

# News Release

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## **Georgia Chamber of Commerce President Praises Speaker Richardson's Trauma Center Proposal**

George Israel, President & CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce this morning had high praise for a proposal to fund a statewide medical trauma care system that was outlined Thursday by Speaker of the House of Representatives Glenn Richardson.

I am delighted with the speaker's initiative. It is a fair and visionary plan to address one of the states most critical needs, Israel said. And appropriate, Israel explained, since studies indicate 75 percent of the patients who need urgent trauma care were involved in car wrecks.

Israel noted that Georgia has but four Level 1 trauma centers -- on call 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week -- for the immediate treatment of the most serious of kinds of injuries, for example life-threatening car or motorcycle accidents or gunshot wounds. Just two years ago, one of the four Level 1 centers in Georgia was forced by huge financial losses to consider reducing its trauma services to that of a Level 2 trauma center, with less capacity to treat severe accidents.

The current crisis has not escaped the attention of the Board of Directors of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the business community in general. Georgia has an urgent need to build and fund a comprehensive trauma network to serve all Georgians, Israel said, noting that North Carolina, by contrast, has eight Level 1 medical trauma centers. The result, Israel said, is that every North Carolinian is within one hour of the highest possible level of potentially life-saving, specialized critical care. For many Georgians, the nearest Level 1 trauma center may be more than two hours away. Perhaps that fact explains why the trauma death rate in Georgia is an astonishing 20 times the national average, Israel declared.

Further complicating the current crisis, according to the Georgia Chamber president, is the fact that hospital trauma centers generally lose money, millions of dollars a year in Georgia, in uncompensated care or under-compensated reimbursements from Medicare and Medicaid.

The plan as explained yesterday by Speaker Richardson includes an additional \$10 per car vehicle registration fee married to an idea first proposed by Gov. Sonny Perdue earlier this year, an extra fine on super speeders, drivers caught driving over 85 mph or more anywhere in Georgia or 75 mph or more on a two-lane road, as defined in the Governors legislation, introduced this past session by state Sen. Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone).

The Georgia Chamber is the grassroots voice of business, vigorously representing its diverse membership in the public policy arena. As it constantly works to protect Georgia's enviable pro-business environment, the Georgia Chamber remains mindful of its mission to keep the state economically prosperous, educationally competitive and environmentally responsible.

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