

## HEALTH CARE REFORM

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010. While the Georgia Chamber believes that free-market health care reforms are absolutely needed, concerns remain over how the bill as passed will impact businesses here in our state and throughout the nation. Many businesses face new taxes, fees and mandates, and it is likely that access to

health care providers will ultimately be reduced for many Georgians. For summaries of this sweeping legislation, timelines for the implementation of various provisions, and opinions regarding the impact it may have, visit [www.gachamber.com/healthreform](http://www.gachamber.com/healthreform) - this special page will be updated regularly.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

On the heels of health care reform, President Obama has brought a renewed focus to the passage of energy legislation. While the goals of decreasing dependence on foreign energy and increasing the use of renewable energy options are laudable, the approach currently being discussed would have a disproportionately negative impact on Georgia and other states that depend on conventional energy sources. It has been estimated that

the tariffs, infrastructure investments and mandates being considered could saddle the average household with as much as \$1,500 per year in increased energy costs. An announcement by the Obama administration this spring to allow for the expansion of drilling along the Atlantic coastline, while welcome, has been widely viewed as an attempt to build support for sweeping energy proposals by Congress and the administration.

## FINANCIAL REGULATORY REFORM

Financial reform is quickly gaining steam in Congress. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently launched a campaign to ensure that consumer protection, financial transparency and regulatory gaps are addressed in ways that will strengthen the country's financial system without making it harder for small businesses to access credit or imposing unreasonable and burdensome new regulations. The U.S.

Chamber has also warned against inequitable standards for lending institutions – to quote U.S. Chamber President Tom Donohue, we should not “tax financial institutions to prop up their failing competitors” or “give shareholder activists the upper hand at the expense of other shareholders.” For more information about this legislation, visit [www.uschamber.com](http://www.uschamber.com).

## EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

While the Employee Free Choice Act may no longer be a top priority for Congress, two recent appointments to the National Labor Relations Board make it more likely that some of the provisions desired by unions could be adopted as part of new workplace management rules – including efforts to organize. Georgia and its neighbors in the Southeast have long enjoyed a distinct economic development

advantage as right-to-work states, one that could be quickly taken away if employers are no longer able to make their own decisions with regard to pay, benefits and workplace regulations. The Georgia Chamber's Business & Industry Development policy committee has formed a subcommittee led by two top labor attorneys that will be watching this issue closely so that we can keep members informed.

## SAVANNAH HARBOR EXPANSION

The Port of Savannah is one of Georgia's most important assets – responsible for 286,000 jobs, \$52.6 billion in cargo, and \$2.8 billion in state and local taxes each year. As shipping vessels grow larger, it is critical that the port be able to grow accordingly. The Georgia Chamber is proud to support the Port's request of Congress for \$105 million, which would be used in conjunction with a 40% match

from the state of Georgia to deepen the port and ensure its contributions to our state and region long into the future. Senators Johnny Isakson and Saxby Chambliss submitted requests to the Senate Appropriations Committee in April, and this project will hopefully be received favorably during the federal budget process.