Public Affairs Division Update

James McGahee (Vice Chairman)
Military Affairs Update

Brian Geary, Chairman
Mission Statement:

To continue a long-standing tradition in our community of cultivating and enhancing a positive relationship between the business community and local military personnel.
Sub-Committees:

1. Red Carpet
2. Right Start
3. Airman Appreciation Day
4. Airman of the Quarter
5. Sports Day Event
6. Anniversary Party Committee
Goals

- Provide a link between military and the Valdosta-Lowndes County business community through the interaction of military personnel and the business community.

- Educate all Moody newcomers about Valdosta-Lowndes County and familiarize them with the business community.

- Recognize Moody’s annual contribution of over $409 million to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Community.

- Encourage communication between the military and the Chamber about their concerns that may be related to the Valdosta-Lowndes County business community.
Right Start Program

- We attended **22** Right Start Presentations and Information Fairs so far this year. These are scheduled every other Tuesday at Moody AFB. Being the only Air Force Base in the world to allow the Chamber to help welcome the new incoming Airmen, we are able to provide a presentation highlighting the Valdosta area, and what the community has to offer to enhance the Quality of Life at Moody.

- During the information fair, we provide answers to any questions the new folks have, and hand out the welcome packets the Chamber members pay to be a part of.

- What a win-win situation for Moody and the Community.
Red Carpet Parties

- We have hosted four Red Carpet Parties at Ocean Pond welcoming the New Senior Leadership to the base. In addition, we presented going away gifts to departing Senior Commanders. It is always a fun time for all; all the guests are treated to a traditional southern dinner, and fellowship.

- We have been able to secure sponsors for all four of the parties this year, one being our 45th Anniversary Party.
Red Carpet Events @ Ocean Pond

To view more photos visit our photo gallery on the Chamber’s Web Site
www.valdostachamber.com or click link http://www.valdostachamber.com/photo-gallery.htm

For more information contact Karil Brockington at 247-8100 or email:
kbrockington@valdostachamber.com
Thank you to Our 2010 Red Carpet Sponsors:

Four Star Sponsors

ADT Security Services, Inc.
Catfish One
Eye Associates of South GA, LLC
First State Bank/Synovus Mortgage Corp.
Georgia Power Company
Georgia Printco, LLC
Greenleaf Center
iBERIA Bank Mortgage
J. Randall Hicks, P.C. Attorney at Law
Johnson Distributing Company
Kentucky Fried Chicken
Moody Law Firm, LLC
Quinn Construction
Pearl Executive Shuttle
Smitty’s Package Store
Southeastern Federal Credit Union
Steel’s Jewelry
The Links
The LPA Group Incorporated
Valdosta Daily Times
Wiregrass Georgia Technical College
Valdosta-Lowndes Co. Conference Center & Tourism Authority
Vallorbe, Inc.
WAL-MART Supercenter
Wilson Eye Center
Thank you to Our 2010 Red Carpet Sponsors:

One Star Sponsors

Ace Electric
Astro Exterminating
BB&T
Bemiss Citizens Bank
Col. Clarence Parker
Coleman Talley LLP, Russell D Henry
Farmers Home Furniture
Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Center
Langdale Ford
Langdale Honda Kia of Valdosta
Miller Hardware
Nexxttep Technology Services, Inc.

Prudential Financial Company
Reames & Son Construction Company
SMITH Northview Hospital
Southeastern Capital Mgmt. Group
Tall Tree/Staten Crossing Apt.
That Others May Live Foundation
The Herndon Company Real Estate
The Park Avenue Bank
Valdosta Flying Service
Valdosta Sunrise Rotary Club
Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority
Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority
## 2010 Red Carpet Sponsor Attendance

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<th>Sponsors Attended</th>
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Change of Commands

- We have had several changes in the leadership at Moody so far this year. As I always say it is sad to see the old regime leave but it helps us to meet a new group of leaders.
Airmen Appreciation Day

- The committee supported the Airmen Appreciation Day through donations. This is a great opportunity to acknowledge these young men and women who put their lives on the line everyday to help secure our freedom.
Visiting Dignitaries

We provided gifts of South GA pecans and a couple of Red Carpet glasses to visiting Generals to Moody. We have coordinated with the base Protocol Office to keep several on hand and let us know when they have someone visit.
Several committee members attended the Annual Awards banquet in honor of the Airmen and Civilians at the base who have excelled in their jobs.
Moody Air Force Base
Sports Day

Friday, October 1, 2010
Conclusion

- An impressive year. I ‘m proud of all the committee members who have stepped up to help in any way possible to make this year a huge success.

- It is a pleasure to serve as the Military Affairs Chairman. I will continue to represent the Chamber through my connections with Moody and the Air Force.
The Government Affairs Council’s State Legislative Committee has worked tirelessly on developing the 2011 Agenda, our process:

- Review 2010 agenda
- Meet with Local Delegation
- Meet with GA Chamber
- Champions review legislation
- After many hours of meetings, research, discussion and deliberation the agenda is created
- The language was tweaked on a few of the agenda items but only one item was added

2011 Proposed State Legislative Agenda
Education

The Chamber supports improvement strategies that link education and workforce development in a seamless manner, preparing a student for whatever future they might choose and ensuring the long-term viability of our local economy. The Chamber’s goal is to build the best workforce and ensure our companies have the talent they need to stay competitive.

Sales Tax Holidays

The Chamber supports providing a sales tax holiday at the beginning of the school year that would exempt sales tax on back-to-school items. The exemption would last at least four days. An additional sales tax holiday would exempt tax on energy efficient products.
Special Council on Tax Reform & Fairness for Georgians

- The Chamber supports the efforts of the Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness for Georgians with their attempt to update and modernize the tax code.

Regarding this effort, the Chamber supports:
- changes to state tax policy that encourage economic growth, entrepreneurship and prosperity,
- creation of an independent trial court over tax disputes involving the Georgia Department of Revenue Tax Court and
- enhance the administration and collection of taxes at the state level.

Trauma Care

- The Chamber supports legislative efforts to stabilize and enhance the trauma care network. The network should be supported either by existing government funds or additional revenue sources which are dedicated, predictable, broadly imposed and government-collected. Further, the allocation of such funds should be made in accordance with the formula established by the Georgia Trauma Care Network Commission.
Alternative Energy & Conservation

The Chamber supports legislation for creating a balanced, sustainable, reliable and affordable solution to our energy needs.

The Chamber supports public policies that provide support for:

(1) Efforts to optimize energy efficiency that will lead to long-term conservation practices;

(2) Conversion to more environmental friendly forms of energy generation, including nuclear and clean coal technologies;

(3) Research and development of alternative energy sources such as bio-fuels, solar power, geothermal, tidal energy and other renewable fuels produced by agronomic crops and new energy technologies; and

(4) Energy and environmental issues that are sensitive to their short-term and long-term economic impact and that utilize proven and effective technology based on sound science.

The Chamber opposes legislation:

(1) That is overly burdensome or imposes new regulations that would stifle systems that feed economic development and job growth and

(2) Policies that are not based on sound science or data or lack current technology for effective implementation.
The Chamber supports the Suwannee – Satilla Regional Water Council’s vision of managing water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia’s regulated riparian and regulated reasonable use laws that is based on sound science and consistent historical data for population and water resource use and needs assessment projections.

Our common goal is to support the State and Region’s economy, to protect public health and natural resources and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens while preserving the private property rights of Georgia’s landowners and in consideration of the need to enhance resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities.

The Chamber will monitor the progress of the Suwannee – Satilla Regional Water Council and the Regional Advisory Committees with the goal of reaching a sustainable, reliable, affordable Agricultural, Industrial and Municipal water use and water quality policy.
Clinic for the Working Uninsured

- The Chamber supports public and private funding options for safety net clinics that provide access to health care for the working uninsured to ensure that present and future needs are met.

Civil Justice Reform

- The Chamber supports monitoring and protecting the important legal and civil justice reforms that were adopted in 2005 including the requirement to prove gross negligence with regard to emergency room liability, the elimination of several joint and liability and provisions to discourage frivolous litigation. The Chamber supports caps on economic damages, opposes legislation that further weakens the reforms of 2005, and supports the reduction of the rapid growth of medical liability awards and insurance costs.
Wellness Statement

- The Chamber supports the creation of insurance products that provide incentives to reward healthy lifestyles, with appropriate consideration for cost effectiveness.

Sales Tax Exemption on Energy Used for Manufacturing

- The Chamber supports providing an exemption with respect to State (not local) sales and use tax for the cost of energy (natural or artificial gas, electricity, or any other energy) used directly in the production of manufactured goods.
The Chamber supports the development of a thoughtful strategy that will provide the needed funding to address transportation funding needs at both the state and local level. The funding solution strategy should provide increased, dedicated and reliable long-term funding for transportation maintenance and improvements. The Chamber will continue to actively promote top priority projects identified in the City of Valdosta’s Transportation Master Plan, as well as our long-standing support for the widening of State Road 133.
The State Legislative Committee respectfully requests your consideration to adopt the Proposed 2011 State Legislative Agenda.
2010
Government Affairs Council Update
MISSION:

Represent the business community to federal, state and local elected officials, aggressively promoting legislative issues that pertain to business development.
Area chambers back SPLOST

Hahira Chamber president Willie Linahan (back left), Valdosta Chamber chairman Lena Bosch and Lake Park Chamber president Howard Tessin with Stan Fillion, seated, chairman of the chamber’s committee backing the September 16 SPLOST referendum.

“A Penny for Continued Progress”
Get Ready for the 88th Annual Chamber Dinner Meeting!

Lindsay Thomas, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce will be speaking on January 25 at the Chamber’s 88th Annual Dinner Meeting. He has been listed numerous times in Georgia Trend magazine as one of Georgia’s 100 Most Powerful and Influential Georgians.

Make your plans now to attend the Chamber’s 88th Annual Dinner Meeting. This will be the first event held in the beautiful new Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center! Tickets available until January 18 at the Chamber of Commerce. The entire community is invited!
Census 2000: “It’s Your Future - Don’t Leave It Blank!”

John Bowling, chairman of the Metropolitan Area Committee, stresses the safety of the census. “Information collected by the census cannot be shared or sold to anyone, including other government agencies,” Bowling said.

Photo courtesy of the Valdosta Daily Times
Sales Tax Holiday 2002

Barnes Kicks Off “Sales Tax Holiday”
Bubba Campbell recipient of ‘Champion of Business Award’

The Chamber presents several awards each year — the A.L. Girardin Award to our ‘member of the year’, the Small Business of the Year, the Manufacturer of the Year, DRUGS DON'T WORK Partner of the Year, and World Class Employees of the Year. But there’s one Chamber award that is NOT presented each year. It’s presented ONLY when a Chamber member has impacted the entire business community in an exceptional way.

In fact, the Chamber’s ‘Champion of Business Award’ has only been presented once before. The Chamber created this special award in 2002 to acknowledge and honor the members of our local delegation to the Georgia General Assembly; State Senator Tim Golden and State Representatives Ron Borders, Ellis Black, and Jay Shaw, for the pro-business legislation they sponsored on our behalf that year.

“Once again, the Chamber Executive Committee finds that there is an individual whose actions have benefited the entire business community,” said Chamber Chairman of the Board Jud Rackley (Brandon, Rackley & Dukes, PC) in presenting the ‘Champion of Business Award’ to Bubba Campbell at the Chamber’s Mid-Year Membership meeting at JP Muldoons on July 28. “I know that you are going to agree with the Executive Committee that this local business person truly is a ‘champion’ who deserves a special thanks.”

Chamber leaders and members of the Georgia General Assembly surround our ‘Champion of Business,’ Belk manager Bubba Campbell, and wife Anna after receiving the award at the Chamber’s annual Mid-Year Membership Meeting in July. Pictured are (clockwise from top) John Heavener (Georgia Retail Association), Rep. Ellis Black, Sen. Tim Golden (Beacon Hill Financial, LLC)
Jet Service Has Landed!

On Dec. 18, members of the Chamber’s Transportation Committee welcomed the announcement of jet service to Valdosta Regional Airport. Gary St. John of Atlantic Southeast Airlines, Inc. said, “Beginning January 31, ASA will begin flying the first regional jets from Valdosta to Atlanta.”

The jets include two 50-passenger CRJs. ASA also will add two 66-passenger ATRs, which are a larger version of the Brasilia currently in use. The CRJs and ATRs will begin replacing the 30 passenger Brasilia starting in February.

The Chamber’s Transportation Committee has persisted for more than 15 years in working with ASA to ensure jet service for the Valdosta Regional Airport. Steve Everett (Langdale Ford) was an instrumental part of “Project Jet,” whose goal in the mid-1980s was to bring jet service to Valdosta. “I believe that jet service from Valdosta will be the single best thing that can happen to promote airline travel out of Valdosta Regional Airport,” Everett said. “The business traveler requires comfort and generally flies a very tight schedule. These planes are much bigger; the seats are more comfortable and much roomier than the Brasilia’s currently being used. The reduced flight time to about 55 minutes should allow for better connections in and out of Atlanta.”

Ronald Cowart (Cowart Electric and Industrial Contractors), chairman of the Chamber’s Transportation Committee said, “On behalf of the Chamber’s Transportation Committee, I appreciate the efforts of ASA to improve air service to and from Valdosta Regional Airport. The Chamber has really pursued these improvements, and I commend ASA for making them happen.”
Telecommunications: Can Valdosta businesses compete?

Can Valdosta Businesses Compete?" was the subject of the 4th Annual Telecommunications Forum held Oct. 14 at the Valdosta-Lowndes Conference Center. The event was sponsored by the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber, the Valdosta-Lowndes Conference Center & Tourism Authority and The Valdosta Daily Times.

Randy Cox (Park Avenue Bank) explained the purpose of the forum. "Since the community was recently named a Metropolitan area, this year’s forum was designed to determine if Valdosta-Lowndes County can compete in terms of our telecommunications services with the other Metro areas."

This year’s keynote speaker was Mike Adkinson, founder and CEO of TechLINKS Magazine in Atlanta. Adkinson told the group, "Technology is not an end in itself. It is a tool to help you. It’s not how much broadband width you have, it’s what you do with it. As our national and state economies continue to change, the key to Valdosta’s future success will be to provide a place where home-grown entrepreneurs know that they can come home, build businesses, receive support, and be successful."

Valdosta businesses have the same ability to communicate as Fortune 500 companies with real time email access, digital imaging, and connection to corporate computer networks over faster, secure connections."

Telecommunication services offered by BellSouth in Valdosta-Lowndes County are in a parity with any other city in the state of Georgia, including Atlanta. The capabilities and infrastructure available in Valdosta-Lowndes County are second to no other cities in the State of Georgia."

Ted Lawrence
BellSouth

Jorge Neves
Sprint PCS

For more information about the Chamber’s Technology Resources Committee contact Yolanda Shropshire, (229)247-3100 or yshropshire@valdostachamber.com.
The Chamber is already making our case to elected officials about the concerns of the business community for the upcoming 2004 Legislative Session. On Oct. 2, Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor visited with Chamber members to discuss his forecast of the upcoming session. "I encourage everyone to get and stay involved in their local Chamber of Commerce," stated Taylor. "Making your voice heard loud and clear starts at the local level. If we don’t pay close attention to transportation, education and healthcare, for example, there could be an adverse impact on our business climate and the state’s economy. I look forward to working on all of these issues with the business community during our next legislative session."

Chamber Manufacturers Council members urged the Lt. Gov. to work on legislation to clarify wording in the Unemployment Insurance statute that currently allows some dismissed employees who violate the employer’s posted attendance policy to collect benefits, in certain situations. "We are pleased that Lt. Governor Taylor supports correcting this ‘glitch’ in the Unemployment Insurance law which allows payment of benefits even when a claimant violates a known, reasonable and lawful attendance rule," said Mark Wilson (Langdale Industries). "This correction will reduce Unemployment Insurance costs to businesses and will reinforce the message that good employee attendance is a major key to a successful company."

This language amendment is intended to protect employers whose employees are violating their fundamental right to expect them to be at work, not including those absences subject to FMLA protections. The Chamber currently is in the process of developing the 2004 Legislative Agenda for Business, which will include this issue as well as other top business development issues in our community. Chamber members will be given the opportunity to rank their top legislative priorities for the Chamber to pursue during the 2004 Legislative Session.

Lt. Governor Mark Taylor met with Chamber members regarding Unemployment Insurance reform during a Chamber reception for him at the Chamber on Oct. 2. Pictured are Mark Wilson (Langdale Industries), William Sirmans (Georgia Department of Labor), Taylor, Jeff Hanson (Park Avenue Bank), and Kris Jensen (Salt America, Inc.).

For a look at the Chamber’s 2004 Legislative Agenda for Business, go to the Chamber’s Web site at www.valdostachamber.com.
2005 Champions of Business

The Champion of Business Award is not an annual award. The honor is reserved only for those individuals who have gone above and beyond to make a difference for business, not just in their organization or in Lowndes County, but on the state level as well.


Dukes, Goff, and Wilson have been working on this issue for several years. In 2001, the Manufacturers Council called attention to a “glitch” in the Georgia unemployment insurance law. This glitch is a loophole that provides unemployment insurance to some employees when attendance is the reason for dismissal. Dukes worked with the Chamber throughout the beginning stages of investigating this issue until it was out of her local jurisdiction.

By 2005, “clarifying attendance as a reason for dismissal” had gained enough momentum to be placed on the Legislative Agenda of the Georgia Chamber and Georgia Industry Association. Goff and Wilson made numerous trips to Atlanta to testify in committee meetings and speak with Legislators on the importance of fixing the “glitch”.

These two Champions of Business were instrumental in working with the Georgia Department of Labor to develop the language that will fix the “glitch” and save employers in Georgia thousands of dollars.

The Governor signed HB 520 on May 10, 2005 officially clarifying attendance as a reason for dismissal. Thank you again to our 2005 Champions of Business. Without your help, this legislation would not have been possible! You’re our superheroes!
7.5% Workers Comp Discount made Permanent

Program celebrates 200th member

260 Chamber Members save $200K+ - potential dollars that stay in our regional economy
The 2005 Georgia General Assembly was a very productive time for the Chamber’s Governmental Affairs Committee. Several trips to Atlanta to lobby for pro-business legislation paid off with five bills from the Chamber’s Legislative Agenda for Business to be signed into law.

Seeing the passage of so much pro-business legislation does not happen often. This year, the Governmental Affairs Committee decided to celebrate the “heroes” at a “Celebrate the Session” reception on Apr. 12 at the Chamber.

“This was a banner year for the Governmental Affairs Committee,” said Jeff Hanson (Park Avenue Bank), chairman of the committee. “The hard work of volunteers like Paula Goff (Regal Marine) and Mark Wilson (Langdale Industries) this year, and Fred Wetherington (Wetherington Farms) and Susan Dukes (Ga. Department of Labor) shows exactly what can be accomplished with a grassroots effort.”

On Apr. 15, the Governmental Affairs Committee and the Kiwanis Club of Valdosta hosted the 2005 Legislative Overview Luncheon, with comments on the session by Reps. Jay Shaw, Ron Borders, and Ellis Black, and featured speaker Sen. Tim Golden. More than 80 business leaders were on hand as the delegation discussed the high points of the Legislative Session.

Year after year, Chamber members identify affordable healthcare as their number one legislative issue. The subcommittee decided that this year, the Washington Trip would focus primarily on this important issue. On May 11, 11 business leaders made the annual trip to Washington, DC to discuss affordable healthcare with our federal delegation. One “power team” met with Reps. Sanford Bishop, Jack Kingston, and Charlie Norwood, and the other team met with Sens. Johnny Isakson and Saxby Chambliss to talk about healthcare concerns in Greater Valdosta, and to inform them of progress on the local level. The trip also included meetings at the U.S. Chamber, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Pentagon.

This fall, the Governmental Affairs Committee will reconvene to develop the 2006 Legislative Agenda for Business. For more information on the Chamber’s Governmental Affairs program, or to voice legislative concerns affecting your business, contact Amy Karam at (229) 247-8100, or akaram@valdostachamber.com.
General Assembly completes 2008 legislative session

Several bills passed to strengthen manufacturing including a cap limiting the sales tax on energy used in manufacturing, expanded sales tax exemption for machinery & parts and the creation of a “Made in Georgia” initiative.

STATE WATER PLAN
The plan calls for Regional Water Councils and the Chamber is working with our local delegation to have Lowndes County representation appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House.

MANUFACTURING
Several bills passed to strengthen manufacturing, including a cap limiting the sales tax on energy used in manufacturing, expanded sales tax exemption for machinery and parts, and the creation of a “Made in Georgia” initiative to promote the sale of products made in Georgia. As Sen. Tim Golden stated, “These kinds of legislative proposals are a great start, but in my opinion, they are only a start. More needs to be done to make Georgia a leader in and destination for industry. Manufacturers have a huge impact on the economy throughout our state, representing 10 percent of the overall workforce.”

STATE SALES TAX HOLIDAY
The holiday was renewed for certain school supplies, clothing, footwear, computers, and computer related accessories from July 31 – Aug 3. This legislation was originally initiated by Valdosta citizens in 2001.

BUSINESS OWNER PROPERTY RIGHTS
Legislation preventing business owners the right to disallow firearms on business property was amended to ensure business owners retained their property rights.

Visit the Chamber’s Government Affairs page at www.valdostachamber.com for more information.
February 11, 2009 the State Legislative Committee holds briefing with State Legislators
Successfully championed the following State business development initiatives in the 2009 Legislative Session:

• **HB 120** - Renewal of Sales Tax Holiday

• Regional Water Council was formed and includes two representatives from Lowndes County, Wesley Langdale and Rusty McCall

• **SB 31** - Georgia Nuclear Energy Financing Act, provides for a utility to recover from its customers the costs of financing associated with the construction of a nuclear generating plant
Sen. Tim Golden, original author of the Sales Tax Holiday in 2000, fights hard along with the Chamber's Government Affairs Council to get the legislation passed again each year.

"Former Belk manager Bubba Campbell was THINKING B.I.G. when he came up with the Sales Tax Holiday idea for Georgia and approached me about it. Sales Tax Holiday is a win-win for businesses and consumers, and there is no doubt that it stimulates our economy," said Golden.

"This year's B-T-S Sales Tax Holiday sales exceeded the great year we had last year. The mall parking lot was packed!" said Belk store manager Paul Clingan.
The Chamber’s State Legislative Committee met with the “Let’s Get Georgia Moving” Coalition regarding development of 2010 legislation on how to fund transportation for the state of Georgia.
Over 100 businesses attended the GA Chamber Power Lunch on August 27 at the Valdosta Country Club. The theme for the meeting was Bringing Georgia Together.

George Israel, GA Chamber CEO stated, “This was the best turnout of any of the previous 11 events we have hosted. It is obvious the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber is a Five-Star Chamber.”

GA Chamber Chairman, Mike Garrett (Georgia Power Co.) stated, “In too many ways, there are still two Georgias. We all need to work together to achieve our common goals.”
Federal Legislative Committee
meets with
Congressman Kingston

February 9, 2009
Champions spoke on:

- Health Information Technology Funding
- Labor Law Issues
- Energy
On Sept. 28, the Chamber offered the business community a private meeting with U.S. Representative Jack Kingston.

The Congressman responded to questions and comments by members of the Government Affairs Council. Randy Sauls (South Georgia Medical Center) addressed healthcare issues facing our community to Cong. Kingston, in particular, trauma care funding availability for South Georgia.

Congressman Kingston gave a brief overview of the most important issues facing our nation today including the Afghanistan war, healthcare, employment/labor law, cap and trade legislation and fiscal responsibility.
STIMULUS OR STYMIED: 2009

Is Your Business Ready for the Coming Changes in Employment Laws?

Presentations by Jason Willcox and G. Robert Ryan, Jr. (Moore, Clarke, DuVall & Rodgers, P.C) & Megan Smith & Anne Barnas (SmithBarnas & Associates, Inc.) in association with the Federal Legislative Committee

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Chamber leads regional meeting with Congressman Bishop

Chamber advises Bishop "VOTE NO on EFCA"

Business 2009 Valdosta - Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce
Chamber champions present 2009 Federal Legislative Agenda to U.S. Delegation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Pentagon
Federal Legislative Overview Luncheon with U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson

Friday, April 17
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Hilton Garden Inn

Seating is Limited!

2009
Government Affairs Council Chair, Paula Goff (Smith Northview Hospital) presented the Chamber’s 2009 Local Legislative Agenda during the Aug. 4 Lake Park City Council Meeting.

Goff stated, "This is the first year the Chamber has developed an official local agenda, and we are pleased to present it to all of our local governments and stakeholders. This is a ‘living’ document and will be updated as needed. We are very excited about the organization of our Gateways Committee which will be chaired by Marshall Conner (Georgia Power Co.) along with vice-chair Aaron Strickland (Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful). We are asking all of the stakeholders to appoint a representative and come together as a committee to make our Gateways more appealing."
Members of the newly formed Gateways Committee visited with Columbus Chamber President, Mike Gaymon and Gateways Committee Champion, John Flournoy to study the successful gateway improvement program in Columbus, Ga.

"Gateways provide a first impression of a community to visitors upon entering, and we have implemented a thoughtful, unified strategy to strengthen and beautify the overall appearance of our community," stated Flournoy.
Census 2010
Kick-off Event

It's in Our Hands!

We move forward when you send it back!
Chamber promotes State Agenda

Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber
2010 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

**Alternative Energy & Conservation**
The Chamber supports legislation implementing public policies that promote:
1. efforts to optimize energy efficiency that will lead to long-term conservation practices,
2. conversion to more environmental friendly forms of energy generation, including nuclear and clean coal technologies,
3. research and development of alternative energy sources such as bio-fuels, solar power, tidal energy and other renewable fuels produced by agronomic crops and new energy technologies,
4. energy and environmental issues that are sensitive to their short-term and long-term economic impact and that utilize proven and effective technology.

**Monitor Water Council**
The Chamber supports the Suwannee – Satilla Regional Water Council’s vision of managing water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia’s regulated riparian and regulated reasonable use laws. Our common goal is to support the State and Regional economy, to protect public health and natural resources and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens while preserving the private property rights of Georgia’s landowners and in consideration of the need to enhance resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities. The Chamber will monitor the progress of the Suwannee – Satilla Regional Water Council and the Regional Advisory Committees with the goal of sustainable Agricultural, Industrial and Municipal water use and water quality.

**TAXES**

**Sales Tax Exemption on Energy Used for Manufacturing**
The Chamber supports providing an exemption with respect to State (not local) sales and use tax for the cost of energy (natural or artificial gas, electricity or any other energy) used directly in the production of manufactured goods.

**Sales Tax Holidays**
The Chamber supports providing a sales tax holiday at the beginning of the school year that would exempt sales tax on back-to-school items. The exemption would last at least four days. An additional sales tax holiday would exempt tax on energy efficient products for at least four days in 2010.

HEALTH CARE

**Trauma Care**
The Chamber supports an increase in the number and funding of level one and level two Trauma Care Centers in the State of Georgia, particularly in South Georgia. Further, the Chamber believes the allocation of such funds should be made in accordance with the formula recently established by the Georgia Trauma Care Commission.

**Clinic for the Working Uninsured**
The Chamber supports public and private funding options for safety net clinics that provide access to health care for the working uninsured to ensure that present and future needs are met.

**Civil Justice Reform**
The Chamber supports monitoring and protecting the important legal and civil justice reforms that were adopted in 2005.

**Wellness Statement**
The Chamber supports the creation of insurance products that provide incentives to reward healthy lifestyles.

EDUCATION

**EDUCATION**
The Chamber supports improvement strategies that link education and workforce development in a seamless manner, preparing students for whatever future they might choose and ensuring the long-term viability of our local economy. The Chamber’s goal is to build the best workforce and ensure our companies have the talent they need to stay competitive.

TRANSPORTATION

**TRANSPORTATION**
The Chamber supports the development of a thoughtful strategy that will provide the needed funding to address transportation funding needs at both the state and local level. The funding solution strategy should provide increased, dedicated, and reliable long-term funding for transportation maintenance and improvements. The Chamber will continue to actively promote top priority projects identified in the City of Valdosta’s Transportation Master Plan, as well as our long-standing support for the widening of State Road 133. The Chamber also supports repealing the pickup truck exemption regarding the use of safety belt.
Chamber Co-Hosts State Legislative Lunch with Rotary Clubs

State Legislative Committee presents 2010 Agenda for Business to Local Delegation
Chamber hosts GDOT Commissioner Vance Smith 2009

GAC presents Transportation Funding issue and Gateways plans to Commissioner Smith

Reception for GDOT Commissioner Smith
State Legislative Briefing in Atlanta 2010

Hosted State Legislative Briefing in Atlanta with Local Delegation, GA Retail Assoc. and the GA Chamber
Chamber attends Water Council meeting

State Legislative Committee chairman Darrell Wilder (Georgia Power Co.) addressed the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Council during their quarterly meeting on March 25 at Wiregrass Georgia Technical College. Wilder shared the Chamber’s position stating, “The Chamber supports your vision of managing water resources in a sustainable manner and your goal to support the State and Region’s economy, to preserve public health and natural resources and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens while preserving the private property rights of Georgia’s landowners. We firmly believe that there is no more important economic development asset to the Valdosta Metropolitan Area than water availability and supply quality.”

www.valdostachamber.com
The Chamber hosted an informal meeting with Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Commissioner Vance Smith on August 11. Pictured are GDOT Board member Jay Shaw, GDOT Special Asst. to the Commissioner Stephanie Carter and GDOT Commissioner Vance Smith.

“Transportation funding will be a top issue on the agenda once again for the 2011 Legislative Session, so we went to the source in an effort to perform our due diligence in representing our members and the community’s thinking on this important transportation issue,” said Chamber president Myrna Ballard. The Chamber invited GDOT Commissioner Vance Smith and District 1 GDOT Board member Jay Shaw to meet with local government representatives in August to discuss transportation funding.

House Bill 277 and The Georgia 2020 Transportation Act, also known as the Transportation Funding Bill, were discussed in detail. Commissioner Smith stated, “These are steps in the right direction, but we still need to look at additional funding sources for transportation due to less revenue from the motor fuel tax, which has had a diminishing return since 2007.”

Jay Shaw, GDOT Board member, spoke on the importance of Senate Resolution 821, regarding GDOT multi-year construction agreements that will be voted on statewide in 2010. “We need to educate the public on how important it is to get this resolution passed for the good of transportation in Georgia,” stated Shaw.

“One of the most critical issues facing our State and our community is funding for transportation system maintenance and development projects. The Chamber wants to make certain that our members and the business community as a whole have input into proposals for new transportation funding,” stated Ballard.

For more information on the Chamber’s State Legislative Agenda, contact Alison Stokes at 229-247-8100 or astokes@valdostaclamber.com.
Successfully championed the following State business development initiatives in the 2010 Legislative Session:

- Transportation Funding
- Trauma Care Funding
- Seat Belt Law for Pick-up Trucks
- Water Stewardship Act of 2010
- Legislation codifying Georgia Work Ready
Endorse Expansion of Lowndes County Commission
The Chamber supports expansion of the Lowndes County Commission.

AYP - Community Unification for Educational Excellence
The Chamber supports the Community Unification for Educational Excellence foundation in its efforts to unify our public school systems. Annual yearly progress will be monitored and reported on by a Chamber representative serving on the foundation board.

Protect Moody AFB from Encroachment
The Chamber supports the protection of Moody Air Force Base from encroachment.
Gateways

The Chamber supports the development of a Gateways Committee, coordinated by the Chamber, charged with development of a plan to improve the appearance of the gateways to our community. Members of the committee would include a representative from the Cities of Valdosta, Remerton, Hahira, Lake Park, Dasher, Lowndes County, V-L County Airport Authority, V-L County Industrial Authority, V-L County Tourism Authority, Keep Lowndes /Valdosta Beautiful, Georgia Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organization, V-L County Parks and Recreation Authority, and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber.

Transportation Plan

The Chamber endorses a coordinated public transit system that promotes and benefits the business community and their employees.
Tax Allocation Districts
The Chamber supports the creation of Tax Allocation Districts and endorses requesting the State Legislature to pass local legislation that would allow a referendum to establish Tax Allocation Districts within the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County for the enhancement of commercial development while protecting the quality of life for the community.

Unified Land Development Code, Land Development Regulations & Urban Redevelopment Plan (ULDC), (LDR) (URP)
The Chamber advocates pro-business comprehensive planning and development and supports proposals of modifications, improvements and revisions that would lead to a stronger economy in Valdosta-Lowndes County.
The Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce believes that government’s proper role in the economy is to act and pursue policies to support and encourage a capitalistic, free enterprise system that creates a climate in which private business can flourish and be successful. We believe that one of government’s primary purposes is the protection and defense of private property rights and we believe that the Federal government’s role should be limited to those powers expressly given to it by the Constitution of the United States.

We believe that a government’s role should be limited in nature and should encourage entrepreneurship through a tax system that rewards rather than punishes productivity and innovation.

We favor a government that is fiscally responsible, one that abides by the same laws they levy upon others, and one that responds to the will and the voices they represent while ensuring that the rights of private property and enterprise are protected.

We acknowledge that the use of government incentives can be effective, but only endorse incentives that support American jobs. We realize that government spending can be a boost to our economy if used wisely and judiciously, but this spending should be done with a limited purpose and a well-defined benefit as indicated by the will of the people.

We support and encourage our leaders to address our complex issues with innovative and creative ideas to address our concerns, but to do so without compromising our core beliefs including rights to private property and to free enterprise.

We realize that government regulation is sometimes necessary, however, regulation should always be limited in scope to address the specific problem, and the goal of any regulation should be to ensure that there is a level playing field to ensure the maximum opportunity for success for entrepreneurs and the protection of our system of private property and free enterprise. We oppose overbearing regulation that creates burdens and obstacles to private enterprise. We oppose regulation which amounts to government efforts to create social engineering through regulation of free enterprise. We oppose burdensome regulations that amount to hidden taxes on private enterprise.
Chamber promotes 2010 Federal Agenda

VALDOSTA-LOWNDES COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
2010 LEGISLATIVE POLICY PRIORITIES

Education, Workforce Development & Job Creation
It is imperative to educate and train our workforce while keeping up with changes in technology and science. The Chamber promotes outreach to businesses to determine the skills and training needed for their employees in keeping up with changes in technology and science. Additionally, training must reflect the availability of employment within the area in order to retain the talent educated locally. Job creation is possible only through a strong private sector, therefore, the Chamber supports all efforts to promote free enterprise.

Energy and the Environment
The Chamber supports the development of a National Energy Policy for energy supply and demand involving both the public and private sectors. To ensure that our energy needs are met, bolster our economy, and enhance our national security, we should reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy by stepping up our domestic conservation and efficiency efforts, including nuclear and tidal, developing alternative energy sources, and increasing our own domestic production.

The Chamber will monitor water supply, ownership and quality concerns, including storm water discharges.

The Chamber opposes the imposition of carbon taxes on energy production or use.

Health Care
The Chamber supports the following efforts to improve health care:
- Supports reforms that will lower costs and improve overall health care quality and accessibility, without increasing taxes on small business, that promotes fair and free enterprise in a competitive marketplace.

The Chamber supports health care information technology by setting open standards for health care exchange that are secure and easy to adopt.

The Chamber supports incentive program for wellness, prevention and disease management.

The Chamber supports small business purchasing groups.

Labor, Employment and Immigration
The Chamber will continue to monitor proposed legislation at the Federal level affecting employees, including Employee Free Choice Act, Fair Labor Standards Act revisions, Family and Medical Leave Act revisions, RESPECT Act, Healthy Families Act, Erika's Law, IMMIGRATION Reform, and other proposals to modify or expand existing immigration, employment and labor laws. The Chamber seeks to encourage measures that are cognizant of costs to business and do not place undue new restrictions on regulations on business. The Chamber seeks to preserve exemptions for small business that are currently in place with respect to many Federal laws, such as ADA and FMLA.

Small Business
Small businesses account for three-quarters of all new jobs in this country and embody the spirit of innovation, entrepreneurship and individual initiative.

The Chamber supports bringing together America’s small businesses – the engine of economic growth – for the open exchange of information and ideas, thereby strengthening individual endeavors while amplifying the collective voice of business.

The Chamber supports incentives for small business through lower taxes and simplification of government regulations.

Taxes
The Chamber is committed to pro-growth tax policies that preserve America’s global competitiveness and is opposed to tax increases that reduce businesses’ ability to grow, invest and create jobs.

A successful economy depends on a tax code that rewards achievement, encourages investment and promotes growth. The Chamber supports a fair collection of sales tax that includes online and catalog retailers.

Excessive Government Regulations
The Chamber opposes excessive government regulations.

Each year federal agencies issue approximately 4,000 new regulations at an annual cost of nearly $1.1 trillion. This amount is roughly equivalent to all U.S. individual and corporate income taxes paid annually and represents a huge hidden tax on the American public. The federal regulatory system must be operated in an open and transparent manner and regulations should be based on sound, objective science. Furthermore, regulations should undergo rigorous technical analysis to ensure that they are cost-effective, flexible, and minimize regulatory burdens on business.

Standing Positions
- Monitor I-15 and 59-133
- Protect our economic engines: Moody AFB, education and health care facilities
- Support efforts to provide veterans good health care and benefits in a timely manner
- Support the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s “Free Enterprise Campaign”
- Support the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s “Let’s Rebuild America Campaign: Rebuilding America’s Infrastructure – It Starts With Economic Recovery”

www.valdostachamber.com
Federal Legislative Committee meets with U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss
Georgia Power presents the annual Federal Legislative Update Lunch

During the Chamber’s annual Federal Legislative Update Lunch, sponsored by the Georgia Power Company, U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss updated Chamber members on legislative issues pertaining to business. The event was held April 8 at Wiregrass Georgia Technical College. “It is always good to hear from our U.S. Congressmen, but it is even better for them to hear from our business community. I believe Sen. Chambliss was very receptive to the Chamber’s message,” said Jeff Hanson (The Park Avenue Bank), Federal Legislative Committee Chair.

Pictured with Sen. Chambliss (front center) are Hanson, Megan Smith (SmithBarnes & Assoc. Governmental Affairs Council Chair Paula Goff (SMITH Northview Hospital), Tom Putnam (Langdale Industries), Baha Zeidan (Azalea Health Innovations Inc.), Myrna Ballard and Alison Stokes (Chamber), Chamber Chair Terri Lupo (Georgia Power Co.), Laura Lerdall (That Others May Live Foundation), Brittney Foster (Packaging Corporation of America), and Tom Putnam (Langdale Industries).
Another productive trip to Washington, DC


Pictured with Congressman Kingston (front center) are Chamber Chair Tari Lape (Georgia Power Co.), Megan Smith (SmithBarans & Associates), Jack Rockey (Branden, Rockey & Duke P.C.), Jerry Lape, Government Affairs Council Chair Paula Goff (SMITH Northern Hospital), Crl. Clarence Parker and Chamber president Myers Ballard.

For more information on the Government Affairs Principle Statement and 2010 Policy Priorities, see pages 10-11 of Progress, or visit www.valdostachamber.com and select Chamber Programs/Government Affairs.
Gateways Committee receives $10,000 in seed money from Georgia Power

Terri Lupo (Georgia Power Co.) and Gateways Chair Marshall Conner (Georgia Power Co.) present Gateways Vice Chair Aaron Strickland (KLVB) with $10,000 in seed money for development of Gateways Master Plan.

The Gateways Committee is a sub-committee of the Local Legislative Committee under the Government Affairs Council, chaired by Paula Goff (SMITH Northview).
Gateways Committee 2010 Accomplishments

Master Plan, Chamber Survey, Prioritize Locations, Recommendations on Valdosta Gateways
Gateways Committee
Business After Hours

2010

Business After Hours
Hosted by the Gateways Committee
Sponsored by GEORGIA POWER

Rainwater Conference Center
Tuesday, Sept. 21 • 5-7:30 p.m.
4:30 p.m. Networking 101
Virtual Ribbon Cutting

Visit www.ValdostaChamber.com to RSVP by Friday, Sept. 17
Census 2010

CCC’s hard work pays off

Final Mail-in Participation Rates

- Georgia: 72%
- Lowndes County: 73%
- Valdosta: 70%
- Hahira: 77%
- Lake Park: 70%
Ga Chamber
Power Lunch

2010
State Legislative Committee Meets with Local Delegation

Briefing on Upcoming 2011 Session
Ga Chamber
Listening Session 2010

Yes on 2
Yes2SaveLives.com

Georgia Chamber of Commerce
Chamber’s “Meet the Candidates” Reception 2010
Organized labor is seeking to dramatically rewrite American labor law with legislation that would essentially abolish secret ballot elections during union organizing drives. By forcing workers out of the voting booth and subjecting them to a public "card check" scheme, the bill would take privacy, power, and choice away from America’s workers.
State Legislative Luncheon

Dec. 8, 2010
12-1:30 p.m.

James H. Rainwater
Conference Center

with
Sen. Tim Golden
Rep. Ellis Black
Rep. Amy Carter
Rep. Jason Shaw
Government Affairs
Council
Restructure
Proposal
Purpose

- To increase proactive participation and leadership;
- Identify key legislative initiatives that can enable progressive change;
- Develop and shape Policy Positions that will drive that change, to more effectively lobby to support these positions; and
- Expand communications initiatives to support this proactive shift.
The program currently lacks the capacity to act quickly on items as they arise unless they are specifically addressed in our legislative agendas.

The GAC should have a forward-leading, proactive role on issues that will positively impact the community’s business climate and quality of life, rather than reacting to specific bills as they are teed-up in the legislature.
1. Develop a GAC Executive Committee and 7 Policy Committees.

2. Authorize the GAC Executive Committee to approve Priority Issues as determined by the GAC Policy Committees under the guidelines of the Legislative Principle Statement and Policy Positions, which are approved by Chamber Board of Directors.
3. Create and execute a more rigorous communications function to achieve broad alignment and support of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber’s agenda.

4. Represent business interests and support legislation on key issues affecting our business climate.

5. Develop a strong network of top business leaders, develop a large grassroots membership and mobilize when needed on key legislative issues.
The Executive Committee of the GAC shall consist of:

- Chair and Vice Chair of the GAC;
- Vice Chair of Public Affairs;
- Chair of the Chamber Board;
- Chairs of 7 GAC Policy Committees;
- Chamber Government Affairs staff; and
- Chamber President.
The GAC will consist of 7 Policy Committees:

- Economic Development & Taxation
- Education & Workforce Development
- Energy & Environment
- Health Care
- Transportation
- Business & Industry
- Local Business & Industry
1. GAC Chair and Vice Chair: one two-year term, after which they may be eligible for re-appointment.

2. GAC Policy Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs (appointed by the GAC Chair and Vice Chair): serve one two-year term, after which they may be eligible for re-appointment.

3. There are no term limits for GAC members.

4. All members of the Chamber will be invited to serve on the GAC.
The official public positions on local, state and federal issues are known as its “Policy Positions.”

Policy Positions are intended to be broad in scope, general in application and generally remain unchanged from year to year.
Specific issues that are deemed a priority of the GAC and the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce are known as “Priority Issues”.

Sales Tax Holidays or Exemptions Used in Manufacturing are prime examples.
1. Consistent with Policy Positions;
2. Of local, statewide interest or national in character;
3. General in application to the broad nature of the organization;
4. Address a timely, current problem; and
5. Include background material, copies of the legislation, proposed position paper and suggested talking points that conform to the Legislative Principle Statement and the Policy Positions.
The process is a member-driven process, designed to ensure that priority issues that are passed by the GAC provide a well-reasoned, strong platform for the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber to take to the appropriate level of government.
The restructuring of the GAC represents a bold and aggressive strategy to dramatically increase the Chamber’s capacity to deliver on its mission and solidify its position as the “Voice of Business” in our community.
We believe its successful implementation will stimulate permanent increases in capacity and effectiveness through increased membership, awareness and influence, and the expansion of its top leadership base.
Consider Proposed Chamber Board Policy regarding the Government Affairs Council