

2019 Federal Legislative Update & Agenda



Sumter County Chamber's 2019 Federal Legislative Agenda represents our commitment to advance a vibrant and thriving economy by enhancing the business climate and quality of life for Sumter County and southwest region of Georgia. The Chamber's Governmental Affairs Division, working with its strategic partners, offered their specific expertise and perspectives, to thoroughly evaluate these federal issues and their potential impact on businesses and the community.

EDUCATION / WORKFORCE

Federal support for workforce education in rural America and rural Georgia is critical. Federal grant funds from Perkins, Pell, and the USDA has allowed South Georgia higher educational institutions to: 1.) provide financial support through tuition assistance for economically disadvantaged college students, 2.) purchase industry approved equipment and 3.) promote new program advances in areas deemed critical to the workforce by the state of Georgia. This type of funding is vital for rural educational institutions to continue to meet the growing demands of an educated workforce today and for the future.

HEALTHCARE

Legal challenges to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) have negatively impact hospitals in states that did not expand Medicaid with, threatening additional cuts to Medicaid Disproportionate Share (DSH) hospitals. The percentage of uninsured patients in rural Georgia is over 20% and the burden of additional ACA and Sequester reductions to reimbursement will further stress healthcare providers. We urge you to continue to delay the DSH cuts. Phoebe Sumter Medical Center, as a safety net hospital in a rural county with high uninsured, will experience \$11.8M of additional cuts in the next 5 years which will outstrip our ability to generate net income during that same period.

Pharmaceuticals are the fastest growing, non-salary expense. Protection of the 340B program is critical for rural, safety net hospitals to purchase drugs at a lower price and thus offset the growing cost of medications for our patients. We urge you to in supporting the 340B program to make medications more affordable and reduce financial burden.

AGRICULTURE

The 2018 Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program (WHIP) is critical to the Ag Industry. Many communities and families struck by Hurricane Michael were destroyed and/or suffered loses due to the damaging weather. One year later there is no resolution for the disaster received. Many farmers will not recover which will affect generations to come. WHIP funding is critical for the Ag Industry in Sumter County and regional Counties to produce.

International Trade Issues is affecting profit margins at the farm level. Farmers are selling goods for prices seen many years ago with input prices soaring. Farmers understand this is a necessary trade tool for the United States and ask for resolution of Trade tariffs as rapidly as possible to minimize further damage to the agriculture industry and communities affected.

TRANSPORTATION:

Power Alley, US 280 proposes to traverse the entire state from Columbus to Savannah. Completed projects for US 280 will supply 204 miles of four lanes of roadway. Currently 27 miles of this corridor are in active project development, from Sumter County to Crisp County. The completion of construction of US 280 is necessary to supply better access for Fort Benning and Fort Stewart military bases. The agriculture and manufacturing industries will significantly increase the overall economic for Sumter County upon completion of this major project.