

Response by State Senator Jeff Chapman Republican Candidate for Governor

<http://www.jeffchapmanforgovernor.com/index-0.html>

Life sciences economic development:

What is the role of state government in supporting life sciences economic development?

State government has an important role to play in supporting economic development of various types. In the case of the life sciences, this support is particularly important because of the tremendous job creating potential and rapid growth of this dynamic industry along with the impact that breakthroughs in bioscience will continue to have upon the quality of life for Georgia's citizens.

Stiff competition among states to attract, develop and retain bioscience firms makes it necessary for Georgia's local and state economic development officials to fully understand the issues facing the life sciences industry and the factors affecting its continued growth if they are come up with public policy strategies that will give our state an edge in promoting bioscience economic development. I believe that the most direct, efficient and cost-effective route to success in this endeavor is to develop better ways to work directly with bioscience institutions, organizations and firms in determining how best to foster a healthy growth environment for the life sciences industry. This could be accomplished in various ways—consortiums, partnerships, and alliances, to name a few—but the end result would essentially be the same: ground-based input from those who know the industry best, which would allow for smart choices in investing our resources—time, labor and tax dollars—for the benefit of both the life sciences industry and Georgia's economy. Georgia Bio, with its network for the exchange of ideas, information and opportunities in the biotechnology industry, could be very helpful in this regard.

The state too can play a direct role in accelerating the growth of the bioscience economy. One way to do this is to create a Life Sciences Support Center which could offer programs to address the needs of established and emerging bioscience companies. Among those needs are assistance in determining economic feasibility and identifying markets and distribution channels; access to specialized equipment and laboratories; channels for recruiting key personnel; mentoring services by successful bioscience entrepreneurs; and assistance in dealing with regulatory and other issues that are specific to the life sciences industry.

While, I am a strong advocate of the state serving as a facilitator of economic development but am also committed to finding the most economical ways for this to take place. Tax incentive of various types are certainly one way for government to attract and promote the growth of the bioscience industry, but we need to examine closely the extent to which those practices have yielded the desired benefits, both here in Georgia and elsewhere, if we are to use to tax relief measures wisely and to their full advantage.

Among the questions that need to be asked about bioscience industry financing, several stand out:

- How effective are development programs that provide support for bioscience companies through low interest loans, tax-exempt financing, sales tax exemptions, and/or tax credits?
- What are the best and proven ways to attract and develop sources of investment capital (public and private) for start-up and emerging companies as well as for later-stage bioscience ventures?
- How can we best ease the cash flow demands that bioscience companies face as they try to make ends meet during the lengthy development process of bringing a new technology or product to the market?

As governor, I will ensure that we have carefully researched and experience-based answers to these and related questions so we can best leverage the influence of both the public and private sectors to build financial support for the economic development of the life sciences industry.

I also think that Georgia's economic development strategy for the bioscience industry needs to be better balanced between attracting new businesses to the state and providing support for existing early-stage, innovative companies. I want Georgia to be known as a state that is committed to long-term, positive outcomes for bioscience companies that choose to set up shop here, rather than a state that is primarily interested in recruiting a steady stream of new businesses. Of course, a track record of success in supporting sustainable growth can, in itself, be a powerful tool for drawing new businesses to the state.

Georgia is well-positioned in so many ways to be a leader in bioscience research and development. By capitalizing on our existing resources and providing carefully targeted support for the bioscience industry, I believe we can make Georgia a model state for the world life sciences community and grow our share of this vital industry.

K-16 science education:

How can Georgia ensure that its students will be able to compete for 21st century advanced technology jobs and that our state will have the skilled work force to support life sciences industry growth?

Ensuring that Georgia's students will be able to compete for 21st century technology jobs and that our state will have the skilled work force to support life sciences industry growth will be a top priority for me as governor. I intend to meet this challenge through three key initiatives: 1) develop dynamic programs to encourage students to consider careers in the life sciences; 2) expand and upgrade life sciences education to better prepare students to meet the demands of bioscience employment; and 3) ensure that teachers are knowledgeable about the biosciences and have the training to fully engage students in life sciences education.

Among the steps that can be taken to accomplish these goals are:

- Improve collaboration among educators, the human resources departments of bioscience companies, and economic development officials to ensure that the K-16 science and technology curriculum addresses the educational and work force needs of the life sciences industry
- Develop a corps of master teachers in the life sciences to work with younger bioscience educators as a means of improving bioscience teacher training and performance
- Help teachers to access and use engaging biotech curricula by promoting the sharing of best practices in inquiry-based bioscience classroom education in Georgia and nationwide
- Provide additional support for ongoing professional development of bioscience teachers
- Expand the use of company-sponsored mentoring programs and internships so as to give students first hand experience with the dynamic field of bioscience
- Open up opportunities for students to make research and industry connections through real, online and videoconferencing workshops and field trips

I also believe that we should do more to facilitate closer ties between Georgia's universities and the life sciences industry so as to allow bioscience companies to benefit from transformative ideas coming out of university labs, and for universities to connect with corporations willing to provide an avenue to move their discoveries into practical applications.

Finally, we must also look beyond our schools to develop a skilled work force to support life sciences industry growth. Useful in this regard would be the creation of outreach programs that can identify the types of bioscience jobs available, workforce qualifications, and the availability of bioscience training and education programs. In this way, we can encourage adults who are looking for employment or already in the work force to explore job opportunities in the life sciences industry.

Federal health care reform:

What, if anything, is the most critical need for Georgians when it comes to health care reform?

Clearly, when one out of five of our state's citizens is uninsured and countless others are underinsured, the most critical need in health care for Georgia is better access to affordable, high quality health services. I believe that there are ways to meet this need without a massive and intrusive federal health care reform that promises to add to our massive national debt, place a huge financial burden on the states, and grow the size and power of a federal bureaucracy that has a track record of inefficiency, waste and poor performance.

One way to promote access to affordable medical care without involving the federal government and without increasing state health care expenditure would be to provide a tax credit for individuals and businesses that contribute to community-based health care programs run by non-profit organizations.

A good example of what I'm referring to is the non-profit organization Coastal Medical Access Project (CMAP), which, since 2001, has been providing health care access for residents of Coastal Georgia who are uninsured or underinsured. Thanks to close collaboration among the medical community, faith-based and other organizations, local businesses, and volunteers, CMAP has been able to provide tens of thousands of coastal Georgians with quality medical services, including primary care, free pharmaceuticals, and management of care for chronic illness such as diabetes or heart disease. A tax credit for donations to such programs should stimulate giving and increase their ability to address the health care needs of uninsured or underinsured citizens in their own communities. It is also important to note that programs like CMAP typically devote a higher percentage of their funds to providing services than large agencies run by the state or federal government, making them an efficient and cost-effective way to help address the health care access problem that afflicts far too many Georgians. .

Another step that could be taken to improve health care access and lower costs would be to establish a low risk pool comprised of people who are in good health and are physically fit. Lower health care premiums for individuals who qualify for a low risk pool would provide an incentive for more Georgians to practice a healthy life style, which, in turn, would impact the obesity epidemic that is affecting our state and adding to health care costs.