



HR 993 Policy Brief

The Georgia Chamber advocated for the passage of House Resolution 993 and chose to Scorecard the bill because of the significant impact it will have on the businesses throughout Georgia. The resolution creates a statewide court dedicated to providing expedited resolution of certain complex commercial cases.

HR 993 would amend the Georgia Constitution to provide for the creation of a business court with statewide jurisdiction. Business courts provide a number of benefits including enhanced predictability, increased speed, improved case management, reduced litigation costs and judicial expertise in complex commercial litigation. Additionally, business courts offer benefits to the broader court docket: by removing complex, time-consuming business cases from general dockets, non-business cases may be resolved more expeditiously. A pilot program created the Metro Atlanta Business Court which serves Fulton County Superior Court and the Gwinnett State and Superior Court. Since the Metro Atlanta Business Court's inception in 2005, the division has handled nearly 240 cases and resolved them 50-60% faster than similar complex cases on the regular docket. In 2015 and 2016, the average time for disposition of motions was 16 days and over 80% of surveyed practitioners were satisfied with their experience. The business court should be expanded statewide to be widely available to all Georgians regardless of where a business is located.

Georgia is currently attracting blue chip, Fortune 500 companies who are placing their headquarters in our state; however, an unpredictable legal climate coupled with increased litigation costs sends the wrong message not only to companies eyeing Georgia as a potential corporate headquarters, but to businesses of all sizes who care deeply that the civil justice system remain fair, equitable and efficient for all parties. HR 993 will enhance Georgia's position as a desirable place to do business and will allow us to more effectively compete with neighboring states, including North Carolina and South Carolina that have such courts.

The Georgia Chamber appreciates the General Assembly's support and passage of HR 993 as well as the support of Governor Deal for signing the resolution on May 6, 2018. Voters will have the opportunity to amend the Georgia Constitution to create this statewide business court in the November 2018 elections.



HB 696 Policy Brief

The Georgia Chamber advocated for and chose to Scorecard HB 696 due to its significant impact to businesses of all sizes throughout the state. HB 696 allows for state sales and use tax exemptions for certain computer equipment sold or leased for the use in high-technology data centers. This legislation modernizes existing tax law as it relates to data centers and incentivizes large investments by data centers that will serve businesses across various industry sectors.

As the voice of Georgia's business community, it is our intent to ensure our state remains competitive and continues to attract and retain businesses of all sizes. HB 696 puts Georgia at a competitive advantage in the recruitment of new and the expansion of current data centers. Georgia businesses rely on internet infrastructure and data storage to succeed in today's market and these high-quality data centers service a wide range of industries including movie studios, e-commerce, and payment processors. Data centers generate tremendous economic activity and our surrounding states have already updated their data center tax policies – we need to act now to ensure that Georgia stays competitive in attracting new and continued investment in our state.

Georgia has been named one of the top ten states for high tech job growth and one of the top 5 states for software publishing employment. Additionally, Georgia has been named one of the top 5 states for total fiber and bandwidth access. This is due to the fact that almost every major international and North American fiber provider has a core interconnection point in Atlanta, our state has low cost and reliable electricity and a geographic location that makes it less vulnerable to natural disasters that disrupt business. This legislation allows Georgia to capitalize on its assets and provide high quality jobs to its citizens.

The Georgia Chamber appreciates the General Assembly's support and passage of HB 696 as well as the support of Governor Deal for signing the legislation into law on May 7, 2018. This legislation is integral to Georgia's progress as an innovation and technology destination.



HB 769 Policy Brief

The Georgia Chamber advocated for and chose to Scorecard HB 769 due to its significant impact to businesses across the state. HB 769 implements recommendations from the House Rural Development Council related to healthcare. Specifically, the bill created a new Rural Center for Healthcare Innovation and Sustainability, a new category of micro-hospitals which could open in communities with a closed hospital and incentives to increase healthcare providers in rural communities.

Six rural hospitals have closed since the beginning of 2013 in Georgia. More than half of the state's remaining rural hospitals are vulnerable to closure. This loss to a community represents more than just jobs lost. It prevents new industries from moving to our rural counties because employees will not be able to receive care in their community. 74 counties in Georgia are projected to lose population or stay at zero by 2030 and all of those counties are outside of Atlanta. Moreover, 87 counties in Georgia are projected to lose jobs over the next ten years and all of those counties are rural. Our rural communities can not afford to lose community and economic development assets.

Our rural counties are also changing. Currently, 6 counties have 25% or more of their population over 65 years old. By 2030, 56 counties will have 25% or more of their population over 65 years old. All of the 56 counties are rural. 116 counties in Georgia have 20% or more of their population over 65 years old and 114 of those are rural. As seniors become a larger proportion of our rural counties, having quick access to hospitals and physicians becomes increasingly important to ensure Georgians are healthy. Traveling long distances is not feasible for many individuals that have chronic and serious conditions. Incentivizing investments in our rural community hospitals is integral to protect Georgians across the state and the presence of micro-hospitals is essential in providing immediate care to those experiencing heart attacks, strokes, or car accidents.

The Georgia Chamber appreciates the General Assembly's support and passage of HB 769 as well as the support of Governor Deal for signing the legislation into law on May 2, 2018. This legislation is a critical to ensuring prosperity throughout rural communities across the state.



HB 918 Policy Brief

The Georgia Chamber advocated for and chose to Scorecard HB 918 due to its significant impact to businesses of all sizes across the state. HB 918 provides for the annual Internal Revenue Code update for tax years 2017 and 2018 to conform with changes in federal law. The legislation also reduces corporate and individual income tax rates from 6.0% to 5.75% for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2019 with a potential reduction to 5.5% for taxable years on or after January 1, 2020.

Businesses rely on predictability and certainty in the tax code. Updating the state code to reflect changes in the federal tax code is critically important to ensure this certainty. The Chamber supports changes to tax policy that reduce income tax rates to the extent of fiscal responsibility and believe the proposed changes to the tax code are a useful step forward. This legislation addresses Georgia's windfall while protecting our AAA bond rating. HB 918 will save taxpayers more than \$5 billion over the next five years. Doubling the standard deduction will allow Georgia filers to take fuller advantage of the updated federal standard deduction.

Additionally, the Chamber supports changes in the tax code that encourage job creation and retention in Georgia. We recognize that businesses are the key to jobs, as well as economic development and an improved quality of life for all Georgians. We must ensure the Georgia business environment is fair and competitive, not only for the state's current businesses but also for businesses considering relocating here. The changes in HB 918 represent one of the biggest income tax cuts in state history with the first reduction in the individual rate since 1937 and the first reduction in the corporate rate since 1969.

The Georgia Chamber supports changes to tax policy that are competitive both domestically and internationally to encourage the location and expansion of businesses in Georgia. The Chamber appreciates the General Assembly's support and passage of HB 918 930 as well as the support of Governor Deal for signing the legislation into law on March 2, 2018.



HB 930 Policy Brief

The Georgia Chamber advocated for and chose to Scorecard HB 930 on behalf of its statewide membership because of its significant impact. HB 930 re-purposes the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority into a new governance structure that includes thirteen counties in metro Atlanta and provides a mechanism for those counties to pass TSPLOSTs and participate in that governance structure. Counties in Metro Atlanta can propose a Transit-SPLOST up to 1% and voters in the county would need to approve the referendum as proposed by the county commission. Counties not included in the Atlanta region must join with two or more neighboring counties in order to call for a Transit-SPLOST.

Recognizing the economic impact of strengthening Georgia's transportation network, the Chamber supports efforts that will raise transit investment. We acknowledge that investment in transit must be done in a thoughtful and strategic manner to maximize mobility within communities as well as create better connections between employers and employees. Metro Atlanta is expected to add over 1 million new people by 2030. Additionally, 75% of the new jobs created in Georgia will be in Metro Atlanta. This significant growth underscores the importance of prioritizing investments in infrastructure to ensure citizens have increased economic opportunities.

Atlanta and the State of Georgia continues to grow the logistics industry. 80% of the U.S. market is within a 2-day truck drive. Hartsfield Jackson International Airport handled more than 625,000 metric tons of cargo with more than 2 million square feet of warehousing available. The Port of Savannah is the fourth busiest and fastest growing container port in the U.S. and the Port of Brunswick is the nation's busiest seaport for new automobile imports. Investments and innovations in infrastructure are vital elements, ensuring companies can move product efficiently through Atlanta throughout the state to the ports or the Southeast. When their business thrives, they will continue to invest in the state and provide employment opportunities for Georgians.

The Georgia Chamber appreciates the General Assembly's support and passage of HB 930 as well as the support of Governor Deal for signing the legislation into law on May 3, 2018. This legislation is a critical piece to keep Georgia prosperous and moving forward.