

## 2017 State Legislative Issues

### Talent Supply and Education

#### **Funding for Workforce Growth Efforts—College of Central Florida**

Invest in affordable workforce programs by providing additional operational funding for the College of Central Florida to grow workforce programs critically needed in our region. While the overwhelming need for capacity expansion lies in nursing and health sciences programming, credible data and the testimony of our partners demonstrate a need to support transportation & logistics, business and IT programming to support existing businesses and the new employers attracted to Marion County.

#### **Funding for Health Sciences Technology Center—College of Central Florida**

Support for the College of Central Florida's request for capital outlay (PECO) funding for a new \$29.7M Health Sciences Technology Education Center to meet increasing healthcare industry needs. The 72,000 square-foot facility will house state of the art simulation teaching labs to support collaboration among health sciences programs including Nursing, Emergency Medical Services, Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic, Dental Assisting, Physical Therapist Assistant, Radiography, and Surgical Technology.

### Tax Policy

#### **Workers Compensation Reform**

Support changes to the worker's compensation system that address the rising cost of attorney's fees, which is driving the increase in rates, without jeopardizing access to care for beneficiaries. This includes support for legislative efforts to normalize rates to prevent future spikes so our businesses can plan for their future. A legislative solution should include tying attorney fees to the amount of benefits secured for the injured worker.

#### **Opposition to Business Rent Tax**

Support legislation that amends Florida Statute 212.031, reducing the tax levied on rental or license fees charged for the use of real property, making technical changes, and providing an effective date. The CEP would further encourage the legislature to consider plans to eliminate this tax completely, as it is the only tax on leases in the nation.

The business rent tax puts Florida at a competitive disadvantage. It creates a cost of doing business in Florida which business in no other state must contend. In addition to the competitive disadvantage, the business rent tax is unfair. In most commercial leases, the tenant is also paying the property taxes as a portion of the rent. These results in the business paying both property taxes and sales tax on the same facility.

## MOVING FORWARD

It is our small and medium-sized businesses which are most disadvantaged by the business rent tax. This becomes a tax on their just being in business. As we work to encourage new business creation, entrepreneurs must deal with the impact and costs of this unique tax.

### **Support Sales Tax Reform—Local Discretionary Revenue Flexibility**

Support tax reform measures that simplify administration and provide an economic boost to taxpayers while at the same time considering and minimizing the collective and cumulative negative impact on local revenues, including state shared and local discretionary revenue sources that are critical to local governments in providing community services.

The CEP supports modification to existing laws to allow for a discretionary sales tax that can be used for general purposes, including operational expenditures and/or enactment of the transportation sales surtax for non-charter counties.

- Modify the existing law to allow the use of the local discretionary sales surtax for local government for general purposes, including operational expenditures within the general fund in addition to the traditional expenditures identified as Capital Improvements.
- Enact a law allowing Marion County (a non-charter county) the opportunity to levy a transportation sales surtax similar to charter counties. This law will help not only Marion County, but other non-charter counties in Florida.

## **Innovation and Economic Vitality**

### **Support a Competitive Business Climate—Enterprise Florida**

Support the funding and mission of Enterprise Florida in its current entity or modified entity, which provides capital for business expansion, startups, and small businesses. Building the nation's most competitive climate for business requires targeted investments in economic development. While nearly all private-sector jobs are created by a strong business climate, targeted incentives still matter in competitive projects.

- Eliminating Enterprise Florida will send the message that Florida is closed for business and cause confusion to the market place of site selection and travel.
- Florida cannot afford to be put at a competitive disadvantage in attracting business and jobs to the state.
- Every state which has attempted to eliminate performance-based incentives has brought them back, with North Carolina being the most recent.
- While derided as “corporate welfare”, performance-based incentives are an investment to growing revenues and jobs.
- Performance-based incentives are vital to the ability of Florida communities to be competitive in a global environment.

## **Support Tourism—Visit Florida**

Support adequately funding Visit Florida. Florida's attractive business climate is underwritten by a strong and robust tourism sector. The loss or diminishment of this sector by the elimination of our primary tourism marketing arm will only serve to hurt businesses and communities across the state and decrease sales tax revenues to the state and local communities. Eliminating or significantly defunding Visit Florida will only dilute the Florida brand causing confusion to the travel market place.

- According to the Office of Economic and Demographic Research's Chief Economist, Amy Baker, for every \$1 the state invests in 'Visit Florida', \$3.20 in tax revenue is generated.
- Every 76 visitors to the state supports one tourism job.
- In 2015, visitors to Florida spent \$108.8 billion, generating \$11.3 billion in state and local taxes (nearly 30% of total tax receipts), and supporting 1.4 million Florida jobs.
- Visitors spent an average of \$300 million per day in 2015
- According to a 2015 Economic Impact of Tourism Study by Kerr & Downs, Marion County had 1,768,528 Visitors with direct expenditures of \$600,207,348 and a total economic impact of \$912,068,303.

## **Opposition to Tribal-State Gaming Compact as Relates to Pari-Mutuel Decoupling**

Oppose any equine decoupling legislation as such a move would have a devastating effect on the horse racing and breeding industry in Florida.

CEP is focused on the importance of safeguarding the significant economic impact of the Florida Thoroughbred industry and ask Florida legislators to oppose Thoroughbred decoupling—the elimination of live racing as a requirement for tracks to offer other forms of gaming like cardrooms and slot machines.

It is largely a matter of jobs and economic impact. Florida Thoroughbreds are a billion dollar industry in the state and provide over 12,000 direct racing industry jobs. A 2015 CEP Marion County Equine Industry Study noted that:

- The equine industry has \$2.62 billion total economic impact in Marion County.
- 19,209 full and part-time jobs are produced in Marion County due to the equine industry.

## **Environment & Growth Leadership**

### **Water Resources & Springs Protection**

Marion County continues to be conscientious of our responsibility to protect and preserve our natural resources, extending to both our lands and waters. We look for our economy to thrive by promoting our land and water resources, their connectivity, and their quality. The environmental and economic benefits are immense, not only for Marion County, but for the entire state of

Florida. Our success is Florida's success and we seek to establish partnerships, research, funding and solutions that promote stewardship, obtainable goals, and sound land use practices.

The CEP requests support for the following areas of focus:

- The acquisition, restoration and management of lands that are vital to the protection of natural and groundwater resources, promote wildlife migration, and further connectivity of our waterways and trails.
- Fund and implement regional verification of the effectiveness of agricultural and industry best management practices (BMPs) at representative sites pursuant to FS 403.067(7)(c)3. Current presumption of compliance with state water quality standards for implementing agriculture BMPs is not adequate for all regions. Unjustified sanctions against any industry that contributes minimally to nutrient load will not result in cleaner water, but can be very damaging to the industry and economy.
- Fund enhanced septic system and package plant abatement projects for the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) prioritized areas and mandate connections to central sewer when central sewer is available.
- Continue to fund domestic wastewater retrofit projects to reach advanced treatment standards.
- Continue to fund alternative water supply projects and programs to promote the efficient use of water, including public education, and water quality improvement projects.