

# 2012 BUSINESS AGENDA

The Manatee Chamber's focus in 2012: economic development, technical school funding equity, taxation, health care / reform and infrastructure. On January 31, 2012 the Florida Legislature convenes the state legislative session. Each year, the Manatee Chamber of Commerce adopts a Business Agenda which it lobbies for in Tallahassee and in Washington.

**The Chamber advocates for an innovative, competitive, favorable business and economic development climate. Proper training and funding translates into growth within the job market.**

With near double figure unemployment in Florida and higher in Manatee County, the creation of new jobs and diversification of the industrial base remains a top priority. Targeting growth sectors both nationally and internationally is paramount to regaining a competitive edge in attracting new jobs.

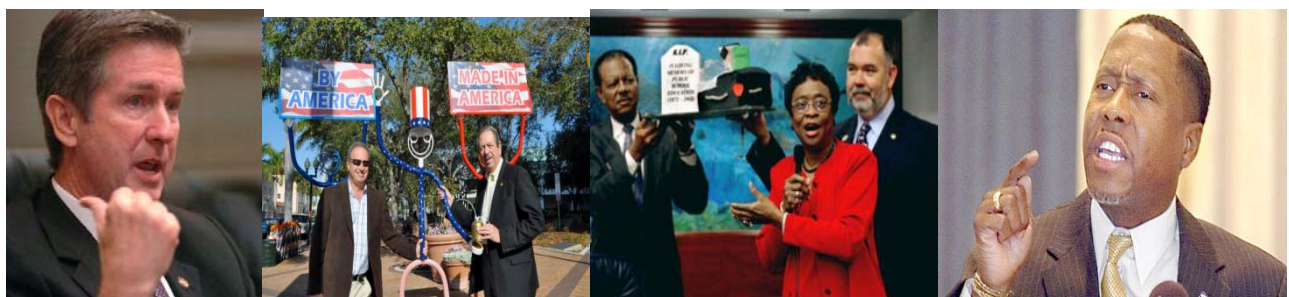
## Workforce Education Funding Equity

During the 2011 session of the Florida Legislature, substantial progress was made in the budget towards implementing an equitable funding formula for District-based workforce education. For the first time in a decade, the FY 2011-12 budget passed by the Florida Legislature allocates nearly 40% of the Workforce Education dollars based upon the "workload / equity" model recommended by the Florida Department of Education (DOE). This was a significant first step toward providing each District with workforce funding based upon the students they serve and the outcomes they achieve.

Florida's adult, career and technical centers/programs serve nearly 400,000 students annually and are playing a key role in rebuilding Florida's economy and getting our citizens back to work. But the current funding allocation "model" for these Districts is still inequitable and presents a significant obstacle for many communities in meeting their workforce training needs.

**We strongly support continuing the great work of the 2011 session and fully phasing-in and utilizing the DOE workload/equity funding model – to completely re-allocate base funding for School District-based adult, career and technical centers/programs.**

- The Chamber supports the creation of four-year degree programs at USF Sarasota-Manatee with increased funding of \$2 million annually for three years.
- The Chamber endorses making the State and region a worldwide sports performance capital. IMG has historically attracted athletes from across the country. Events like master rowing championships can be attained with improved facilities. The Manatee / Sarasota County region benefitted from approximately \$12 million in 2009-10 regional rowing events. The Premier Sports Campus at Lakewood Ranch's Nike Soccer Tournament recently generated over \$8 million in economic impact.
- The Chamber supports a careful review of regional planning councils and streamlining of the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process to eliminate duplicity in regulations to regain a competitive edge in job creation.



**The Chamber supports legislation addressing the escalating costs, delivery, mandates, and new regulations within health care reforms.**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District has one of the highest Medicare Reimbursement Rates\* in the country. A density factor should be added to the calculation of regional reimbursement rates. Such a formula would work to counterbalance Medicare cutbacks. Options for business owners to purchase affordable group health care remain a great concern.

**Repeal the 2.3% Medical Device Excise Tax\***

Florida is home to one of our nation's largest medical device economies – encompassing nearly 499 device manufacturers (and hundreds more component manufacturers) employing nearly 20,000 Floridians, paying an average annual wage of \$57,262. **Florida is nationally ranked second in the number of FDA-registered medical device establishments.**

As part of health care reform, Congress passed a 2.3% excise tax on most types of Medical devices. Scheduled to go into effect in 2013, this excise tax is based on revenue, not profit, and ultimately will harm small-to-midsize medical device companies the most – the life blood of Florida's medical device industry. Essentially, this means that the tax will apply to sales – regardless of profits – for medical device companies, providing no relief for smaller companies.

**Congress should act to repeal the 2.3% Medical Device Excise Tax, as it is harmful to patient access, innovation and job creation.**

In other health care fronts:

- The Chamber supports research models that are identified to award and fund Alzheimer's research / disease, based upon a peer – reviewed *competitive* grant process. Currently a review of the appropriate funding mechanism(s) for advancing the cure for Alzheimer's disease was to be completed in October, 2011.
- The Chamber supports significant Tort Reform and Medicare reimbursement reform through formula revision.
- The Chamber recommends expansion (currently 325 new residency slots) of the medical residency program\* and to be modeled by the Manatee Residency Project initiated in 2011 in order to increase the doctor – patient ratio within a fast growing and elderly populated state.

**STAY INFORMED!**

To find out more about the Manatee Chamber's Legislative Committee, contact Neil Spirtas at (941) 748-4842, ext. 124 or Neils@ManateeChamber.com. The Manatee Chamber can be found on the web at [www.ManateeChamber.com](http://www.ManateeChamber.com)

**Implement effective internet sales tax enforcement / collections in partnership with the My Main Street Florida project.**

- The State of Florida currently fails to collect approximately \$1.5 billion of revenue created through the purchase of goods and services over the internet. This revenue represents significant potential to minimize fluctuations in the State's budget revenue stream. It additionally could serve to assist the State in restoring much needed funding for education. Education funding represents an investment in the State's long term economic future and must be protected.

**The Chamber supports growth opportunities at Port Manatee and the acceleration of the Port's Connector PD&E Study review of alternatives as well as the financial means for the construction phase.**

In order to better capture trade via the Panama Canal with improved movement of goods and services to and from Port Manatee, the Port needs to complement the Berth 12 project, its SIS status and obtain funding for expansion.

More than \$3 billion has been raided in the State Transportation Trust Fund (over the last eight years) to balance other general budget and specific departmental needs.

- The Chamber opposes the redirection of these monies for non-transportation related purposes.
- The Chamber advocates identifying additional resources to fund critical infrastructure needs.
- The Chamber supports Bob Graham Sunshine Skyway Bridge tolls to be utilized for the tri-county Tampa Bay Area Transportation projects.

**The Chamber supports maintaining the Florida Water Management Districts (and Basin Boards as defined in Florida Statute 373.0693) which allow local governance and provide assistance to local businesses and government in responsibly balancing sustainable development and water resource interests.**

Water supply and resource development projects will be greatly gutted due to budgetary slashing in 2011. The Water Management District's General Fund budget for FY 2011 was reduced forty-four percent. Projects directly benefitting Manatee County and the Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA) equal an \$18.2 million reduction.

- If any substantial restructuring of the SWFWMD's Governing Board is proposed, the Chamber strongly endorses the retention of the dedicated Manatee County seat on the Board.

\*FEDERAL