

# 2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



**BAY COUNTY**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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# The Bay County Chamber of Commerce Supports:

## Business and Economic Development

Continued *reduction of business rent tax* and ensuring SB 50, signed in to law in July 2021, remains in place to keep business rent taxes low. Ensuring a fair and equitable tax system is key to attracting and retaining businesses of all sizes in our state. S

Recognizes the importance of *protecting Florida's Home Rule* and opposes efforts to remove or reduce this authority. S

Legislation *renewing and reinstating the Qualified Industry Tax Refund Program (QTI)* or comparable economic recovery tax refund initiative. The QTI program was not reauthorized in the 2020 Florida Legislative Session and 'sunset' on June 30, 2020. S

The *purpose and implementation of Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.* and opposes any legislation that would divert Triumph funds away from the original eight counties established by the Gulf Coast Economic Corridor Act in 2013. S

*State funding of Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI)* and incentives for high-wage job creation and capital investment. These programs and projects diversify Florida's economy through innovation and attract industries that will have a multiplier effect on the economy. S

## Workforce Development and Education

Continuing our *2022 A Better Way for a Brighter Bay Education initiative* that encourages the business community's involvement in our public schools. Current resolutions include: 1) support for school-based mentoring and; 2) targeted bringing business experience at the school board level. L|S

The efforts of *Florida State University Panama City to continue development and expansion of programs* at FSUPC to meet the needs of the community and local workforce needs. Furthermore, the Chamber supports enhanced funding for the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering that would include the development of an applied engineering research facility on the Panama City campus. S

*Continued funding for PIPELINE and LINE Funds to meet program needs at Gulf Coast State College* in order to support future local workforce demand for nurses and other medical professions. S

*Opposing the consolidation of the Local Workforce Development Boards*, especially in Northwest Florida, and encourages the legislature to maintain the local boards in their current regional designation as well as address poorly performing boards where needed. S

## Quality of Life

*Full funding of the Sadowski State and Local Government Housing Trust Funds* which are essential to affordable housing. In addition, the Chamber encourages the preservation of SB 2512 which permanently stops any further sweeping of funds and supports augmenting affordable housing funding with supplemental revenue in the future. S

*Development and funding of a new performing arts and events center in downtown Panama City* within a walkable location to dining, shopping, marina and new hotel on the Panama City Marina. L|S

## **Military & Defense**

*Key projects for Naval Support Activity Center Panama City:*

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- Funding to incorporate a *strategically located turning basin* near the entrance to the installation's berthing facility to accommodate future mission needs and increase mission efficiency.
- *Dive School Pier repair* to allow for full operations. Repairs needed for the structural deficiencies of dock, concrete pavement, utility trenches, and fender system.
- *Replacement of condemned barracks*. Due to room reductions, existing barracks require 3 beds in 2 person- designed rooms with DoN waiver request. Future need projections estimate a shortage of 50 rooms.
- *Barefoot Palms Property Acquisition*. The Navy's acceptance of the Barefoot Palms property can only be achieved through a reverter clause waiver granted by the Florida Governor and Cabinet.

*Opposing any action expanding offshore drilling or Wind Energy Areas in the Gulf of Mexico* within or east of the Military Mission Line and requests a legislative solution to extending the moratorium or implementing an indefinite ban on all offshore energy development when the current extension sunsets in 2032.

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## **Transportation and Infrastructure**

*Northwest Florida International Beaches Airport Capital Projects:*

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- *Creation of an aerospace and aviation hub* at the Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP), known as the ECP Aviation Center of Excellence.
- *Johnny Reaver Road extension* to support the Florida Air National Guard's preferred armory site.
- *ECP terminal improvements and expansion* to support future growth and capacity

*Transportation Priorities* (waiting Ben)

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## **Gulf, Bay and Fisheries**

Efforts to definitively determine the *feasibility of permanently reopening East Pass* and allocation of state and federal funds toward the permanent solution should studies deem its reopening feasible.

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Recognizing that bay systems are an essential component of the Florida Panhandle's economic viability and quality of life and supports Florida *legislative funding for Panhandle Estuary Programs*, including the St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program.

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*Gulf of Mexico economic and environmental restoration projects* funded by the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act), Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) funds and Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund following Deepwater Horizon disaster.

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*Opposing H.R. 4690 – the Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act*. Federal and state officials should listen to stakeholders when enacting regulations and utilize science-based but fair regulatory decisions. It is important to protect healthy, sustainable fisheries, but also seriously consider the economic impacts of regulatory actions on the fishing industry.

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