



Advocating for Businesses – Strengthening our Community

February 24, 2016

As the Destin Area Chamber of Commerce looks to build a strong and sustainable economy through the business community, our board looks at many factors to help determine our decisions and directions. Currently, we are taking a long, hard look at our future. We are not looking two or three years down the road, but fourteen or fifteen years ahead.

Economists with the Florida Chamber of Commerce project that 6 million more people will move to Florida by the year 2030. They also project that Okaloosa County's population will increase by more than 19,000 in the same time period. That means that, locally, we need to create more than 7,000 new jobs before 2030 to maintain our current unemployment rate.

So how do we do that? We begin by working with local and state governments to create an environment conducive to job creation. We also look for ways to put more money into the hands of business owners and job creators. One giant step the state of Florida can take is to eliminate the business rent tax.

Florida is the only state in the country that charges sales tax on commercial business leases. This makes Florida less competitive and less attractive in business attraction and retention. By eliminating this unnecessary tax, we could put more money into the business owner's coffers, allowing them to reinvest in their businesses.

Currently, Florida businesses are spending \$1.7 billion in business rent taxes. That money could be much better spent creating new jobs, raising wages, offering better benefits or reinvesting in their own businesses. The Florida Legislature should gradually reduce the business rent tax to help support local shops and restaurants, two vital components of our local economy. This is the kind of job-creation environment Destin, Okaloosa and Walton Counties, and the state of Florida need to attract and create high-skill, high-wage jobs in high growth businesses. And that's good for everyone.

Quality of life begins with a good job. Good jobs are created in good economies. And good economies are created when businesses have more money to reinvest in themselves. The Destin Chamber is part of a 30-chamber coalition in partnership with the Florida Chamber working with legislators to encourage the reduction, and ultimately the elimination, of the business rent tax. This fits perfectly into our mission of advocating for businesses, strengthening our community! Join us in letting our legislators know that you, too, want to see this happen!

Shane A. Moody, CCE, FCCP, President and CEO