

ROBERT LLOYD: To help business, the Legislature must support fairness, growth, schools, workers

January 5, 2020

The Daytona Regional Chamber adopted its priority recommendations for the [2020 legislative session](#). We provide these recommendations each year to encourage our legislators to support public and private initiatives that accelerate commerce and create high-paying career opportunities at the state and local level. Your Chamber presented these priority recommendations to Volusia's legislators at their November 20 annual delegation meeting in order to provide the local business viewpoint on commercial issues in our region.

Our focus is, and always will be, on the vitality and growth of business. When adopting legislative priorities, we approach various segments, such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, taxes, regulation, the natural environment and social services with a view of how they interrelate and drive commerce.

– Our region depends upon a healthy mix of tourism and permanent, high-paying industries. We must simultaneously support businesses devoted to tourists who visit here and residents who live here. We are urging the Florida Legislature to continue to invest in Visit Florida and Enterprise Florida to ensure that Florida is a premier destination for tourists and permanent residents. In addition, we are working with Space Florida to attract the next generation of the space industry. Space Florida has made a commitment to recruit new aerospace businesses to Volusia County and the Chamber will continue to settle them into their new home.

– A healthy business climate depends upon fair competition and fair taxation. With the significant increase in the number of vacation rental units (single-family homes) in the Daytona Beach area, the Chamber believes they should be regulated at the local level. These units should also be required to collect and remit sales tax and Volusia County's bed tax.

– In addition, the Chamber supports an Internet Sales Tax by requiring retailers with no physical presence in Florida to collect sales tax on items delivered to purchasers in Florida. Florida's transaction taxes account for 83.8% of all tax collections and Florida's sales tax is nothing new. Unfortunately, Internet sales bypass traditional collection and remittance models and place the obligation on consumers. This creates an unlevel playing field for Internet-based merchants competing against local "bricks and mortar" merchants, many of whom are tax-paying citizens of our region and dues-paying members of our Chamber.

– We are blessed with a natural environment in Volusia County that is unique in our state and nation. We have magnificent beaches on the Atlantic Ocean, the Intracoastal Waterway, Outstanding Florida Waters in the Tomoka River and Spruce Creek, freshwater springs, and world-class inland estuaries. These environmental treasures are under siege. Several bodies of water in Volusia County have been identified as impaired, containing nutrients or bacteria. In order to protect our quality of life, the Chamber supports septic-to-sewer conversions. In 2019, the state allocated \$625 million for water quality projects and directed the Department of Environmental Protection to establish septic-to-sewer conversion grant programs with a local government match. Volusia County must compete with other communities in the state for this funding and remain at the forefront in protecting its natural resources.

– More than 45% of Volusia County's citizens are classified as "working paycheck to paycheck." While the Chamber is committed to attracting and creating high-paying career opportunities, we recognize the need to protect employees working on the lower end of the pay-scale. The Chamber supports affordable



healthcare programs for low-income families. For the same reason, the Chamber recommends using Florida's Sadowski housing trust fund monies solely for affordable workforce housing.

– We have long supported our school district and recognize the vital importance of quality educational resources in order to attract and keep businesses in our area. The Chamber has requested that Florida's District Cost Differential (DCD) education funding formula be replaced with a more equitable and non-arbitrary formula. The current formula is short- changing Volusia schools almost \$11 million annually. The DCD is a failed model and must be replaced for the sake of the future of public education in our area. In addition, we support enhancement and expansion of school-based mental healthcare for students. Specifically, we support measures that would increase the current Mental Health Assistance Allocation and reduce the ratio of students to mental health professionals.

We will advocate for these issues throughout 2020 and will press them with our legislative delegation during the Chamber's upcoming Volusia Days at the Florida Capitol on January 15-16. With hard work and perseverance, the Chamber will advance these priority recommendations and secure a bright future for business.

Lloyd is 2020 chairman of the Board of the Daytona Beach Regional Chamber of Commerce. Later this week, we'll invite a variety of local stakeholders to talk about their priorities for the 2020 legislative session.

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