



2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Business and Economic Development



Quality of Life



Workforce Development and Education



Military and Defense



Transportation and Infrastructure



Gulf, Bay and Fisheries

The Bay County Chamber of Commerce Supports

Business and Economic Development

Elimination of business rent tax. Eliminating this tax can stimulate economic growth, promote entrepreneurship, reduce administrative complexities, and foster a fairer tax system, creating a business climate that attracts the nation’s top job creators. S

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

Funding VISIT FLORIDA, the state’s official tourism marketing corporation. Through VISIT FLORIDA’s strategic marketing efforts, out-of-state and international visitor travel has increased annually and has a positive financial impact across all business sectors, directly and indirectly. S

Workforce Development and Education

Continuing education initiatives that encourages the business community's involvement in our public schools. Current resolutions include: 1) support for school-based mentoring; 2) targeted bringing business experience at the school board level and; 3) growing our Partnership Bay program, connecting businesses with local schools, established in 2023.

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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.

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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.

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Increased affordable access for childcare to promote early learning for children and support working families.

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Transportation and Infrastructure

Northwest Florida International Beaches Airport Capital Projects:

- The *creation of an aerospace and aviation hub* at the Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP), known as the ECP Aviation Center of Excellence.
- *ECP terminal improvements and expansion* to support future growth and capacity.
- Further *development of General Aviation Areas* at the Airport.

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Transportation Priorities:

- East Avenue and SR 389 (East Avenue) *improved 2 lanes from Port (East Terminal) Entrance to Sherman Avenue*
- *Extend Philip Griffiths Sr. Parkway Extension* from Nautilus Street to Chip Seal Parkway (Sports Complex)
- SR 22 (Wewa Highway), *widen to 4 lanes from SR 30A (US 98) Tyndall Pkwy to Star Avenue*
- Star Avenue, *widen to 4 lanes from SR 22 (Wewa Highway) to US 231 (SR 75)*

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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.

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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.

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Military and Defense

Key projects for Naval Support Activity Center Panama City:

- *Dive School Pier Repairs.* Repairs needed for the structural deficiencies of dock, concrete pavement, utility trenches, and fender system.
- *Barracks Replacement.* Existing barracks capacity limitation requires 3 beds in 2 person-designed rooms with an approved DoN waiver request. Future need projections estimate a shortage of 100+ beds.
- *Barefoot Palms Property Acquisition.* Navy is unable to accept Barefoot Palms property from the State of Florida due to a reverter clause in the deed.
- *Turning Basin.* Funding to create a strategically located turning basin near the entrance to the installation's berthing facility to accommodate future mission needs and increase mission efficiency.

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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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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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Legislative appropriation to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Division of State Lands *to remove the hurricane debris, reduce the flooding,* and improve the resilience of Bay and Washington counties.

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