



## **Justin Sayfie Highlights Chamber's 2017 Legislative Luncheon**

*Leading Florida political commenter provides election insight and analysis as Greater Pensacola Chamber releases it's 2017 Legislative Priorities*

Pensacola, Fla-March 2, 2017- Today, the Greater Pensacola Chamber of Commerce held its Legislative Luncheon in advance of the 2017 Legislative Session. Leading Florida political commentator Justin Sayfie provided the keynote address entitled, The Game-Changing Rules of the New Political Playbook.

Sayfie provided the audience with his analysis of what happened during the 2016 elections and shared his insights into how the new rules of politics will impact the 2018 elections in Florida. Sayfie also answered questions from the audience following his remarks.

"2016 was a watershed year in American electoral politics. The impact and ramifications of 2016 will be felt during the 2018 campaigns and beyond," stated Sayfie.

Justin Sayfie is known for his political news website Sayfie Review, which has been described by the Tampa Bay Times as the "online Bible for Florida political junkies." According to a 2014 survey, 73.1% of Florida Legislators get their news from Sayfie Review, making it the top news source for Florida's lawmakers. Sayfie also worked as top advisor for former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and served on the President's Commission on White House Fellows from 2007-09.

The Chamber also provided their 2017 Legislative Priorities at the Legislative Luncheon. This year's Legislative Priorities are:

### **1. Workers' Compensation**

As a result of two recent Florida Supreme Court cases, workers' compensation rates have risen in Florida by an average of 14.5%. This increase is an incredible burden on our small businesses that will stymie growth and potentially impact current employees' wages and benefits. If nothing is done legislatively, workers' compensation rates will continue to rise and negatively impact job growth in Northwest Florida.

The Greater Pensacola Chamber of Commerce supports legislation that will stabilize workers' compensation rates so our business owners can focus on creating jobs.

### **2. BP Oil Spill Settlement Monies**

Current Florida law calls for seventy-five percent of all oil-spill recovery dollars to come to the eight disproportionately impacted counties (Escambia to Wakulla). The Greater Pensacola Chamber implores our Northwest Florida delegation to fight any effort to reduce that amount.

The Greater Pensacola Chamber also encourages policy makers to fund RESTORE and Triumph Gulf Coast projects that will improve infrastructure and job training in Northwest Florida.

### **3. Florida Constitution Revision Commission**

Once every twenty years Florida's Constitution provides for the creation of a thirty-seven member revision commission for the purpose of reviewing Florida's Constitution and proposing changes for voter consideration. The Commission meets for approximately one year, traveling the State of Florida, identifying issues, performing research, and possibly recommending changes to the Constitution. The last comprehensive review of Florida's Constitution occurred in 1997-1998.

The Greater Pensacola Chamber of Commerce requests that Northwest Florida receive adequate representation on the Constitutional Revision Commission. The Chamber also requests that, like in 1997, the Constitution Revision Commission hold a public meeting in Pensacola.

### **4. Tax Credits to Businesses that Hire Veterans**

Senate Bill 152 and House Bill 197 would establish the Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program, which would give a one-time \$3,000 tax credit to businesses for each veteran hired, and a \$5,000 credit for each disabled veteran hired.

The bill caps the total amount of tax credits a business can receive from the program at \$25,000 a year and doesn't hand out the tax credit until the veteran has been working in the job for at least a year. The program also requires the new hire's pay to be at least 80 percent of the median income for Florida veterans.

### **5. Criminal Justice Reform**

Incarceration of those that commit minor non-violent offenses can disrupt businesses and make it difficult for some individuals to stay employed. The Greater Pensacola Chamber believes in smart criminal justice reform that will minimize these disruptions. Legislation has been filed that would benefit Escambia County by taking a financial burden off our criminal justice system as well keep minor offense individuals at their jobs and out of the criminal justice system.

There are bills filed in the Florida Legislature that would reform the way drivers' license suspensions are handed in Florida. This would allow employees that commit minor offenses the ability to keep their drivers' license so they are able to get to their jobs.

Legislation has also been filed that would provide that certain non-violent offenses committed by juveniles would be punishable by citation rather than arrest. This would save tax dollars by keeping these juveniles out of the criminal justice system and not giving them the stigma of a criminal record.

### **6. Governor Scott's Tax Cut Package**

Gov. Rick Scott asked the Florida Legislature for \$618 million in tax cuts aimed primarily at businesses to help continue to create jobs. The biggest item in Scott's tax cut plan is a 25 percent cut to the tax on commercial leases. Cutting that tax by 25 percent would save business owners \$454 million.

Other items in the governor's tax cut package:

- Exempt nearly one quarter for Florida businesses from having to pay corporate income taxes
- A back to school shopping period with no sales taxes
- A disaster preparedness sales tax holiday

-A sales tax free shopping period for military veterans

-Eliminating sales taxes on college textbooks for one year

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**About the Greater Pensacola Chamber**

Founded in 1889, the Greater Pensacola Chamber is driven to create a climate of growth and success, to ensure economic prosperity and to enhance the quality of life in Greater Pensacola. The Pensacola Chamber Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, oversees Leadership Pensacola and completed Vision 2015, a five-year plan for job creation that brought more than 8,000 jobs to the area within three years. These initiatives take a strategic approach to regional growth and community building with the goal of building a healthier, better-educated workforce; continuing to advance the region's economic positioning; and improving community infrastructure. For additional information, please visit [www.pensacolachamber.com](http://www.pensacolachamber.com), [facebook.com/pensacolachamber](https://facebook.com/pensacolachamber), [linkedin.com/company/greaterpensacolachamber](https://linkedin.com/company/greaterpensacolachamber) or follow [@pcolachamber](https://twitter.com/pcolachamber).