology development and deployment across our community; and promote increased competition and options for consumers and businesses. We support public policy that leads to the promotion of investment in deploying broadband facilities to the greatest extent and avoids unnecessary government intervention and regulation of the Internet, which will inevitably drive-up costs for business and consumers.
- ★ The Chamber supports the extension of safe-harbor legislation to limit legal liability for those businesses, churches, hospitals and other organizations that have properly followed all employee, customer and visitor guidance and protocols.

TOURISM

- ★ The Chamber supports the additional funding needed to complete the 32-acre Ingalls Harbor project.
- ★ The Chamber supports the Explore America Act, which authorizes the provision of technical assistance under the Preserve America Program to direct the Secretary of the Interior to enter into partnerships with communities adjacent to units of the National Park System in order to empower gateway communities to leverage local cultural and heritage tourism assets to promote visitation and better tell their stories.
- ★ The Chamber supports the efforts of the Alabama Tourism Department to seek assistance from the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) for Alabama to claim more World Heritage Sites than any other state. The designation of World Heritage Sites is especially important in attracting foreign visitors to our state. There is tremendous interest in Alabama's Civil Rights Heritage among foreign travelers. With Decatur, Alabama serving as the site for the Scottsboro Boys trials, we have an important story to tell that should be included on the Alabama Civil Rights Trail.
- ★ The Chamber is in support of the PLACE Act which provides resources for local communities to invest in the development of their creative workforce.
- ★ The Chamber is in support of the Film and Music Tax Credit Bill.
- ★ In 2026, America will celebrate its 250th birthday and the public will be encouraged to connect with the nation's special places and experience its unique stories. The Chamber calls for making needed investments now in policies and programs to ensure that all communities large and small are able to engage in the national celebration and the economic benefits of tourism are fully leveraged and shared.





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ALABAMA

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ALABAMA

Senator Katie Britt

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2023 STATE AGENDA

QUALITY OF LIFE

- ★ The Chamber supports state funding for projects, initiatives, programs and agencies that enhance the cultural arts and all aspects of the quality of life for residents of Decatur and Morgan County.



TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- ★ The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce continues to support the completion of several transportation projects that benefit travel and commerce including:
 - To continue funding for improvements and a completed corridor study along U.S. Alt 72/U.S. Hwy 31/state Route Hwy 20 to create a limited access roadway from the I65/I565 interchange to U.S. 31/Hwy 20/Wilson Street intersection.
 - To study and recommend improvements along U.S. Alt 72/Hwy 20 from the Wilson Street intersection to the Morgan/Lawrence County line.
 - Widening U.S. Hwy 31 south on the causeway from two lanes to three with a new three-lane bridge to provide continual free-flowing west bound traffic on Hwy 20.
 - The construction of a third regional Tennessee River Bridge to connect Decatur-Morgan County to Huntsville and the Shoals.
 - The expansion of state Route Hwy 67 from two to four lanes from Priceville to the state Route Hwy 36 intersection, to include Upper River Road.
 - Improvements to the Hwy 67/I-65 intersection by increasing the number of turn lanes to access the interstate from Hwy 67.
 - Intersection improvements of Upper River Road and Hwy 67.
 - Roundabout or intersection realignment of Upper River/Old River and Indian Hills Road.
 - Expanding Hwy 36 to four lanes from I-65 to Roan Road in Hartselle.

- The construction of a Hartselle bypass to avoid excessive downtown traffic.
 - Enhancing all modes of freight movement in the region to allow for maximum safety and efficiency.
 - Conduct study to consider adding an I-65 interchange at Bethel Road.
- ★ The Chamber believes investing in the state's infrastructure will protect Alabama's citizens, generate economic growth and improve quality of life. We support and encourage the Legislature to fully fund and facilitate this effort.
 - ★ The Chamber also encourages the construction of other safe, low-cost projects that could be completed to enhance bicycle and pedestrian usage in the downtown areas and around schools throughout the north Alabama region. These projects will connect to current trails in Decatur, Hartselle, Priceville, Trinity areas and Wheeler Wildlife Refuge. This includes funding to continue construction, maintenance and rehabilitation as well as adding greenways to the Dr. Bill Sims Bicycle Trail that provides transportation alternatives and recreational opportunities throughout Decatur-Morgan County. The Chamber supports the establishment of the "Singing River Trail" that would connect counties throughout north Alabama.
 - ★ The Chamber encourages the pursuit of quality-of-life funding specifically through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), carbon reduction refunds, which provides funding for on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, including sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, downtown streetscape, historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities and other transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
 - ★ The Chamber supports state funding for growth of Pryor Field Airport Authority.
 - ★ The Chamber opposes any inter-basin transfer of the Tennessee River and we urge the Alabama legislature to pass statewide water-usage legislation. Navigation should be a key component of such a plan.
 - ★ The Chamber supports the addition of electric vehicle charging stations throughout Decatur-Morgan County.

- ★ The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce understands the importance and economic value of inland ports with facilities already in operation in other southeastern states. The proper identification and ultimate construction of a new inland port facility would not only improve the transportation infrastructure for our existing industries, but it would certainly be attractive to new companies looking to locate in our community.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the mission of the Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DDRA) to continue to implement the Envision Decatur plan updated in the regionally recognized One Decatur plan and urges state funding for its efforts.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the mission of the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship and increased incentives for companies to train youth apprentices in high school. We also support the Alabama Community College System's effort to expand quick-start pre-apprenticeship programs that lead to nationally recognized certifications that prepare residents for in-depth apprenticeships or entry-level jobs in manufacturing and short-term apprenticeship programs that place residents in one of several high-wage, in-demand occupations in advanced manufacturing.
- ★ The Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is a national and regional treasure that has lacked the proper funding for necessary updates for optimum access and use by the community. The Chamber urges the state to approve any appropriate funds for improvements to the grounds and facilities including those projects outlined in the One Decatur comprehensive plan.
- ★ The Chamber encourages the funding of the expansion and improvements to the Morgan County-Decatur Farmers Market including support of local food and food producers.
- ★ The Chamber encourages regional collaboration among economic development agencies.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the Accelerate Alabama Strategic Economic Development Plan 2.0 and the mission of the state to diversify its economic development efforts and steer Alabama towards technology-focused, skill-based jobs that result in lasting opportunities for Alabama citizens.

EDUCATION

- ★ The Chamber supports the renewal and continuous improvements to Alabama's statutory and discretionary incentive programs to assist in recruiting, retaining and sustaining new and existing businesses.
- ★ The Chamber supports the development of public-private partnerships especially in cases where public funds are not available for worthwhile projects.
- ★ The Chamber supports the privatization of the state-run ABC stores.
- ★ The Chamber calls on our state legislature to intercede on behalf of business and economic growth to create a streamlined process for permitting access to state highways.
- ★ The Chamber believes state building codes should be adopted and enforced uniformly across the state. Failure to do so hurts those municipalities that are following the rules.
- ★ The Chamber believes state agencies should verify that all zoning and local restrictions are satisfied before any group homes are certified and funded by the State of Alabama.
- ★ The Chamber supports policies that promote enhanced access to affordable broadband for all our citizens and businesses; encourages new investment, jobs and technology development and deployment across our community; and, promote increased competition and options for consumers and businesses. We support public policy that leads to the promotion of investment in deploying broadband facilities to the greatest extent and avoids unnecessary government intervention and regulation of the internet, which will inevitably drive up costs for business and consumers.
- ★ The Chamber urges the Governor to seek federal approval for the transfer of unutilized opportunity zones to more promising eligible census tracts under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.
- ★ The Chamber supports the extension of safe-harbor legislation to limit legal liability for those businesses, churches, hospitals and other organizations that have properly followed all employee, customer and visitor guidance and protocols.
- ★ The Chamber urges the continuation of the highest standards possible to ensure student success and growth.
- ★ The Chamber demands improved state test scores for students in both math and reading and supports whatever investment required to this end, including strong support of the Literacy Act and the Numeracy Act.
- ★ The Chamber supports increasing the number of Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALT) in our state.
- ★ The Chamber encourages post-secondary training for teachers in the science of learning in Math, Science and Literacy.
- ★ The Chamber urges the Alabama Legislature to make funding for statewide Pre-Kindergarten and a plan for sustainable, quality early education in child care programs and facilities a priority in the 2023 regular legislative session.
- ★ The Chamber calls upon the Governor and Legislature of the State of Alabama to take immediate action to reform education spending in ways necessary to maximize public trust and to secure sufficient additional revenues for high quality education from Pre-Kindergarten through post-secondary education.
- ★ The Chamber supports a graduation rate formula that is based on the number of students who complete the high school program, allows special education students who complete their Individual Education Plan (IEP) to be counted as graduates, recognizes General Education Diploma (GED) as a diploma option and does not penalize schools for creating "drop-back-in" options.
- ★ The Chamber supports increasing the weight on the school A-F Report Card for the College and Career-Ready Indicator over the Graduation Rate Indicator.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports funding to increase the number of career coaches based on enrollment numbers to assist students with career preparation.

- ★ The Chamber encourages public high schools and institutions of higher education to promote greater understanding of personal financial management and detriment of excessive college debt.
- ★ The Chamber believes that while a strong technical education is important for setting students on a path to high demand STEM fields, the Chamber also encourages public high schools and institutions of higher education to promote greater understanding of 21st century skills that are transferable across all industry sectors. Employers increasingly voice the need for employees that are able to think critically, collaborate and communicate effectively. Essential skills such as professionalism, interview skills, social media acumen and email etiquette become increasingly important and should become a regular part of our curriculum.
- ★ The Chamber encourages continued funding for technology, robotics and distance learning in all Alabama school systems.
- ★ The Chamber supports increased funding for dual enrollment.
- ★ The Chamber supports the restructuring of state funds to address the ESL and special education needs based upon student enrollment in these programs.
- ★ The Chamber enthusiastically supports continued expansion of Calhoun Community College, Athens State University and the addition of other higher education institutions in Morgan and Limestone counties.
- ★ The Chamber supports robust student recruitment and increased community engagement with the Alabama Center for the Arts and its students.
- ★ The Chamber supports the continued growth of the Alabama Center for the Arts, dual-enrollment, student housing and other higher education projects in Decatur. These projects, in addition to the Cook Museum of Natural Science, will further the initiative of establishing a STEAM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) economy in downtown Decatur.
- ★ The Chamber fully supports the funding of Alabama's two-year college system based on regional needs.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the Business Education Alliance (BEA). This alliance was created through the Business Council of Alabama (BCA) to assist in providing the best education opportunities and skills training available for Alabama's public school students.
- ★ The Chamber supports the construction of the Craft Academy in Morgan County for teaching construction trades to high school students.
- ★ The Chamber supports the training and employment of AIDB (Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind) students being prepared at the new campus in Decatur.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the funding for marketing and economic recruitment efforts of all phases of the Robotics Technology Park and encourages cooperation with area schools to develop appropriate curriculum and degrees to fully utilize this facility.
- ★ The Chamber supports the continuance and complete support of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA).
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports policies and funding to encourage small business development, entrepreneurship and business lending programs throughout Alabama.
- ★ The Chamber supports continued funding for the Alabama Technology Network (ATN) and the Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) initiative, which serve as catalysts for economic growth by supporting business and industry throughout the state of Alabama.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the continuance of funding for programs aimed at increasing the level of highly skilled, highly trained workers. Specifically, the Chamber urges funding of Calhoun Community College's workforce development solutions/training programs.

- ★ The Chamber supports continued grant funding for workforce development and education improvement programs through: the Department of Education, the Alabama Community College System, the Alabama Workforce Council, the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Economic Development Administration.

HEALTHCARE

- ★ The Chamber supports efforts that will ensure any legislation seeking to establish the operating guidelines for an Alabama Health Insurance Exchange and encourages competition within the market, includes appropriate business and provider representatives within the oversight structure, avoids duplication of regulatory authority and ensures the stability of the state's health care delivery system.
- ★ The Chamber supports increasing choices for employers in purchasing affordable healthcare and support health benefit programs based on free-market competition without government interference.
- ★ The Chamber encourages exploration of a workable Medicaid expansion in the state of Alabama to ensure adequate healthcare for Medicaid recipients and to ensure adequate reimbursement for hospitals, physicians, nursing homes and hospice agencies for providing care.
- ★ The Chamber supports funding/incentives to our community mental health center to ensure the center covers a broad range of mental health services, including: a civil commitment facility in crisis, a 24-hour crisis care, increased integration of physical, mental and substance abuse treatment and expanded support for families of people living with mental health issues.
- ★ The Chamber supports legislation that will help reduce the burden placed on Alabama businesses due to excessive worker's compensation costs.

CONSTITUTION

- ★ Because of its antiquated nature and lack of adequate framework to allow for effective governmental performance, the Chamber supports comprehensive constitutional reform.

FINANCE AND TAXATION

- ★ The Chamber supports efforts to create a fair and simple tax structure in the state.
- ★ The Chamber supports the continued efforts to streamline governmental procedures and cut cost to include replacing print public notifications with online public notifications.
- ★ The Chamber supports the evaluation of adequate funding for all state agencies and the reduction of Alabama's excessive percentage of earmarks.

TOURISM

- ★ The Chamber supports tax legislation to create tax incentives for tourism product development, which is any facility or attraction that is used for tourism or travel purpose.
- ★ The Chamber is in support of the Film and Music Tax Credit Bill.
- ★ The Chamber supports funding of the Alabama Tourism Department and their work to promote tourism in Alabama.
- ★ The Chamber opposes tax increases on the tourism industry as a means to generate income.
- ★ The Chamber encourages the retention of funding in the state budget for the Alabama Bass Trail.
- ★ The Chamber supports the efforts of the Alabama Trails Commission to encourage all types of trails as outdoor recreation thus boosting tourism and promoting a network of trails as an economic resource.
- ★ The Chamber supports the enforcement of short-term rental property owners paying the state lodging tax.

DEFENSE

- ★ The Chamber feels strongly that Redstone Arsenal offers an ideal location for the military to further consolidate activities for the good of the services. We urge continued support from the Governor and Alabama Legislature for Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) related infrastructure needs.



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2023 LOCAL AGENDA

QUALITY OF LIFE

- ★ The Chamber supports funding for projects, initiatives, programs and agencies that enhance the cultural arts and all aspects of the quality of life for residents of Decatur and Morgan County.
- ★ The Chamber supports funding for public libraries as vital community places that fulfill the informational, educational, cultural and recreational interests for residents of Decatur and Morgan County.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ★ The Chamber strongly endorses the One Decatur comprehensive plan and its full funding and implementation by all responsible parties on the time schedule outlined in the plan.



- ★ The Chamber encourages the city of Decatur to implement a comprehensive growth strategy to include the continued implementation of the One Decatur comprehensive plan and work to consider all options available to the city conducive for strategic growth. We also support the implementation and reviewing of building design standards of the second phase of the long-range plan which includes the implementation of our new zoning ordinances.
- ★ The Chamber highly recommends the city of Decatur allocate a minimum of one percent of the budget each fiscal year to spur development. Additional monetary and in-kind incentives are also urged to be considered by the city of Decatur and the Morgan County Commission when appropriate.

Retail Sales Taxes

- ★ The Chamber does not support retail sales tax increases to generate municipal revenue.

Industrial Tax Abatements / Retail Development Incentives

- ★ The Chamber assesses the need for industrial tax abatements and retail development incentives on a case-by-case basis; however, we support the use of tax abatements and incentives when accompanied by a measurable plan for new capital investment, job creation, job preservation, revenue generation, revitalization and economic development in all municipalities of Morgan County. We encourage companies and developers receiving tax abatements and incentives to continue reinvestment in the local community by utilizing Decatur and Morgan County based vendors and suppliers in addition to our talented workforce and strongly promote living in Decatur-Morgan County.

- ★ The Chamber supports the creation of targeted incentive programs that encourage residential growth in Decatur-Morgan County.

Annexation

- ★ The Chamber believes the city of Decatur should explore the viability of annexation of property whose owners enjoy a benefit from city services and adjoining boundaries of Decatur.
- ★ The Chamber urges the annual adequate funding of the city of Decatur, Decatur Utilities Revolving Development Fund along with the enforcement of our sewer annexation policy to encourage future annexation into our community.
- ★ The Chamber supports a disciplined/consistent approach to dedicating funds to the sewer annexation policy.
- ★ The Chamber supports the continued annexation of land for development and redevelopment adjacent to active rail lines to recruit new business and/or business expansion opportunities.
- ★ The Chamber supports the annexation of land north of the Tennessee River along the north Hwy 31 corridor.

Beautification

- ★ The Chamber continues to support a more aesthetically pleasing business environment in Decatur and urges the city council to develop and enforce ordinances designed to protect landscaping and infrastructure investment while preserving updated zoning ordinances and design standards that are business friendly.
- ★ The Chamber urges the city to educate and encourage the public to care for our outdoor spaces and discourage litter of any type.
- ★ The Chamber supports efforts to improve and beautify all of Decatur’s major entryways. Such efforts should include the installation of lighting, a water feature, the burial of utilities along the U.S. Hwy 20/31 causeway including local projects and the coordination of grant-funded projects in support of the Sixth Avenue Enhancement Plan.

Downtown Redevelopment Authority

- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the mission of the Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DDRA) to continue to implement the Envision Decatur plan in conjunction with the updated DDRA Five Year Strategic Plan and urges municipal and county funding for its efforts.
- ★ The Chamber supports the continued growth of the Alabama Center for the Arts and other higher education projects in Decatur. These projects, in addition to the Cook Museum of Natural Science, will further the initiative of establishing a STEAM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) economy in downtown Decatur.
- ★ The Chamber supports expanded residential development, including lofts, in downtown Decatur.
- ★ The Chamber encourages exploring the development of “Quiet Zones” at the Moulton St. and 2nd St. railroad crossings downtown.
- ★ The Chamber encourages the funding of the expansion and improvements to the Morgan County-Decatur Farmers Market including support of local food and food producers as a fundamental part of the downtown area.
- ★ The Chamber encourages officials from the city of Decatur to develop a plan to expand and update way-finding signage, and to maximize pedestrian activity in conjunction with all downtown development efforts.

Business and Residential Development

- ★ The Chamber urges the Decatur City Council and Morgan County Commission to work with the Chamber to develop small business, retail and light industrial incentives for new and existing businesses.
- ★ The Chamber urges county and municipal support for the continued improvements of the Morgan Center Business Park located adjacent to I-65 in Hartselle and additional areas throughout Morgan County for future industrial growth.

- ★ The Chamber encourages the Decatur City Council, the Morgan County Commission and local school systems to request, whenever possible, that local businesses and professional services be utilized for any projects of agencies receiving municipal and/or county funding.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the protection of the Tennessee River from any economic development project that produces hazardous materials, poses potential environmental threats or negatively affects the community's quality of life.
- ★ The Chamber encourages city planners to maximize more riverfront property for public usage including recreational, residential and retail opportunities.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the development of upscale apartments and other high-quality living properties to include single family home development to attract new residents to Decatur and Morgan County. We also encourage the building of sidewalks within the complete radius where school bus service is not provided.
- ★ The Chamber supports the regulation of short-term or transient rentals by the City of Decatur to ensure the appropriate collection of taxes and fees.
- ★ The Chamber supports city adoption of a long-term residential rental registration and inspection ordinance.
- ★ The Chamber believes a group home must satisfy all state and federal guidelines before they can be established in the City of Decatur and these guidelines should be strictly enforced by the appropriate entity.
- ★ The Chamber supports policies that promote enhanced access to affordable broadband for all our citizens and businesses; encourages new investment, jobs and technology development and deployment across our community; and promote increased competition and options for consumers and businesses. We support public policy that leads to the promotion of investment in deploying broadband facilities to the greatest extent and avoids unnecessary government intervention and regulation of the internet, which will inevitably drive up costs for business and consumers.

- ★ The Chamber encourages the development/ expansion of fiber networking for residential and commercial entities.

Business Taxes, Fees and Licenses

- ★ The Chamber urges city and county departments to continually analyze and streamline business guidelines in order to create a more efficient and business-friendly atmosphere. Furthermore, the city of Decatur and the Morgan County Commission should conduct a comparative analysis of business licenses, taxes and fees in surrounding cities to ensure that fees in our area are comparable and do not impede economic growth within the city.

Tourism

- ★ The Chamber recognizes tourism as an important revenue-producing industry in Decatur and Morgan County and urges support from the Decatur City Council and Morgan County Commission for tourism product promotion and development.
- ★ The Chamber supports the additional funding and continued growth needed to complete the 32-acre Ingalls Harbor project.
- ★ The Chamber supports the continued development of parks and sporting venues that are consistent with the quality standards established that will bring new events and tournament opportunities to the city and county that increase lodging tax collections.
- ★ The Chamber affirms that projects which promote and recognize the artistic, cultural and historical resources of the city and county are necessary to the growth of a well-rounded community. The creation of facilities, trails, exhibitions and special events that celebrate area heritage and culture will be encouraged as an important aspect of tourism development.
- ★ The Chamber supports the establishment of the "Singing River Trail" connecting counties throughout north Alabama.
- ★ The Chamber supports Decatur Morgan County Tourism's enrollment as a Tennessee RiverTown Community.

- ★ The Chamber supports the Point Mallard Vision Committee and their efforts to explore expansion of Point Mallard Park.
- ★ The Chamber supports the new location of Decatur Morgan County Tourism's Visitor Center. We also support their efforts to enhance the building with a new museum and meeting space.
- ★ The Chamber supports the mission of and continued municipal and county funding for Decatur Morgan County Tourism.

Morgan County Economic Development Association

- ★ The Chamber supports the mission of and continued municipal and county funding for the Morgan County Economic Development Association.
- ★ The Chamber supports continued collaboration with neighboring county economic development organizations to develop new industrial sites, and continued recruitment of new investment and job creation in adjacent and annexed areas of those counties.

Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center

- ★ The Chamber supports the mission of and encourages municipal and county support for the Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

- ★ The Chamber urges local officials to comply with and enforce existing laws addressing illegal immigration in as efficient manner as possible.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Advanced Technology Robotics Research and Development Complex

- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the funding for marketing and economic recruitment efforts of all phases of the Robotics Technology Park and encourages cooperation with area schools and businesses to develop appropriate curriculum and degrees.

Funding and Administration

- ★ The Chamber enthusiastically supports the priority placed on public education and encourages continued municipal and county funding for school systems in Decatur-Morgan County.
- ★ The Chamber supports the long-range growth plan of the Decatur City School System as more rooftops are being built in the city.
- ★ The Chamber urges all school systems in Morgan County to continue reinvestment in the local community by utilizing Decatur and Morgan County based vendors and suppliers.
- ★ The Chamber encourages the school systems of Decatur-Morgan County to proactively promote their successes in all types of media.
- ★ The Chamber supports the ongoing efforts to expand the Career Academies of Decatur to accommodate the growing health science program.
- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the concept and implementation of the new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) Academy and Community Learning Center.
- ★ The Chamber encourages and enthusiastically supports the ongoing efforts of the school systems of Decatur-Morgan County to improve student achievement including test scores and graduation rates.

Career Preparation

- ★ The Chamber strongly supports the mission of the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship and increased incentives for companies to train youth apprentices in high school. We also support the Alabama Community College System's effort to expand quick-start pre-apprenticeship programs that lead to nationally recognized certifications that prepare residents for in-depth apprenticeships or entry-level jobs in manufacturing and short-term apprenticeship programs that place residents in one of several high-wage, in-demand occupations in advanced manufacturing.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- ★ The Chamber supports K12-Higher Education funding for the development of partnerships between Calhoun Community College and business/industry, focused on creating pathways for individual attainment of post-secondary education and skillsets, to achieve completion rates above the national average.
 - ★ The Chamber strongly supports the expansion of career and trade education opportunities within all school systems in Morgan County. We also urge all school systems to collaborate and expand opportunities with Calhoun Community College's and Wallace State Community College's dual enrollment programs and other early college credit opportunities for high school students.
 - ★ The Chamber believes that while a strong technical education is important for setting students on a path to high demand STEM fields, the Chamber also encourages public high schools and institutions of higher education to promote greater understanding of 21st century skills that are transferable across all industry sectors. Employers increasingly voice the need for employees that are able to think critically, collaborate and communicate effectively. Essential skills such as professionalism, interview skills, social media acumen and email etiquette become increasingly important and should become regular part of our curriculum.
 - ★ The Chamber wholeheartedly supports the Best and Brightest Initiative (incentive package for STEM, education and nursing graduates) and the CEO Program (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities-high school students).
 - ★ The Chamber strongly supports funding to increase the number of career coaches based on enrollment numbers to assist students with career preparation.
 - ★ The Chamber encourages public high schools and institutions of higher education to promote greater understanding of personal financial management.
 - ★ The Chamber supports the construction of the Craft Academy in Morgan County for teaching construction trades to high school students.
 - ★ The Chamber supports the training and employment of AIDB (Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind) students being prepared at the new campus in Decatur.
- ★ The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce continues to support the completion of several projects that benefit travel and commerce including:
 - To continue funding for improvements and a completed corridor study along U.S. Alt 72/U.S. Hwy 31/state Route Hwy 20 to create a limited access roadway from the I65/I565 interchange to Hwy 31/Hwy 20/Wilson Street intersection.
 - To study and recommend improvements along U.S. Alt 72/Hwy 20 from the Wilson Street intersection to the Morgan County/Lawrence County line.
 - The expansion of Hwy 67 from two to four lanes from Priceville to the state Route Hwy 36 intersection, to include Upper River Road.
 - Intersection improvements of Upper River Road and Hwy 67.
 - Roundabout or intersection realignment of Upper River/Old River and Indian Hills Road.
 - The construction of a third regional Tennessee River Bridge to connect Decatur-Morgan County to Huntsville and the Shoals.
 - Improvements to the state Route Hwy 67/I-65 intersection by increasing the number of turn lanes to access the interstate from Hwy 67.
 - Expanding Hwy 36 to four lanes from I-65 to Roan Road in Hartselle.
 - The construction of a Hartselle bypass to avoid excessive downtown traffic.
 - Enhancing all modes of freight movement in the region to allow for maximum safety and efficiency.
 - Widening Hwy 31 south on the causeway from two lanes to three with a new three-lane bridge to provide continual free-flowing west bound traffic on Hwy 20.
 - ★ The Chamber urges the city of Decatur to allocate resources to construct new roads and sewer improvements and improve existing roads to support current and planned infrastructure needs within the city of Decatur.

- ★ The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce understands the importance and economic value of inland ports with facilities already in operation in other southeastern states. The proper identification and ultimate construction of a new inland port facility would not only improve the transportation infrastructure for our existing industries, but it would certainly be attractive to new companies looking to locate in our community.
- ★ The Chamber supports the addition of electric vehicle charging stations throughout Decatur-Morgan County.

Local Funding Sources

- ★ The Chamber strongly encourages the Morgan County Commission and municipalities within Morgan County to establish reserve accounts for transportation projects. Such accounts would serve as revenue sources to fund local transportation improvement projects, including resurfacing, as well as serve as the local match for federal and/or state transportation projects. The Chamber also encourages that the allocation of funds for these accounts be made annual budget priorities.
- ★ The Chamber encourages the continued financial support of public transportation by local governments including the study of expanded services within the Decatur metropolitan area.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails

- ★ The Chamber urges the city of Decatur to continue construction, maintenance and rehabilitation of the Dr. Bill Sims Bicycle Path that provides transportation alternatives and recreational opportunities throughout the city of Decatur.
- ★ The Chamber also encourages the construction of other safe, convenient, low cost projects that can be completed to enhance bicycle and pedestrian usage in the downtown areas as well as connecting residential areas with commercial centers, parks, schools and other public and private services. These projects should connect to current trails in Decatur, Hartselle, Priceville and Trinity areas.

- ★ The Chamber encourages the pursuit of quality-of-life funding specifically through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) which provides funding for on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, including sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, downtown streetscape, historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities and other transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This must be a high priority and requires a great amount of vigilance as yearly application is required.
- ★ As a matter of public safety and encouragement of pedestrian traffic within Delano Park, the Chamber encourages push button accessibility, or a pedestrian bridge be installed at Sixth Avenue and Gordon Drive. Furthermore, we suggest an overall feasibility study for this same feature all along the Sixth Avenue corridor.





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