

2024 LEGISLATIVE Priorities



LAKELANDCHAMBER.COM

As the voice of the Lakeland Business Community, the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce continually advocates with elected leaders and policy makers to support pro-business legislation. In advance of the 2024 Florida Legislative Session, Lakeland’s businesses have identified the following priorities for action.

KEY BUSINESS COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Oppose consolidation of **Florida’s Judicial Circuits**.
- Full funding for the **new 6th District Court of Appeals Courthouse in Lakeland**.
- Reject legislation that would compromise operations of **municipally owned utilities**.
- **Elimination of Florida’s Business Rent Tax**.
- Protect and fully fund the **Moving Florida Forward** projects on I-4 and the I-4 & State Road 33 interchange.
- Recurring funding of the **Heartland Headwaters** Protection and Sustainability Act.
- Advance FDOT funding to develop **Central Polk Parkway (East)** from State Road 60 to I-4.
- Support additional **affordable housing** legislation to provide workforce housing options.
- Oppose legislation significantly increasing, or eliminating, **sovereign immunity limits** on local governments.
- Legislation to **stabilize and reduce property insurance** rates for Florida homeowners.

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During the 2024 Legislative Session, the Chamber supports the following legislative priorities that directly impact Lakeland businesses:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

- Sustained funding for tourism via **Visit Florida** and related agencies.

HEALTHCARE

- Preserve current **Medicaid reimbursement rates**.
- Fund \$800,000 appropriation request to support expanding the operations of the **Family Health Center (Morell Clinic)** to Medicaid recipients.

TRANSPORTATION, TRAFFIC & SAFETY

- Advance funding and timeline for expansion of the **I-4 corridor** including vehicular and multimodal improvements through and adjacent to Polk County.
- Prioritize the construction of **commercial truck parking relief** along the State Highway System in the Lakeland area.
- Streamline **funding for local projects designed to ease traffic** in Florida’s fastest-growing communities, particularly those included in the Moving Florida Forward initiative.
- **Oppose legislation** that would eliminate the ability to use Rectangular Rapid Flashing beacons at mid-block pedestrian crossings.

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The Lakeland Chamber supports strengthening our education and workforce systems to close the talent gap and provide Florida with long-term economic prosperity through highly skilled and educated workforce.

During the 2024 Legislative Session, the Chamber supports the following education priorities from Polk County institutions:

POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Support efforts to **deregulate K-12 public schools**.
- Support funding of Junior Achievement **Heartland Biztown** Finance Park
- Support increases in **FEFP funding** of at least 5% and protection against proration regardless of choice of school.

FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE

- Support funding for the update of science labs which include their **citrus and horticulture programs** along with their greenhouse on campus program.

FLORIDA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

- \$7.5 million to enhance ongoing efforts to **STEM Programming** that focus on engineering program support.
- \$15 million for a Student Achievement Center to support **3,000 students by 2030**.

POLK STATE COLLEGE

- Support \$16.2 million to complete Phase I construction of a **workforce development training facility** that focuses on Health Sciences, Education, Hospitality & Tourism Management, Supply Chain & Logistics, and more.
- Support \$6.2 million to **complete renovations to Building 1** on the Lakeland Campus, a 78,000-square-foot classroom, office, and student and academic services building.
- Support \$3 million in recurring operational support to expand the College's Education Program to include **baccalaureate degree programs and teacher retention initiatives** to ensure the development and retention of highly skilled teachers to fill workforce needs.

WEBBER UNIVERSITY

- Support funding of \$755,922 to fund Health Science programs including **nursing and Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA)** in SE Polk County.

KEY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE PRIORITIES

- Funding and support for much-needed **nursing education programs** to recruit highly skilled instructors, build technology-forward facilities and acquire state-of-the-art simulators.
- Retain full funding of **EASE grants at \$3,500 per student** at Independent Colleges and Universities and support **EASE+** to incentivize high demand degrees.
- Continued funding for **VPK programs** providing critical early learning and necessary childcare support for working parents.



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