



North Carolina  
Chamber

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**State Chamber of Commerce Responds to Governor's Budget Proposal:  
Applauds Focus on Economy, Education and Government Belt-tightening**

**RALEIGH, NC** – North Carolina Chamber President and CEO Lew Ebert responded to Gov. Bev Perdue's state budget proposal following its release on Tuesday, March 17, 2009.

"These are extremely tough times that require tough choices," said Ebert. "We appreciate the governor's focus on economic recovery and education, both top priorities of our Chamber's employer members, as well as the government belt-tightening that is both appropriate and necessary in this uniquely challenging economic environment."

The head of the state chamber of commerce cited investments in K-12 education and community college workforce training programs, small business tax relief and the fact that there were no broad-based business tax increases in Gov. Perdue's budget proposal as examples of the right priorities for a struggling state economy.

In regard to a proposed tax increase on tobacco in the governor's budget plan, Ebert said that the state chamber of commerce hopes policymakers will consider it carefully as the legislative session progresses.

"The fact that there are no broad-based tax increases on North Carolina employers bodes well for economic recovery and employers' capacity for job creation and retention," said Ebert. "Yet North Carolina is unique in that we still have nearly 50,000 jobs tied to growing and manufacturing tobacco."

"Policymakers are going to have to take a close look at the impact of this proposed tax increase on our state's economy," Ebert said. "Tobacco is a \$7 billion industry here."

Ebert said the North Carolina Chamber's legislative agenda this year is focused on creating jobs and strengthening and growing the state's economy. "The North Carolina Chamber and its employer members look forward to working with the governor and lawmakers in the coming weeks and months to retain and create jobs in our state and get our economy up and running again."

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**About the North Carolina Chamber**

The North Carolina Chamber is the largest broad-based business advocacy organization in the state with the mission of proactively driving change to make sure that North Carolina is a leading place in the world to do business. More than 25,000 businesses of all sizes and sectors are members of the North Carolina Chamber and partners in its Chamber Federation.