

BUSINESS ADVOCATE

During a year of working apart from each other, the **Business Council of Alabama** focused its time and resources on ways to build and reunite Alabama's business community utilizing unconventional strategies and new technologies.

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VIRTUALLY EVERYWHERE

THE BCA IS ALABAMA'S STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, LEARN MORE AT [BCATODAY.ORG](https://bcatoday.org)

BCA LED THE CHARGE ON KEEPING ALABAMA WORKERS HEALTHY, EMPLOYED, AND PRODUCTIVE

Fourteen months ago, a previously unknown virus shut down the world when COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. Since that day, there have been many uncertainties, but for the Business Council of Alabama (BCA), one thing was very clear – the mission to be a trusted resource and valuable business partner has never been more important.

Since its founding in 1985, BCA has worked tirelessly advocating at the state and federal levels, ensuring businesses of all sizes can grow and flourish. BCA is the one-stop-shop for resources and information that help you do business. This has never been more apparent than during the coronavirus pandemic where BCA has worked around the clock to keep members informed, seeking to give some clarity in the uncertainty of this season. In addition to the traditional member services, it was vitally important to BCA that all its resources be made available to all Alabama businesses at no cost to them.

On April 9 and 10, in partnership with Alabama Public Television, BCA presented the Small



Business Exchange (SBE) designed to help those walking through the process of applying for federal stimulus funding under the CARES Act. SBE allowed small businesses the opportunity to speak to more than 50 volunteer subject matter experts

questions were answered for businesses all across the state, and the Facebook live portion reached more than 11,000 individuals.

In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama (CCAA), BCA showcased over 75 locally owned small businesses throughout the state during the

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from the state’s largest law firms, CPA firms, and banks on a variety of topics. Participants were able to view the televised portion on APT and on Facebook at no charge, as SBE was offered complementary to all Alabamians. Hundreds of

Virtual Spotlight Tour via social media in the spring. Traveling remotely from Coastal Alabama to the Tennessee Valley, BCA utilized various social media platforms to showcase the positive contributions many small businesses had made in their communities throughout the pandemic.



On August 26-27, BCA hosted Engage Alabama, a virtual business summit free to all Alabamians. Bringing together more than 40 elected officials, industry leaders, and experts, the two-day summit was filled with almost 15 different sessions focused on doing business in the current climate. With more than 4,400 combined views on the conference platform, Engage Alabama reached every corner of the state and provided best practices to businesses throughout Alabama.

BCA also played a critical part in securing funding for Gov. Ivey’s Revive Alabama and Revive Plus grant programs, working alongside NFIB, Retail, and Restaurant Associations. If this year has proven anything, it is that small business is the backbone of our state and the lifeblood of our communities. It was vital that there be critical funds made available to help them keep their doors open and not only survive the pandemic but thrive after. It was also important that these funds be grants, not loans. That’s where Revive Alabama and Revive Plus grant programs were born. If a business met certain qualifications, they were able to get a direct infusion of capital. In the first round of funding, the Revive Alabama program provided \$96 million to over



8,000 small businesses. Revive Plus had over 11,000 applicants who received more than \$198 million. Among those businesses were 941 veteran-owned businesses and 4,100 minority-owned businesses. Several Revive recipients said it was those funds that allowed them to make payroll and keep their doors open.

In an effort to ensure Alabamians remain able to work and provide for their families, BCA launched the grassroots initiative to Keep Alabama Open, which first and foremost started with a personal responsibility to do everything possible to slow the spread of the virus. In November in the face of other states moving in the opposite direction and shutting back down, BCA was able to successfully unite hardworking Alabamians in the pursuit of protecting jobs and safeguarding self-governance. Each and every business must take the proper steps to keep their employees and customers safe. Keeping Alabama Open allows people the opportunity to provide for their families. By engaging our membership, Gov. Ivey, and other elected officials on the state and federal levels, we were able to simultaneously support public health orders and guidelines in addition to businesses and their employees’

LEFT PAGE

BCA’s President and CEO Katie Boyd Britt sits down with Gov. Ivey during BCA’s Small Business Exchange.

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Left: BCA launched “Keep Alabama Open,” encouraging businesses and individuals to show their support by displaying signs and stickers.

Right: Horace Horn, of PowerSouth Energy, and Port Director John Driscoll discussed the Alabama State Port Authority during BCA’s Engage Alabama virtual conference.

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BCA has hosted virtual meetings every Tuesday during the legislative session to keep its membership updated on bills such as SB 30 and HB 192.

right to earn a living and support their families.

Additionally, BCA's president and CEO, Katie Boyd Britt, had the distinct opportunity to serve on Governor Ivey's Coronavirus Task Force advocating on behalf of the businesses of our state, as well as the Alabama Small Business Commission Emergency Task Force's Reopen Alabama Responsibly subcommittee working alongside Lt. Gov. Will Ainsworth and other elected officials to ensure businesses could reopen safely.

Working with Gov. Ivey and her team, BCA was instrumental in securing liability protection for businesses and the healthcare community by means of an executive order. This allowed businesses to safely and responsibly reopen their doors without the unnecessary threat of lawsuits at the forefront of their minds. Because of BCA and our partners, Alabama was the first state in the nation to secure such a win for business. But BCA's work on liability protection didn't stop with an executive order.

During just the first two weeks of the 2021 legislative session, three of BCA's priority bills were passed and signed into law by Gov. Ivey. One of those bills was SB 30, providing civil immunity for covered entities operating in Alabama from certain claims and damages claimed by individuals who allege they contracted or were exposed to COVID-19. Also passed was HB 192, which reauthorized three key economic development incentives: the Alabama Jobs Act, the Growing Alabama Credit, and the Alabama Port Credit. The third bill to pass was HB 170, ensuring that economic stimulus payments and related recovery rebates or credits



received by Alabamians will not be subject to state income tax.

Most recently, BCA has put together an inter-organization COVID-19 vaccine distribution task force, which consists of several BCA members who have a large employee workforce. This task force is sharing ideas and working on producing a blueprint for how businesses can get their workforce vaccinated and what steps they need to take in order to be prepared for when that opportunity presents itself. Some of the main issues the task force is looking at is how businesses might be able to coordinate onsite vaccinations and what those logistics might look like in terms

of transporting the vaccine and having it administered. In this effort, BCA is working alongside the state to position the business community as a resource to help continue the battle against COVID-19.

As always, BCA continues to be a trusted resource for all businesses throughout the state. By working with organizations at the local, state, and national levels, BCA hopes to gain as much clarity as possible on ways to best help the business community. By providing resources, hosting webinars, and simply being a listening ear, BCA serves as your best advocate. Whatever the business community may face, BCA is there every step of the way. BCA continues to work hard, making Alabama a "Sweet Home for Business." **BA**

The Business Advocate is published by the Business Council of Alabama, a non-partisan, statewide business association representing the interests and concerns of nearly 1 million working Alabamians through its member companies and its partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama. For more information on the Business Council of Alabama please contact us at (800) 665-9647 or visit us online at bcatoday.org.