

# Chamber Insight

Summer 2016



### Mission Statement

The Opelika Chamber of Commerce promotes and fosters economic and business success, maximizes member investment, while enhancing the community.

### Chamber Staff

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## From the Board Chair

Bill Trant, Jeffcoat-Trant Funeral Home & Crematory



It's my honor and privilege to serve as the Board Chairman during the 2nd half of the Opelika Chamber's 75th Anniversary. As a small business owner and a Chamber member for many years, I understand the impact a Chamber can make in the life of a business and a community.

The Chamber is dedicated to supporting and promoting your business. It is important to remember that successful businesses provide the tax revenues that support our city government, county government, and local schools. The Chamber will continue to partner with and support the city as it works to promote economic development and to improve the quality of life for everyone in our community.

The Opelika Chamber is very aggressive. Recently, several Board members and I, along with President Barbara Patton, traveled to Washington, D.C. for the annual America's Small Business Summit. This Summit gives the group opportunities to hear speakers and talk to representatives and small business owners about issues businesses face, legislation, and other hot topics.

### Have you ever thought about...

- 60% -80% of all New Jobs come from Small Business?
- Small Businesses Pay 44% of the U.S. Payroll?
- There are 28 million Small Businesses in the U.S. - which out number large corporations 1162 to 1

### The anatomy of a Chamber is variety and it's what makes it so successful.

We have large and small businesses, retail and industrial, service oriented and everything in-between that work together to make Opelika and Lee County so prosperous, yet remain quaint and charming.

Join us in making another 75 years of memories! Embrace the journey!

*Bill Trant*



Attending the Small Business Summit in Washington, D.C. were:  
Jimmy Wright, Wright's Market,  
Barbara Patton, Chamber President,  
Bill Price, First Realty,  
Bill Trant, Jeffcoat-Trant Funeral Home and Crematory

# U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## CHAMBER BOARD

### Officers

#### Bill Trant

Chairman  
Jeffcoat - Trant Funeral Home & Crematory

#### Ronnie Wilson

Chair-Elect  
BancorpSouth

#### Shey Knight

Vice-Chair  
Autosport

#### Todd Shackett

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Baxter International

#### Bill Price

Past Chair  
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### Directors

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EAWIN, Region 8

#### Les Davis

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#### Carlton Hunley, IV

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#### Chris Jane

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#### Jeff Jerkins

Bubba's Medicine Shop

#### Sheriff Jay Jones

Lee County

#### Bill Loosier

Edward Jones

#### Brooke Kastner

Auburn Opelika Marriott  
at Grand National

#### Malcolm Marshall

McDonald's

(Directors continued on  
next page)



The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations. For more information or details on these articles, visit [www.uschamber.com](http://www.uschamber.com).

(article photos are from the US Chamber website)

## LABOR: The Overtime Rule's Cold, Hard Reality



Winter is coming for employers and employees December 1 when the Labor Department's new overtime rule comes into effect.

- In May the Labor Department finalized regulations making salaried workers earning less than \$47,476 per year (\$913 weekly) to be eligible for overtime if they work more than 40 hours a week.
- Interestingly, the theory behind the Great Depression overtime law wasn't about raising incomes like the president argues today. Instead, its purpose was to nudge employers to not pay overtime, but rather hire more hourly workers and reduce unemployment.
- Millions of workers will be reclassified from salary to hourly and will have to punch a time card or fill out a time sheet to track how much work they do.
- A business must be able to track and pay the now non-exempt overtime-eligible employees for every single email they do at home, for all the telephone calls they make at home, for every time they open their laptop at home, for every time they travel for work other than their normal commute.
- Not tracking hours opens employers up for lawsuits from enterprising plaintiff lawyers. Quartz reports that federal wage and hours cases have doubled in the last ten years.
- Employers will have to reconfigure how they pay their employees—not for sound business reasons like attracting and retaining workers or improving their operations—but to meet the schemes of DOL “experts” who don't grasp what millions of employers and employees do on a daily basis.



**Brandon Morgan**  
Southern Union  
State Community College

**Jerry Ray**  
Southern Insurance  
Consultants

**John Story**  
S & S Termite & Pest  
Control, LLC

Ex-Officio  
**Judge Bill English**  
Lee County Commission

**Mayor Gary Fuller**  
City of Opelika

**Lori Huguley**  
Economic Development  
City of Opelika

**Dianne Lowe**  
Hampton Inn & Suites  
Ambassador of the Year



AtlasAlabama.gov is a free online resource for entrepreneurs and small business owners in Alabama. Discover available state and local resources as well as learn business basics for starting or growing your business.



**Ballet Academy**  
August 5 | 4 pm  
1703 Westend Ct.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE & INVESTMENT

### The Challenges of Brexit and the Case for a U.S.-U.K. Trade Agreement

- The British people opted for change when they voted for the U.K. to negotiat an “exit” from the European Union. Such a choice is the right of any EU member but is also without precedent. Good or bad decision?
- The U.S. business community has a tremendous stake in Britain’s success. American companies’ investments in Britain are worth \$588 billion, and many of those investment were made to reach not just British consumers but those in the European mainland as well. Consequently, U.S. businesses are committed to working with the U.K. government to ensue that the priorities of these stakeholders are takne into account in the debates that lie ahead.



- The U.S. and U.K. share common values as strong democracies with an enduring commitment to civil liberties and the rule of law, so a U.S.-U.K. trade agreement would further strengthen the economic partnership between the two.

### Did You Know...

Over 50% of the working (120 million) works in a Small Business?

## NATIONAL SECURITY



- Cybercriminals are relentless. They consistently find new ways to break through security systems.
- The world is becoming increasingly digitalized and the Internet of Things is encompassing more of our lives. Cyber threats are increasing in sophistication, scale, and

### How will Businesses Prepare for Cyber Threats?

government, and law enforcement need to continue to work together to become a united force that can respond to cyber threats at internet speed.

- So how do we protect ourselves?
  - Install Firewalls
  - Update Antivirus Software
  - Make sure all employees change passwords every 30 - 45 days.
  - Identify and Avoid Phishing Emails

## AMBASSADORS

**Doug Barfield**  
Himmelwright, Huguley  
& Boles

**Chandler Barrett**  
United Way of Lee County

**Cheryl Dale**  
TownPlace Suites

**Selena Daniel**  
Associated Realty

**John Gwin**  
City of Opelika

**Tara Harbison**  
AU Hotel & Conference Ctr.

**Bob Harris**  
Country & Commercial  
Properties

**Rachel Hyink**  
Marriott at Grand National

**DeDe Jackson**  
Four Season Federal  
Credit Union

**Israel Jane**  
Comfort Keepers

**Mary Louise Kennedy**  
The Event Group

**Cynthia Landry**  
Opelika City Schools

**Clay Lane**  
Southern States Bank

**Charles Livings**  
Still Serving Veterans

**Dianne Lowe**  
Hampton Inn & Suites

**Stacy Lucas**  
Elwood Staffing

(Ambassadors continued  
on next page)

## TECHNOLOGY



- Americans tend to associate water insecurity with less developed countries, but it's become a troubling reality for a growing number of people and businesses here in the U.S., too.
- The ongoing drought in California, has already cost the state's agribusinesses approximately \$1.5 billion this year and impacted food prices across the country. Meanwhile, lead contaminated water from aging pipes in Flint, Michigan, forced thousands of residents to stop drinking local tap water in 2015, becoming one of the state's largest man-made disasters in history.

## Healthcare - H.R. 5447

- The U.S. Chamber strongly supports the "Small Business Health Care Relief Act." This bipartisan bill would restore the ability of small businesses to offer stand-alone Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRAs) to their employees without being penalized.
- Historically, HRAs have been a valuable option for employers, but in 2013, the IRS dictated that all businesses failing to offer a group plan, but providing

## American Startups Are Quenching the World's Thirst for Water Solutions

- Over the next 10 years, 40 out of 50 states are expected to experience water shortages of their own. Water Issues at home and abroad mean big problems for the economy.
- Thankfully, there are several clean water startup companies that are coming up with ideas to combat these issues. Check out these 5 new companies:

*OndaVia*                      *Anfiro*  
*OptEnz Sensors*        *Fanthom*  
*Water Planet*



Opelika Business Clean Water Partnership is forming. If you would like for information or to be involved, please attend an introduction breakfast & learning session on August 16 at 7:30 am at the Opelika Chamber of Commerce.

tax-preferred dollars through an HRA would be fined \$100 per day, per employee.

- H.R. 5447** would allow small employers, who are not subject to the Affordable Care Act's employer mandate, to offer HRAs to their employees to help pay for coverage and qualified medical expenses. This ensures small businesses and their employees have the flexibility to choose the health care coverage that works best for them.

## AMBASSADORS

**Cydney Matthews**  
Southern Union State  
Community College

**Leslie Parton**  
Max

**Dawn Radnitz**  
First Realty

**Jeff Stanfield**  
AuburnBank

**Erin Steele**  
Opelika-Auburn News

**Michel Ulmer**  
Drs. Tatum & Cox

**Tabatha White**  
Alabama Power Co.

## TRANSPORTATION



*Our nation's infrastructure, once the envy of the world, is now in decline. It's time to Rebuild.*

- From the Transcontinental Railroads to the Hoover Dam, and from the interstate highway system to our wide deployment of broadband, America has a long and impressive history of providing state-of-the-art infrastructure.
- Failure to maintain our infrastructure has allowed minor issues to turn into major problems.
- The latest American Society of Civil Engineers Infrastructure Report Card gives America's infrastructure a D+!
- The report estimates that the U.S., at all levels of government, would have to invest \$3.6 trillion to bring our country's infrastructure to a state of good repair by 2020.
- Study after study has shown that investing in infrastructure leads to better safety, faster economic growth and higher quality of life and not maintaining has the reverse effect.

## WORKFORCE - Mid-Year Update



- The latest job report has important implications for policy-makers. The Federal Reserve last increased the Federal Funds rate by 0.25% in Dec. 2015. However, the deterioration in the global outlook, uncertainty in the aftermath of the "Brexit" vote, and recent weakness in job growth since December are expected to slow the pace of rate hikes. A second rate hike doesn't appear imminent, though it is hard to tell because Federal Reserve leadership appears to formulate a new data "dashboard" monthly.

**Did You Know...**

*52% of all Small Businesses are home-based?*



**August 5 - August 7**

## Opelika Chamber CONNECTIONS

**August 10 | 8 am**



Sponsored by  
**Synergy HomeCare**  
of East Alabama

Enhance your business, expand your circle of business contacts and build great relationships by attending the monthly Connections meeting on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 8 am.

**WELCOME**  
*new members*  
.....  
April - July 2016

**ADS Security**  
*Security Systems*

**Ballet Academy**  
*Dance Studio*

**The Breezeway**  
*Restaurants*

**Broad Street Company**  
*Advertising-Agencies*

**Dex Media**  
*Marketing*

**Gentiva Hospice**  
*Phenix City  
Hospice*

**Home 2 Suites**  
*Hotels*

**Mosaics, Inc.**  
*Autism Specialty  
Svs-Adult*

**Jason Baggett**  
*Prudential Insurance  
Financial Representative*

**Pyro's Fire Fresh Pizza**  
*Restaurants*

**Schuessler & Company**  
*Financial-Investment  
Advisor*

**SeeDoGo**  
*Marketing Digital/  
Interactive*

**Service Master Restore of  
Lee County**  
*Cleaning Service*

**Sivanta, LLC**  
*Real Estate - Management*

**Stern Properties**  
*Real Estate*

**WRIGHT'S MARKET RECEIVES U.S. CHAMBER AWARD**



Left to Right: U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Tom Donohue and Jimmy Wright, Wright's Market

**WRIGHT KNOWS HOW TO DO IT RIGHT!**

- Wright's Market was chosen by the U.S. Chamber as one of their Top 100 Small Businesses in America -the "***Dream Big Blue Ribbon Award.***"
- Wright's Market was also honored at the Small Business Summit by the U.S. Chamber the "***Community Excellence Award.***"

**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**CHAMBER CELEBRATION PARTY**

**DECEMBER 15, 2016**

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**WELCOME**  
*new members*  
.....  
April - July 2016

**Toland Construction Co.**  
*Real Estate*

**Tower Loans of Opelika**  
*Loan Service*

**TownePlace Suites**  
*Hotels*

**Rhonda Long**  
**Weichert-Realtors -**  
**Porter Properties**  
*Real Estate-Agents*

**Small Business  
of the Quarter**

**WRIGHT'S**  
Your Hometown Store for the best meats and more!



Left to Right: Jimmy Wright, Wright's Market, Bill Trant, Chamber Board Chair and Barbara Patton, Chamber President.

**603 Pleasant Drive**  
**Opelika, AL 36801**  
**334.749-1333**



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## EDUCATION

- In today's competitive environment, simply having a degree or certificate and a can-do attitude does not guarantee success.
- Businesses and our economy cannot succeed without well-educated and trained workers who are eady to hit the ground running on day one of employment. The key lies with choosing the right institution and the right course of study.
- A new interactive tool called "Launch My Career" equips students with the information they need to make smart decisions and require the training and skills necessary to offer the greatest value to their communities and potential employers.

*New Tool Could Help Narrow  
the Skills Gap*

### Launch My Career

Hot jobs  
Lifestyle goal calculator  
Break-even calculator  
20-yr ROI  
Comparison report

- Launch My Career is being tested in a few states right now and hopes to be in all states soon.

**Did  
You Know...**

*Approximately 543,000 new  
businesses get started each month  
but more close each month than  
start up each month.*













