

Rotary
Club of
Charlotte



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

June 13, 2023

2022-2023 Board Members

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Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Elly Clary



Gary Salamido, President & CEO, NC Chamber of Commerce

by **Susie Masotti**

Gary Salamido, President and CEO of the North Carolina Chamber spoke to the Charlotte Rotary. Gary began his career with the NC Chamber leading their efforts in lobbying and political affairs in 2011 following a 19-year career as the director of State Government Affairs for Glaxo Smith Kline. He was promoted to his current position in 2019. Like the rest of us, he spent the majority of 2020 and part of 2021 in lockdown but is now getting out and spending valuable time with as many groups, like Charlotte Rotary, as he can.

The NC Chamber is focused on 3 pillars/measurements of success in all their endeavors – Education & Talent Supply; A Competitive Business Climate, and Infrastructure & Growth Leadership. He reminded everyone that the people oversee NC's future as business owners, consumers, and citizens. No matter who is in leadership in Raleigh, the Chamber focuses on building businesses which in turn employ people. Real change is made much more quickly at the state level and not at the federal level. The Chamber's Vision 2030 plan was built regardless of who the Governor is or which side of the aisle the legislature leans to keep NC business flowing. Gary feels that North Carolina is always ahead of the game when it comes to attracting people and businesses because of our geography – you're a 3-hour drive from the mountains or the coast from just about anywhere in the state which makes it very attractive. Unlike other parts of the country that are seeing people flee larger cities, NC is seeing growth in all areas – the Sun is Shining on NC right now!

Areas of current focus are:

- The NC Chamber Foundation's public/private partnership is tackling NC's healthcare worker shortage. The strategy is to focus on each area of the state and what their specific area of concern is (which

may not be the same in another region).

- The NC Chamber Coalition on Child Care recognizes that this topic has a direct impact on the workforce and education issue, especially since the pandemic, and is working on growing and reimagining this effort.
- Infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) is always top of mind. While the “Sun Shines” on NC we need to take advantage regionally on how the business community can help speed things up.
- Wrapping up this legislative session – revenues are in a good place. Everyone is deciphering the State budget and there is a lot of policy built into how that money is distributed.
- Looking to the 2024 elections we all need to remember that NC has become a hotbed for the Presidential election and has become a state that you cannot lose if you want to win the Presidency. However, the business community’s agenda has not changed – the biggest challenge is in bringing both sides of the aisle to work together in our State’s best interest.

From a political standpoint, no matter who is in leadership in Raleigh, the NC Chamber measures each leader (of each branch) and ranks them based on how they vote on the NC Chamber’s agenda and not how they voted politically.

When asked about NC’s starting pay rate (and ongoing pay rate) for teachers, Gary stated that NC needs to begin by getting teacher pay levels to at least the national average and at the same time focus on how NC schools can produce students who are ready for post-secondary life (whether in school or on to work). Gary was asked to comment on how to navigate our state leaders toward local transportation needs. Gary said first that each area of the state needs to keep their local “fights” at home and present a united front in Raleigh on any issue. Finding ways to diversify funding sources and recognizing that one size fits all does not work for all in NC. The pace of government cannot keep up with the pace of innovation and paths need to be cleared to modernize how things are worked on in Raleigh. The Chamber’s largest challenge is the same as most businesses and people face – the extremes of each political view stand in the way of progress. Whether it is the Progressive side of political issues recognizing that attainable regulations are the goal and those cannot be regulated through the courts or on the extreme Conservative side the balancing of each community is key and that limited interference and more free markets is in everyone’s best interest and not just the wealthy among us.

Finally, Gary was asked how Charlotte can rid itself of the “redheaded stepchild” with vaults of money appearance to those in rural parts of NC and in the eastern parts of our state. Gary answered that it works both ways – both sides need to recognize each other’s strengths and weaknesses and use them for all our benefit.

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/835932137>
The program introduction begins at 27:15 minutes.