

# GREENVILLE-PITT COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2009 NORTH CAROLINA LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

On behalf of the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors and our 1,000 members (representing 30,000 employees), we proudly present the 2009 North Carolina Legislative Agenda. We understand the budgetary challenges facing state government but appreciate your ardent support as we seek to "strengthen the business environment, enhance the quality of life, communicate the views of business and support constructive initiatives on major issues of public policy."

## **Business Problem**

Businesses are buckling under the ever increasing costs of health insurance. Year by year premiums are on the rise. Many small and large business owners are faced with the unenviable choice of continuing or discontinuing health insurance for employees. 81.5% of our legislative survey respondents stated this was an issue that the upcoming session should address.

## **How can the North General Assembly help?**

- *Extend tax credits beyond January 1, 2010 for businesses that provide health insurance for employees*
- *Significantly increase existing tax credits for businesses that provide health insurance for employees*
- *Explore other options that will reduce the cost of health insurance including association provided health insurance, innovative pilot programs and initiatives to encourage healthy lifestyle choices.*

## **Business Problem**

Union activity on the state and federal level is increasing. The Employee Free Choice Act of 2007 passed the House of Representatives and died in the United States Senate. The EFCA is poised to make a come back in 2009. In October of 2008, the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution in opposition to this threatening piece of legislation. Union activity on the state level is on the rise as well. North Carolina has one of the lowest union penetration rates in the country. This is one of the many reasons our state has seen much growth and prosperity.

## **How can the North General Assembly help?**

- *Uphold North Carolina's right-to-work law and strongly oppose all union friendly legislation both in the public and private sectors*

## **Greenville-Pitt County Initiative**

Pitt Community College's enrollment is up almost 10% while 2009 budget cuts in excess of 4% seem inevitable. In more specific terms, the North Carolina Community College System is facing dire budget shortfalls in the areas of healthcare, technical education and customized training programs. From 1999-2005, employment in healthcare related jobs grew by 45.8%. Pitt Community College also must expand technical programs in order to meet the needs of area businesses. Customized training programs, a critical tool for our state's businesses, have not experienced an increase in funding for more than a decade.

## **How can the North Carolina General Assembly help?**

- *Provide an additional \$37 million in recurring funds over four years to meet the educational demands of healthcare related careers*
- *Provide an additional \$18 million in recurring funds over four years to re-invigorate the system's technical education programs*
- *Provide an additional \$7 million in recurring funds over four years to support the system's customized training programs for our state's businesses*
- *Fully support the four (4) year plan, "Creating Success: North Carolina Community Colleges"*

*Pitt Community College's share of these funds will be substantial and the benefits to area businesses and students will be great.*

## **Greenville-Pitt County Initiative**

The Brody School of Medicine treats nearly 20,000 indigent patients per year. Despite progress in operations improvement, cost containment, and pursuit of new sources of clinical income, the medical school is unable to absorb the cost of providing indigent

care. North Carolina continues to suffer an ongoing shortage and maldistribution of dentists. Previous efforts, including expansion at existing programs and revision of licensing requirements, have failed to advance the state in this regard. The people of Eastern North Carolina have suffered a higher than average affliction with cardiovascular disease. The new East Carolina Heart Institute will assist those afflicted with cardiovascular disease; however, many preventive initiatives are in desperate need of funding. Research, education and collaborative space are all needed to produce the science based workforce and new products necessary to support the growth of higher-skilled, higher-paying jobs throughout the Greenville-Pitt County area and the entire region. North Carolina is facing a shortage of physicians, as well as issues of distribution of both primary and specialty care providers.

#### **How can the North Carolina General Assembly help?**

- *Provide \$5 million of recurring funding to reimburse the Brody School of Medicine (BSOM) for direct costs incurred for providing medical care to indigent patients in eastern North Carolina*
- *Provide \$14 million in operating funds for the East Carolina University School of Dentistry*
- *Provide \$300,000 in operating funds to help improve preventive and interventional measures for patients who are already symptomatic of cardiovascular disease*
- *Provide \$15.1 million in planning funds for the design and construction of a new life science and biotechnology building at ECU.*
- *Provide \$4 million to support the collaborative effort between ECU and UNC-Chapel Hill*

#### **Greenville-Pitt County Initiative**

Shortfalls within the North Carolina Department of Transportation's budget have resulted in the delay of many projects critical to the success of the Greenville-Pitt County area. 65% of our legislative survey respondents asked that the North Carolina General Assembly ensure adequate funding for the Greenville-Pitt County area's portion of the Strategic Highway Corridor Plan.

#### **How can the North Carolina General Assembly help?**

- *Ensure sufficient funding for the Strategic Highway Corridor Plan*

*\*The 2009 Legislative Agenda was adopted by the Board of Directors on December 18, 2008.*

