

A RISING TIDE

GREATER GAINESVILLE CHAMBER

2019 Legislative Session Outcomes



proactive. collaborative. regional. POLICY.

ROWING IN THE SAME DIRECTION

The Greater Gainesville Chamber's 2019 Legislative Agenda was built on partnership and answered a pivotal question we posed to our 1,300 members and key partners in business, education, government, workforce and the nonprofit sector: "How can we help you?"

The answers we received laid the foundation of our 2019 priorities. In economic development, we focused on continuing opportunities presented to residents and businesses through the work of Enterprise Florida, the investments of the Florida Job Growth Fund, and potential solutions to the unique needs of our region's rural communities. Priorities in education centered on infrastructural investment and increasing awareness of, and access to, career and technical education programs. We supported the University of Florida's ascent toward becoming a top-5 university and Santa Fe College's work to increase regional access to its award-winning, industry-relevant courses. In other areas – transportation and safety, real estate and development, and healthcare – we supported greater capacity, affordability and investment through market-driven solutions.

The work lawmakers accomplished during the 2019 Legislative Session advanced many of our priorities. Enterprise Florida and the Florida Job Growth Fund emerged intact. Florida's largest highway extension project in decades – created to increase safety, ease congestion and emphasize rural economic opportunity – is off to a running start. Low-income families now have greater power to set an educational path for their children, and healthcare will be more affordable and accessible for patients and providers.

Our legislative delegation – Sen. Keith Perry, Rep. Clovis Watson, Rep. Chuck Clemons, and Rep. Chuck Brannan – was unified in its support for the \$90.9B state budget that will fund these needs, and many related and unrelated measures that will promote savings, safety and progress. For example, our delegation unanimously supported safer road conditions by outlawing texting and driving, fought opioid abuse by supporting awareness of non-opioid alternatives to treat pain, and moved citizens closer to lower prescription drug prices, among other things.

As we celebrate the 2019 Legislative Session's achievements and consider new strategies to push unfinished business over the finish line next year, we know several things are true: Our region can't afford to be divided. We won't always agree. One unified Greater Gainesville voice speaks louder and clearer than many fragmented ones. Our lawmakers are listening.

As we approach the January start to the 2020 Legislative Session and an active election year, we thank our legislative delegation and our dedicated volunteers for their work, engagement and passion for this community.

Finally, we again ask our partners and the community, "how can we help you?" We look forward to building a plan of work for 2020 around some of the answers we receive.

2019 LEGISLATIVE OUTCOMES

Small Business: Big Impact

Small business is the lifeblood of our regional, state and national economies. In 2018, the U. S. Small Business Administration reported that small businesses created more than 152,000 net new jobs, and employed 3.3 million people, or 42% of the private workforce. About 90% of Greater Gainesville Chamber members are small businesses. In 2019, the Florida Legislature approved several measures to decrease red tape and costs, and increase opportunities for small businesses. Among them are the following:

- Continued the trend of reducing of the business rent tax (SB 1642)
- Approved sales tax holidays for back-to-school and hurricane preparedness (HB 7123)
- Reduced insurance rates for everyone by eliminating assignment of benefits fraud (SB 122/HB 7065)
- Subtracted the Global Intangible Low-Tax Income from Florida Corporate Income Tax and augments other changes in the Internal Revenue passed as part of the 2017 Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (SB 576/HB 7127)

Economic Development: Holding the Line

Enterprise Florida is responsible for referring many of the projects that resulted in the 3,000 jobs and \$200M in new capital investment announced by the Greater Gainesville Chamber in the last decade. In 2017, Florida tourism generated nearly \$25B in revenues, relieving citizens of having to pay any state income tax at all. Programs such as Federal Opportunity Zones encourage investment in low-income areas. Rural areas, which constitute a large swath of Alachua County, continue to need investment in jobs, training, infrastructure. Legislation passed this year will support advancement or meet needs in all of these areas.

- Enterprise Florida funded fully at \$26M. Florida Job Growth Grant Fund partially funded at \$40M. (SB 2500)
- Funded Visit Florida at \$50M (SB 178/HB 6031)
- Provided students and schools in Federal Opportunity Zones with special considerations similar to those given to persistently low-performing schools and students who are zoned to attend them (SB 7070)
- Provided rural areas with enhanced resources for workforce training, infrastructure, and access to private broadband internet (SB 7068)

Education & Talent: Increasing Access and Choice

Today's students are tomorrow's workforce. Our region has an established legacy of post-secondary education excellence, with the No. 8 University and a No. 1 Community College anchoring Alachua County as a regional center of excellence for learning. Our workforce partner, CareerSource North Central Florida, is nationally known for leadership in entrepreneurship and industry relevance, and our PreK-12 education system is laser-focused on recruiting the best and brightest teachers, keeping students safe and optimizing the learning environment for students. Legislators in 2019 supported continued educational excellence and improvement.

- Expanded educational choice for low-income families and removed barriers to teacher certification and provided incentive awards (SB 7070)
- Took several measures to increase students' access to apprenticeship programs, including requiring participation in apprenticeship programs to be used in determining school grades and factored into the FTE for certain students. Created the Florida Apprenticeship Grant program, and updated provisions regarding apprenticeships in existing programs, such as career centers, the Florida College System and workforce programs (HB 989/ SB 1388; SB 522; HB 7071)
- Provided \$12M in funding for employer-driven training grants available through FloridaFlex (SB 2500)
- Funded workforce training in emerging transportation infrastructure technologies (SB 7068)

Real Estate & Development: Efficiency, Access & Affordability

Floridians across the state - including critical workers such as teachers, healthcare workers and first-responders - are in need of housing they can afford. Policies that support responsible, cost-efficient development benefit the Floridians who most need affordable housing. Solutions at all levels of government must address this need; even if our region received 100% of the funds possible from the state affordable housing trust, the need would still outpace the supply. Lawmakers supported efficiency, access and affordability in multiple ways this year.

- Prohibited local governments from charging a development an impact fee until the impact actually occurs (SB144/HB 207)
- Streamlined the permitting process, set reasonable deadlines and forbade the government from controlling housing unit prices (SB 1730/HB7103)
- Allocated about \$200M in Sadowski Trust Funds – over \$75M more than in 2018-2019 - toward their intended purpose: supporting affordable housing solutions. Just over half of those funds will address housing needs in the Panhandle related to Hurricane Michael (SB 2500)

Healthcare: Market-Driven Solutions for Access & Savings

As our population grows, so will the need for healthcare. This year, lawmakers passed measures to reduce healthcare costs for patients and providers, increase access to care, and empower hospitals and healthcare facilities to make market-driven expansion decisions.

- Eliminated the certificate of need requirement for some new general hospitals and “tertiary services,” including organ transplant, neonatal intensive care units and pediatric open-heart surgery (HB 21/SB 1721)
- Approved importing low-cost prescription drugs from Canada. The Governor has expressed confidence in Florida’s ability to be the first state in the nation to receive federal approval for this type of program. (HB 19/ SB 1528)
- Allowed Florida-licensed health care providers and out-of-state health care providers who register in Florida to qualify as telehealth providers. (HB 23/SB 1526)
- Allowed individuals who have commercial health insurance to receive payments from their carriers when they choose a covered healthcare service from an insurer’s shared savings list of providers (HB 1113/SB 524)
- Many other changes, including a loan repayment program for dentists who treat underserved people; elimination of noncompete clauses or restrictive covenants between certain entities and physicians. Expanded direct care agreements beyond physicians to include chiropractors, advanced practice nurses, physician assistants, dentists and primary care group practices; and more (HB 843/SB 7078)

Notable Appropriations (SB 2500/ Florida State Budget)

The following list, while not exhaustive, includes several appropriations across key areas.

- State Road 26 Right of Way Land Acquisition - \$2.63M
- State Road 26 Water & Wastewater Project - \$500K
- Alachua County Agricultural Center - \$400K
- University of Florida Music Building - \$11.5M
- University of Florida Data Science & Technology Building - \$25M
- Santa Fe College Student Success Incentive Funds - \$1.17M
- Santa Fe College Florida College System Program Funds - \$38.8M
- Santa Fe College Education Enhancement Trust Funds - \$4.23M