

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Chamber and Rotary Host State Delegation

VALDOSTA, Ga. —The Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber and Rotary Clubs of Valdosta hosted a State Legislative Luncheon on Wed. at the Valdosta Country Club. Approximately 200 guests gathered to hear upcoming legislative issues from Sen. Tim Golden and Reps. Ellis Black, Amy Carter and Jason Shaw.

Jeff Hanson, Chair of the Chamber's Government Affairs Council, welcomed the crowd, encouraging attendees to become involved in the Chamber's GAC, which seeks to address business legislative issues. The program has seven issue-driven policy committees that work throughout the year to ensure Valdosta-Lowndes County remains a place where businesses can thrive.

Sen. Golden began by stating his number one priority for the upcoming legislative session is funding for the Health Sciences Initiative, a partnership between South Georgia Medical Center, Valdosta State University and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College. Golden reiterated that this initiative is essential not only to the growth of Valdosta-Lowndes County, but to the growth of the Southern region.

Removing the sales tax on energy used in manufacturing is also on the top of the Senator's agenda, a concept he introduced in the '90s. Golden stated that Georgia is behind the curve and to be competitive we must pass this legislation this year.

Rep. Black addressed what he said is sure to be a controversial topic next year—the regional transportation tax. This will be a one percent regional sales tax, currently scheduled to appear on the July ballot. Black encouraged everyone to educate themselves on the issue, stating that Georgia is the second lowest state in the country when it comes to per capita spending for transportation projects.

Rep. Carter spoke on the budget, reporting the 2011 fiscal year as the first full year to see positive monthly revenues in five years. Additionally, while five out of the eight triple-A rated states are potentially going to be downgraded, Georgia is one of three that will not. The ratings

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reflect Georgia's conservative fiscal management during the recession. Triple-A ratings mean the State typically pays very low interest rates on its debt.

Rep. Shaw began by thanking the delegation for their continued support, stating that one issue he will be focusing on is regulation for copper theft. There are currently 500 buyers in the state and only 40 of those are known. Shaw will be researching similar legislation in other states to introduce a bill that will address this growing concern.

Kyle Jackson, State Director of the National Federation of Independent Business, closed the meeting by presenting Sen. Golden with the Guardian of Small Business Award. Jackson stated, "Senator Golden has always gone above and beyond for small business and it is an honor for me to present him with this award."

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Kyle Jackson, NFIB State Director, presents Sen. Golden with the NFIB's Guardian of Small Business Award at the Chamber's State Legislative Luncheon, co-hosted by the Valdosta Rotary Clubs.