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### **Opelika Chamber of Commerce Goes to Washington**

**OPELIKA, AL – ( June 16, 2011)** Recently, four directors and one staff member of the Opelika Chamber of Commerce contributed their time and their own financial resources to visit Congressman Mike Rogers, Senator Richard Shelby and Senator Jeff Sessions in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the Washington Fly-In was to discuss various issues such as healthcare, debt limit, defense, housing, and tax reform as it relates to our members. The Chamber's Governmental Affairs committee is intent on keeping the membership informed on relevant business issues.

On the healthcare front, the Republicans want to repeal "Obamacare" but the President will veto it, so the next step is to address healthcare changes that are needed one issue at a time. The Republican position is that the healthcare laws are "unfriendly" to business.

As everyone knows, the debt issue is a serious problem. Forty percent of every dollar of federal government spending is borrowed. There must be spending cuts to coincide with an agreement to increase the debt ceiling. Entitlements, which are the largest part of the budget, must be addressed. There is a consideration of increasing the retirement age for those under age 55.

Budget requests for the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lybia have decreased but there are many military equipment needs. At the time of Opelika's visit, Prime Minister Netanyahu was in Washington and everyone visited expressed support of Israel.

Housing, transportation, and tax reform are other issues that were discussed. Although tax reform is needed, it doesn't appear to be high on the agenda for 2011. Gas tax revenues have decreased by approximately 25%, therefore there are not enough funds to begin major road projects.

The housing market is still overbuilt. Senator Shelby felt that the market should be allowed to absorb excess capacity rather than implement new federal programs.

The visit was very informative and enlightening for the Chamber directors. The Opelika Chamber of Commerce feels that the contacts they made with their senators and representative and staff will be beneficial in ongoing efforts to support the business community.

