

2009



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Where
We Stand



Where We Stand

2009 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Dear Friends:

We are pleased to share with you the Chamber's 2009 Legislative Agenda on behalf of our member businesses, which employ more than 16,000 people in the Upper Cumberland region. After examining a variety of political issues that affect Chamber members and the business community as a whole, we have produced this comprehensive report to set forth our stance on these matters in keeping with our commitment to create an improved business climate in our Highlands of Tennessee and Upper Cumberland region. While the positions stated herein are not all-inclusive, they do represent the sentiment of our members on most issues.

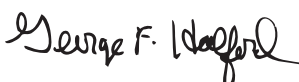
This agenda addresses areas of primary concern for our members, including taxation, health care, education and workers' compensation reform. It also covers specific economic development and transportation issues that have the potential to affect the overall business climate of our region.

The 2009 Legislative Agenda was developed by Chamber leaders, who provided specific expertise or perspective in evaluating issues and their potential impact on the business community. On several issues, positions were formulated in conjunction with like-minded stakeholders, including other Middle Tennessee chambers and the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Chamber Board of Directors adopted the agenda, empowering staff and volunteer leadership to communicate our position to key policy makers at the local, state and federal levels.

Sincerely,



Tom Lawrence, M.D.
Chairman of the Board



George Halford
President/CEO



Jim Martin
Vice Chairman,
Public Policy Division



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|--------|
| Chamber Executive Committee | Page 4 |
| Government Affairs Committee | Page 4 |
| Local and Regional Issues | Page 5 |
| State Issues | Page 8 |
| Federal Issues | Page 9 |

A wooden gavel is positioned in the lower-left foreground. A large, thick red checkmark is drawn over a faint American flag pattern in the background. The text "FOR FIRST" is visible in large, semi-transparent blue letters behind the gavel and checkmark.

*Where
We Stand*



2009 Chamber Executive Committee

Tom Lawrence, M.D., Chairman
Upper Cumberland Otolaryngology

Bob Luna, Chair Elect
Luna & Birdwell Investment Group

David Williamson, Secretary/Treasurer
Bank of Putnam County

Allen Ray, Immediate Past Chair
BB&T-Legge Insurance

Bob Bell, Economic Development Vice Chair
Tennessee Tech University

Jim McGeehin, Community Development Vice Chair
Flowserve Corporation

Thomas Lynn, Organizational Development Vice Chair
First National Bank of Tennessee

Jim Martin, Public Policy Vice Chair
Putnam 1st Mercantile Bank

Bob Allen, Highlands Initiative Vice Chair
PrePak Systems, Inc.

Special thanks goes to the 2008 Government Affairs Committee, who researched and prepared the 2009 Legislative Agenda.

Bob Bell, Public Policy Division Vice Chair
Tennessee Tech University

Carolyn Morrison, Chair
State Farm Insurance

Philip Baker
Farm Bureau

Steve Copeland
Copeland Veterinary Clinic

Tom Jones
Research Electronics, Inc.

Bernie Mattingly
Cookeville Regional Medical Center

Sue Neal
Bank of Putnam County – Baxter Office

Terry Wilson
LINC Preferred Group

George Halford
Chamber President/CEO

Ellene Duncan
Chamber Senior Vice President





LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

LOCAL/REGIONAL ISSUES

A. Transportation Infrastructure

1. Local/Regional Roads



Situation: Roads are a vital component of regional economic development. Current road systems around the Cookeville-Putnam County hub inhibit the smooth flow of traffic and limit distribution and labor mobility in the area.

Chamber Position: The Chamber supports several key local and regional road projects, including:

- Local
- Fifth Exit at I-40
- Gould Drive Extension west

- through new Highlands Business Park
- Five-lane South Jefferson Avenue to Highway 111 south
- Five-lane Broad Street (US 70 N-W) to new Fifth Exit
- Five-lane Spring Street east to Highway 111

Region

- New corridor road connecting to the 386-acre, mixed-use Highlands Business Park and the Upper Cumberland Regional Airport to Sparta/White County and its proposed airport business park of 68-plus acres.

- Four-lane state Highway 56 north from I-40 to Gainesboro/Jackson County
- Four-lane US Highway 111 north from Livingston/Overton County to Static/Tennessee state line
- Four-lane Highway 52 from Livingston/Overton County to Celina/Clay County

2. Air Transportation

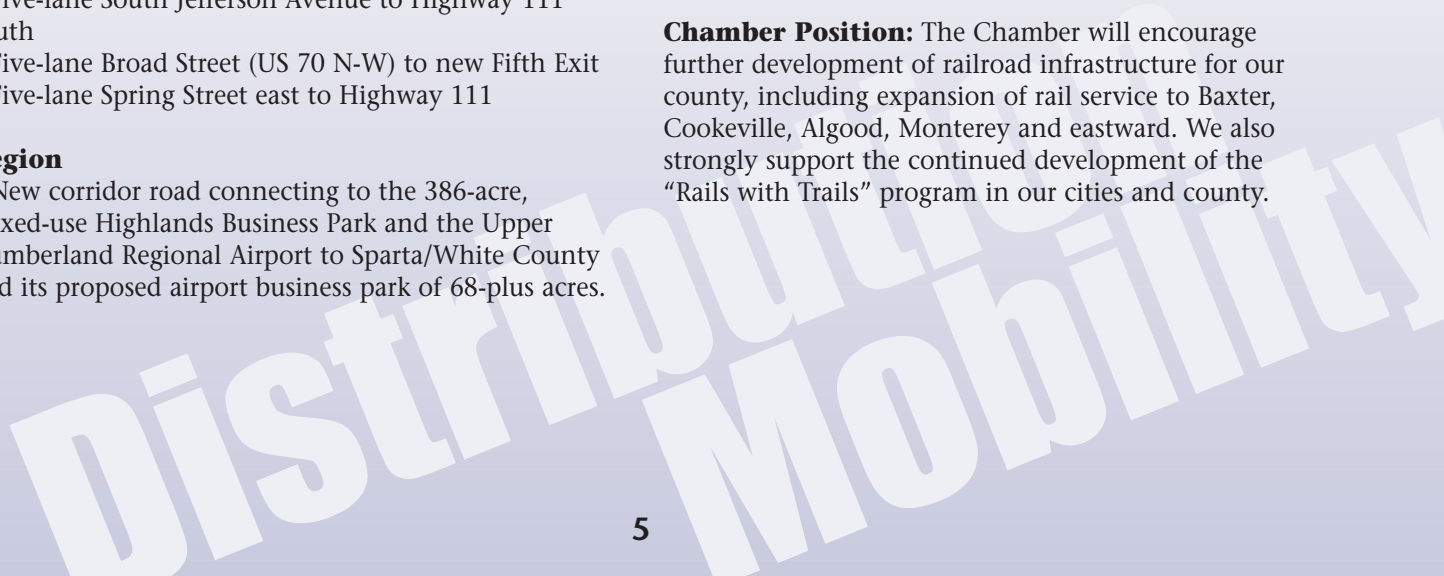
Situation: A vibrant regional airport will contribute dramatically to long-term economic development in several counties, including Putnam County.

Chamber Position: The Chamber supports efforts to improve the capabilities of the Upper Cumberland Regional Airport, including runway expansion and additional supporting structures and the development of adjacent lands for economic purposes.

3. Rail Transportation

Situation: Improving and extending rail service in the region will improve opportunities for distribution and provide new capabilities for business expansion and recruitment.

Chamber Position: The Chamber will encourage further development of railroad infrastructure for our county, including expansion of rail service to Baxter, Cookeville, Algood, Monterey and eastward. We also strongly support the continued development of the "Rails with Trails" program in our cities and county.





B. Health Care

1. General



Situation: *Access to high-quality health care, including mental health, is an important attribute of a community known for an excellent quality of life. The health care “complex,” with Cookeville Regional Medical Center as the centerpiece in Cookeville/*

Putnam County, is a significant and important economic engine for our community and region.

Chamber Position: The Chamber will encourage growth and expansion of Cookeville Regional Medical Center, other health care providers, and the Tennessee Tech University Nursing School, and will support the emerging “health care/university” master planning in Cookeville. The Chamber supports Governor Bredesen’s reformation of the state health care support system and will encourage state and local organizations to develop plans for alternative safety nets for health care. The Chamber will be an advocate for affordable insurance.

2. Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Situation: *We recognize that the Upper Cumberland area has an abnormally high incidence of mental health illness along with a high incidence of alcohol abuse and drug abuse and addiction, specifically the production and abuse of methamphetamines. We understand the tremendous negative impact this situation is having on families and children and the overall quality of life in our region. We further recognize the lack of adequate treatment programs, both inpatient and outpatient, to meet the needs of this situation. We also recognize the adverse effect this situation can have on the region’s ability to attract business and industry.*

Chamber Position: The Chamber supports the efforts of the 13th Judicial District Drug Task Force and will work closely with judicial, medical and social agencies to address problems. The Chamber encourages businesses and other organizations to embrace the “Drug Free Workplace” program. The Chamber will work with local and state elected officials along with other organizations to provide appropriate inpatient and outpatient

facilities and programs for the treatment of mental health and substance abuse problems in the Upper Cumberland area. We will encourage Leadership Putnam to continue its close involvement, and we will work with state and federal officials to secure grants to address the problems.

C. Economic Development

1. New Business (Industrial) Parks

Situation: *Having an inventory of controlled, developed land for immediate sale at a reasonable price is a given and a must for the region’s success in attracting 21st-century jobs and payrolls.*



Chamber Position: The Chamber supports efforts of Putnam, Overton and White counties, as well as other Upper Cumberland counties, to develop an inventory of “controlled” public land for economic development. The Chamber will also offer appropriate assistance in marketing all available property in partnership with the respective local economic development entities in each county.

2. Incentives

Situation: *Modern-day economic success means being able to “move at the speed of the customer.” It is imperative that our local governments endorse a Chamber-sponsored, preapproved incentive plan for targeted new companies and existing businesses wishing to expand.*



Chamber Position: The Chamber has developed and supports a comprehensive, “preapproved,” targeted incentive plan for new and existing companies.

3. Tourism

Situation: *The Chamber recognizes that visitors to the Upper Cumberland are an important economic engine of our economy. More than 40,000 people travel I-40 through the Upper Cumberland region each day.*



Chamber Position: The Chamber supports development and implementation of a Visitors Center on I-40 in Cookeville to serve the Upper Cumberland region. The Chamber also supports the following new regional economic tourist attractions: designation of Cumberland Area Heritage Corridor and a Rails with Trails program which spans 28-plus miles between Algood, Baxter, Cookeville and Monterey as important and exciting new attractions.

system that will be a national model for metropolitan communities and be attractive to potential employers and existing customers.

E. Education

Situation: *Recognizing that a community/region's per capita income has been proven to be directly proportional to the quality of its educational system, our region is blessed with a comprehensive system which must be adequately funded and supported.*

Chamber Position: The Chamber recommends that all elements of our educational system, from Putnam County schools through Tennessee Tech University, should be fully and adequately funded. The Chamber recommends that the state Legislature fund Tennessee Tech and other institutions of higher learning, including community colleges, at such a level that additional tuition increases are not necessary, thus giving more Tennessee residents an opportunity to earn a degree.



D. Technology

Situation: *Technology information systems and high-speed data transmission are key components of a community's 21st-century state-of-the-art business retention program.*

Chamber Position: The Chamber supports the development and implementation of a strategy to ensure that the Upper Cumberland region has a state-of-the-art telecommunications

The Chamber supports efforts of the Board of Education to improve graduation rates in Putnam County and encourages the board and the County Commission to adequately fund those areas and programs that deal directly with reducing high school dropouts and improving the high school graduation rate.



State-of-the-art Opportunity



STATE ISSUES



A. Taxes

Situation: *Tennessee business taxes are some of the highest in the Southeast region and put the state at a competitive disadvantage for new business growth and expansion.*

Chamber Position: The Chamber will continue to advocate for sound tax policy and for reduction in the tax burden shared by the state’s businesses.

B. Continued Workers’ Comp Reform

Situation: *The Chamber supports the workers’ compensation reform passed by the state Legislature in 2004, and discourages any amendments to the bill until sufficient time has passed to determine the effectiveness of the reform measures.*

Chamber Position: The Chamber supports the workers’ comp reform movement and encourages implementation.

C. Education

Situation: *Recognizing that a community’s per capita income has been proven to be directly proportional to the quality of its educational system, the state must provide appropriate financial resources.*

1. General – Funding

Chamber Position: The Chamber will continue to advocate appropriate funding for P-16 educational systems in our region.

2. Pre-K Education

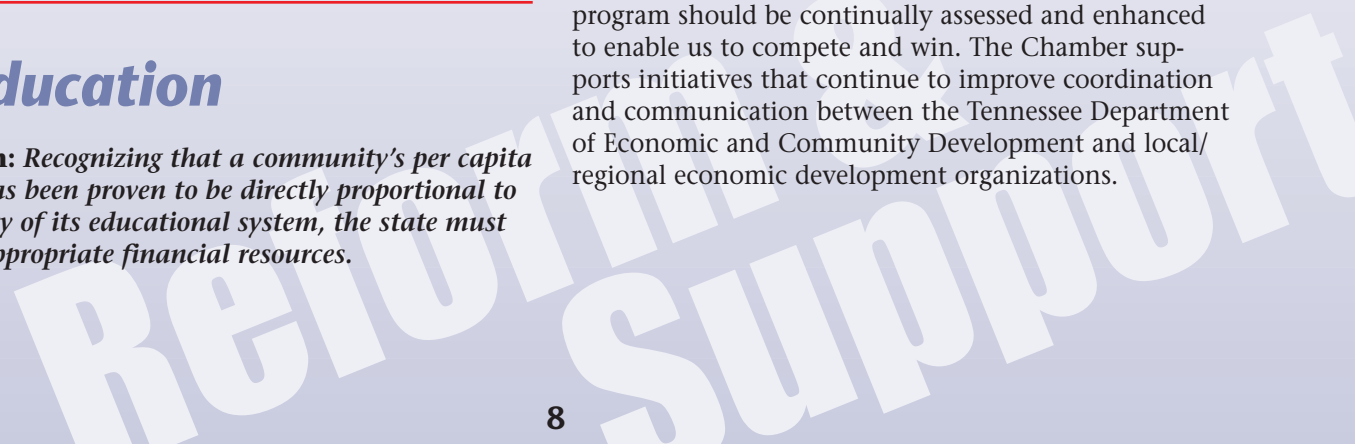
Situation: *The Chamber believes that far too many Tennessee children arrive at kindergarten unprepared.*

Chamber Position: The Chamber enthusiastically supports efforts of Governor Bredesen to implement and expand the program.

D. Economic Development

Situation: *Neighboring states competing for new business are, in general, offering a much more lucrative state incentive plan. While incentives are just one factor in corporate decision making, they are very important when a Tennessee location is considered “equal” with a competing state finalist.*

Chamber Position: Our state economic incentive program should be continually assessed and enhanced to enable us to compete and win. The Chamber supports initiatives that continue to improve coordination and communication between the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development and local/regional economic development organizations.





FEDERAL ISSUES



The Chamber generally, in concept, supports the legislative positions of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, especially those relating to health care, tax reform, immigration policy, economic incentives and labor management issues.

The Chamber opposes the American Free Choice Act (card check legislation) which essentially abolishes secret ballot elections during union organizing drives. The bill would take privacy, power and choice away from America's workers.

Reform, Support
Choices