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THE CHAMBER FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY

Birmingham Business Alliance urges support of major local issues before the Alabama Legislature

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. –February 22, 2018 – The Birmingham Business Alliance (BBA) is asking the Alabama Legislature for support in the current legislative session of several issues important to the Birmingham region.

As the lead economic development organization for the Birmingham seven-county region, the BBA advocates for certain policies and issues that will help the region grow in jobs and capital investment. These are the issues and bills the BBA is watching closely and advocating for:

- The passage of a tax to add an open-air stadium to the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex. Already, the Jefferson County Commission has committed \$30 million and the City of Birmingham has affirmed its intent to support the project. The stadium is part of the BJCC's \$300 million master plan that also includes a modernized Legacy Arena and outside renovations. A modernized BJCC and new stadium will improve our region's ability to host large-scale conventions, trade shows, sporting and entertainment events, and draw more people here from around the country. Thousands of business professionals visit Birmingham every year by attending conferences and conventions, and their perception of our city is lasting and critical to our economic development efforts. The stadium will also have a positive impact on communities north of downtown Birmingham.
- The passage of The Alabama Jobs Enhancement Act (HB317), which clarifies that legitimate economic development activities do not qualify as lobbying. Passage of HB317 would eliminate any requirement for economic developers and site selection consultants to register as lobbyists, while actual lobbyists will still be required to register as lobbyists, and it will provide for more transparency of economic development incentives. Failure to pass HB317 would result in fewer economic development opportunities for Alabama and fewer jobs for our citizens. Any threat to the passage of this critical legislation puts

jobs at risk, and impedes both the region's and the state's ability to continue to build on recent economic successes, such as [the Mercedes-Benz facilities in Bibb County, which will create 691 jobs](#), and [the Autocar plant in Jefferson County, which will create 746 jobs](#). Our competitors in other states are watching this legislation and are ready to use it to their advantage if HB317 doesn't pass.

- Increased investment in infrastructure. Considering President Trump's recently released infrastructure plan, Birmingham and Alabama must be prepared to move forward to ensure that our state does not miss out on any available funding to repair crumbling roads and to build the roads and bridges that commerce and our workforce rely on daily. Our state needs a new funding mechanism to address road and bridge construction and maintenance. We are in immediate need of additional state revenue that will address both our short- and long-term infrastructure projects.

"Supporting these legislative priorities and advocating for issues that put the Birmingham region in a competitive position increases our ability to attract and retain business and a quality workforce," said Brian Hilson, president and CEO of the BBA. "We are making sure legislators statewide have the facts about each of these issues and how they can affect all communities in Alabama."

Passage of the Alabama Jobs Enhancement Act is significant to the work of the BBA and the future of economic development projects in Alabama.

Dennis Donovan, a principal at WDG Consulting, a site selection company based in New Jersey, said the passage of this legislation is critical so that Alabama is not at a competitive disadvantage.

"There is no question that Alabama will lose projects," he said. "I am supportive of legislation that promotes ethics, but we (site selectors) are not advocates for business. We don't lobby for legislative change. The types of incentive negotiations we do on behalf of our clients are around training, site selection, facilities. We are not trying to influence policy."

In 2018, as in previous years, the BBA is highly focused on issues and policies that will continue to grow Birmingham's economy. Most recently, the BBA supported the passage of a statewide framework for ridesharing; renewal of the state historic tax credit program to continue redevelopment momentum; expansion of the state's award-winning pre-k program; passage of a sales and use tax exemption for Southern Research; and support of the Alabama Jobs Act, which supports companies hiring underserved citizens and creating jobs in underserved areas.

[The BBA's annual legislative agendas](#) cover a wide range of issues that affect economic development, including research investment, transportation and

transit, health care, education and workforce development, and energy and the environment.

“Public policy is an important part of our work at the BBA and we will continue to advocate for legislation that supports our purpose of increasing jobs and capital investment for the region,” said Waymond Jackson, senior vice president of public policy for the BBA.

The Birmingham Business Alliance is the lead economic development organization for the Birmingham region. For more information about the BBA visit its website at www.birminghambusinessalliance.com.

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