2017-18 Advocacy Agenda
(Local, State & Federal Issues)

(Adopted 1/24/17)

Introduction

This document has been built to ensure the JAX Chamber will be able to help businesses thrive and grow in every corner of our community. The JAX Chamber, through this policy platform, views its role as pivotal in creating more economic opportunity for families, which will improve the quality of life for everyone in our city.
**Business Climate**: Ensure that proper tools exist to provide a catalyst for economic growth and maximize the region’s unique resources as we aggressively recruit jobs and capital investment

- Support adequate funding of Florida’s economic development toolkit which facilitates business development, retention and expansion and further sustains the capacity for quality job growth and economic diversity (Local & State)
- Phase out the Business Rent tax as Florida is the only state that collects one (State)
- Support for our health care infrastructure by ensuring adequate funding for UF Health (Local & State)
- Support of Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation (Local)
- Advocate for our Pension Reform resolution which is effective, affordable and sustainable over the long term (Local)
- Support State and Federal policies, such as tax reform, which will stabilize and strengthen the economy of Puerto Rico (State & Federal)
- Advocate for increased funding to the Downtown Investment Authority (Local)
- Develop a convention center that is responsive to market demands and drives redevelopment of downtown (Local)
- Streamline licensing and permitting processes and reduce overall regulatory burden (Local, State & Federal)

**Energy**: Pursuing energy policies to spur economic development and ensure Jacksonville continues to be the Energy Capital of the Southeast

- Support policies that allow for increased access and usage of Natural Gas in all forms (CNG, LNG, etc) (Local, State & Federal)
- Oppose over-burdensome Carbon regulations which would adversely impact our electric utilities (State & Federal)
- Support safe energy exploration and transportation strategies which are based upon sound scientific facts and oppose any efforts to hamper the future development of these technologies and initiatives (Local, State & Federal)
- Support efforts to advance policy that are inclusive of all forms of energy and do not negatively target any one sector (Local, State & Federal)
- Oppose any energy regulations that would impose undue financial burden to the business community (Local, State & Federal)
- Support efforts that will ensure our JEA remains competitive and continue to thrive (Local, State & Federal)

**Small Business**: Promote a business climate that encourages growth and prosperity among small businesses throughout our region.
• Support efforts to create an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Florida and support funding of state and federal measures to increase access to capital needed for growth by Florida small businesses *(State & Federal)*

• Advocate for the funding and the creation of a best practices toolbox for local government planning, zoning and future land use initiatives within DEO *(State)*

• Support adequate funding for Jacksonville area small business programs, such as the Women’s Business Center and the Small Business Development Center *(Local & State)*

• Support efforts to reduce the tax burden on small businesses, specifically the “Tangible Personal Property Tax” levied on businesses of all sizes. *(State)*

• Support efforts to stop rising workers’ compensation insurance rates that are harming small businesses *(State)*

• Support efforts to Reform the Department of Labor’s Overtime Rule and ensure that it does not burden small business with unintended consequences which could severely impact their ability to do business *(Federal)*

**Infrastructure, Transportation & Mobility:** Promote projects and policies that ensure Jacksonville is a national model for anticipating and implementing innovative solutions in the areas of Infrastructure, Transportation & Mobility

• Advocate for the relocation of Amtrak to Downtown Jacksonville *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support designation of the St Johns River as a Marine Highway Connector, etc. *(State & Federal)*

• Rally leadership and resources to secure the federal and non-federal share of the Harbor Deepening project *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support efforts that ensure JAXPORT, JTA and JAA continue to grow and thrive *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support policies and initiatives within Federal legislation that will enhance NEFL infrastructure and ability to compete on the global market such as, but not limited to *(Federal)*:
  o Water Resources Development Act,
  o Full usage of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund,
  o Sustainable Highway Trust Fund
  o Reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
  o Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill.

• Support the use of new technologies, such as Unmanned Systems, in a safe and responsible manner, while safeguarding the existing right to privacy and ensuring transparency and accountability *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support policies, initiatives, and regulations that will enhance NEFL’s ability to implement and integrate Autonomous and Connected Vehicles. *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support policies and initiatives that will enhance NEFL’s opportunity to grow in Emerging Technologies. *(Local, State & Federal)*
  o Advanced Manufacturing, Biotechnology, Nanotechnology
  o Information and Communication Technologies
  o Sustainable and Smart Cities
**Education:** Ensuring quality education for all students in the region allowing them the opportunity to achieve the highest possible economic success.

- Support alignment of region’s career academies to targeted industries and key sub-clusters identified in JAXUSA strategic plan and efforts to create specific curriculum *(Local & State)*
- Support efforts to increase funding and support for student technology and capital infrastructure needs in our k-12 schools *(State)*
- Advocate for the effective implementation of college and career ready standards *(State)*
- Advocate for Youth Employment tax credits which provide low and moderate income high school students with job readiness training and paid internships during the summer months. *(State)*
- Advocate for reform of the current Duval County School Board governance structure to ensure Jacksonville has the foundation to build a world class educational system. *(Local & State)*
- Support of a more comprehensive system of accountability for schools and teachers that relies on a combination of student achievement, qualitative observable traits and non-academic social-emotional indicators *(State)*
- Advocate for easing of class size requirements. Allow class size to be determined at the school level rather than the classroom level *(State)*
- Support the expansion of UNF’s Advanced Manufacturing and Materials Innovation Initiative focused on increasing the region’s highly skilled workforce in the emerging technologies associated with manufacturing and 3-D printing *(State)*
- Ensure that the Department of Education calculate and release a state-wide readiness rate for the VPK program every year. *(State)*
- Advocate for a VPK readiness rate which should be calculated using a developmentally appropriate, valid and reliable assessment, aligned with the Florida Early Learning and Development Standards that measures a child’s progress during the VPK program year. *(State)*

**International:** Branding Jacksonville and Northeast Florida as the International Gateway to the Southeastern United States.

- Address regulatory issues that hamper opportunities for trade and goods movement throughout Northeast Florida *(State & Federal)*
- Support the creation of a legislative advisory committee on trade to monitor impact of international trade agreements on the state of Florida. *(State)*
- Support policies which will strengthen Northeast Florida business ties to the Caribbean region by engaging organizations such as, but not limited to: *(Local, State & Federal)*
  - The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)
  - The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
- Improve U.S. trade promotion programs to help small businesses export *(Federal)*
Support programs directly tied to enhancing trade development and promotion, enable Northeast Florida businesses to gain access to opportunities in international markets, and attract job creators. This includes supporting (State):
- Export Diversification Grants and Export Marketing Plan grants
- Capital needs of small business exporters that are not addressed by traditional lending and investment institutions
- Increase business educational programs to provide skills enhancing global marketing and outreach
- Develop “soft incubator” landing sites to serve as initial landing options for international business start-ups.

Support for policies that allow for more foreign direct investment into Northeast Florida (State & Federal)
Support the Northeast Florida Global cities initiative (Local)
Support increased access to markets through free trade agreements which will help Northeast Florida grow into a global market (Federal)
Ensure the EX-IM Bank has an operational Board with a full quorum (Federal)
Encourage the establishment of foreign trade offices and appointments of honorary consulates within Northeast Florida (Federal)
Support the establishment and ratification of tax treaties to ensure that the Northeast Florida business community can operate efficiently and effectively in foreign markets (Federal)

Workforce: Developing the workforce that employers demand to ensure the region’s economic growth and success
- Support efforts and legislation to update and reform the foreign skilled worker visa program, H-1B, and to expand the current cap which rests at 85,000 annually (Federal)
- Support policies that will help retain and integrate veterans into the regional work force (Local, State & Federal)
- Support expansion of the FloridaFlex/QRT workforce training program (State)
- Support policies designed to facilitate ex-offender reentry into the workforce through programs such as the JAX Chamber Open Door Initiative (Local & State)
- Stabilize TANF Workforce Funding for the 24 regional workforce boards (State)

Military: Sustain the positive environment in our region for military personnel, both active-duty and retired, and their families.
- Advocate for increased national security related presence in the region by active, reserve and guard as well as support for spouses and children (Local, State & Federal)
- Support the arrival of the Littoral Combat Ships (LCS), Amphibious Readiness Group (ARG), Patrol Craft, Destroyers and other assets to Naval Station Mayport. Help facilitate the orderly arrival by
• Assisting in housing, spouse employment, school choice for children, post K-12 education, local amenities and transfer of spouse business licenses *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support local businesses to obtain the on-going and contingency contracts to support the military presence *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Advocate for greater VA access and support capability in the region *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Continued support of our veterans in areas such as, but not limited to: education, tax exemptions, professional fee waivers and employment *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support efforts to encourage decision makers on the homeporting of the MQ-4C Triton at Naval Station Mayport and the F-35 for the Florida Air National Guard at Jacksonville International Airport *(State & Federal)*

**Environment**

• Support ongoing efforts to phase out problematic septic tanks *(Local & State)*

• Advocate for the increased investment in Jacksonville’s water infrastructure *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support efforts to revitalize and clean-up of the Shipyards *(Local, State & Federal)*

• Support policies which will allow increased access and utilization of the St. Johns River. *(Local & State)*