

2011 Legislative Agenda

Economic Development

The State of Georgia has provided incentives to businesses to encourage relocation to Georgia, creation of jobs, training of the work force and building infrastructure. However, in the 2010 Legislative Session, these programs were not fully funded. If these programs are not adequately funded, communities will not be able to compete with other states to bring jobs to Georgia and grow the economic opportunities for our citizens.

- We support continued appropriations for the Regional Economic Assistance (REBA) grants, Quick Start, the Intellectual Capital Partnership Program (ICAPP) and OneGeorgia Economic Development Growth and Expansion (EDGE) Fund.

With the expansion of Fort Benning due to Base Realignment and Closure, adequate road infrastructure to support the growth in our region continues to be a high priority. With the cooperation of the Valley Partnership, the leadership of Fort Benning and Columbus Consolidated Government, we have identified the critical projects that will provide for relief to current residents while allowing for growth in the future.

- We support appropriations for the following road projects:
 - Fort Benning Alabama Gate and Corridor (\$22,000,000)
 - Eastern Connector (southern portion) (\$25,063,000)
 - SR 26 at US 280 (\$105,000)
 - SR 26 between US 280 & High School (\$7,700,000)
 - Property acquisition for SR 26 between US 280 & High School (\$1,400,000)
 - Buena Vista Rd Interchange (\$50,000,000)
 - St Mary's Road Widening: Robin Road to Ft. Benning, including Interchange (\$16,500,000)

The Enterprise Zone on Cusseta Road in south Columbus was originally established in April 1998 and readopted in December 2008 for an additional ten years. This zone is designed to attract manufacturing, telecommunications, warehousing and distribution, finance, some real estate activities, and new residential construction or rehabilitation to south Columbus. Expanding this area will create more opportunities for economic expansion in a distressed area of Columbus that is near Fort Benning and could benefit from its expansion.

- We request that the City Council expand the Enterprise Zone.

Tax increment financing is a widely used economic development tool that offers local governments a way to revitalize their communities by expanding the tax base, offsetting, in part, federal and state funds that are no longer available. Tax Allocation Districts can act as a catalyst to attract further private investment into economically depressed areas. TADs help local governments attract private development and new businesses which create jobs, attract customers, and in turn generate additional private investment.

- We support offering a referendum enabling the Columbus City Council to create Tax Allocation Districts in Columbus.

Community Development

Public assistance is critical in preventing and solving crime in our community. For 25 years, Crime Stoppers has provided rewards to those individuals who provide definitive help in solving crimes. The Board of Directors of Crime Stoppers, Inc., has raised the funds for this program through generous donations. However, this method of funding provides neither adequate nor long-term solution.

- We support increased felony and misdemeanor fees to fund Crime Stoppers reward programs.

Section 9006 of the Health Care Reform Act requires businesses to file tax form 1099 for all vendors with whom businesses spend \$600.00 each year. This includes goods and services. Such a requirement places an undue burden on business, especially small businesses. Sen. Johnny Isakson and Sen. Saxby Chambliss have co-sponsored legislation to repeal this particular requirement.

- We support passage of the Small Business Paperwork Mandate Elimination Act.

Environmental Sustainability

The Chattahoochee River is critical ecological, economic and recreational asset for our region. Because we share this resource with communities both up- and downstream of Columbus, we all must implement environmentally sustainable practices that utilize the power of the Chattahoochee River yet preserve it for all stakeholders.

- We support legislation to require that municipals users who remove water from the Chattahoochee River return an environmentally sustainable minimum of water back to the river.

Inter-basin transfers are used in Georgia to meet the water needs of various communities, especially the Atlanta region. In section 10 of the Comprehensive Water Plan adopted in 2008, guidelines are recommended to follow prior to initiating any further inter-basin transfers. Because these are only guidelines, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division may not always follow the recommendations.

- We support legislation that codifies into law guidelines for inter-basin transfers included in the Comprehensive Water Plan for the State of Georgia.

Workforce Development

Columbus State University offers a Bachelor of Science degree in computer science that includes a gaming and simulation track. CSU partnered with Fort Benning to create a program that complements the US Army's computer battle simulation program.

- We support restoring funding to the ICAPP program for the CSU gaming and simulation track.

Workplace violence is a major public health concern that has increased in incidence and attention within the past decade. The healthcare sector leads all other industries, with 45% of all nonfatal assaults against workers resulting in lost workdays in the US. Prevention is essential for creating a safe and therapeutic environment for patients and a safer work place for health care workers. Health care workers who leave because of assaults and threats of violence contribute to a healthcare workforce shortage.

- We support legislation that will expand protections and increase penalties for battery, malicious assault and unlawful assault against healthcare workers.