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Legalizing Gay Marriage Could Ease Georgia Budget Woes

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in the news

More jobs reported in Savannah area

The Savannah metro area — Chatham, Effingham and Bryan counties — saw an uptick of 1,700 jobs in December 2010 compared to a year earlier, according to state employment officials.

The metro area had 152,500 jobs last month, up 1.1 percent from 150,800 in December 2009.

New unemployment benefit claims were down 13.5 percent from 3,119 in December 2009 to 2,697 last month.

Statewide, Georgia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose to 10.2 percent in December, up two-tenths of a percentage point from a revised 10 percent in November. The rate was 10.3 percent in December 2009.

It marks the 39th consecutive month Georgia has exceeded the national unemployment rate, which is 9.4 percent.

Former S.C. ports land for sale again

PORT ROYAL, S.C. — Land in Port Royal owned by the South Carolina State Ports Authority is again on the market after a second attempt to sell the property fell though last week.

Port Royal Town Manager Van Willis says concerns about the title to smaller parcels in the site and about a marina permit prompted Charleston developer Ben Grambling to

pass on the deal.

Former Gov. Mark Sanford signed legislation almost seven years ago to close the little-used port and sell the 51-acre property.

Ports Authority spokesman Byron Miller says the authority has a commercial real estate firm looking for a new buyer.

SMART lunch scheduled for Feb. 1

The Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce will hold the next installment of its Small Business Council / SMART Lunch Series on Tuesday, Feb. 1, in the Savannah Morning News auditorium.

James "Jamie" McCurry Jr., director of administration at Georgia Ports Authority, will speak on the Port of Savannah and the Savannah Harbor Deepening Project. The lunch series is sponsored by Comcast.

Networking begins at 11:30 a.m., followed by lunch and the program from noon-1 p.m.

The cost is \$11 at the door. R.S.V.P. is required by noon Jan. 27.

To RSVP or for more information, contact Susan Smith at 912-644-6434 or SSmith@SavannahChamber.com.

SunTrust reports improved earnings

ATLANTA — SunTrust Banks Inc. (NYSE: STI) on Friday reported net income of \$114 million, or \$0.23 a share, for the fourth quarter of 2010.

This compares to a net loss of \$248 million, or \$0.64 a share,

for the fourth quarter of 2009 and to earnings of \$84 million, or \$0.17 a share, for the third quarter of 2010.

For the year, SunTrust earned \$189 million in net income and reported a net loss to common shareholders of \$0.18 a share, an improvement from the net loss per share of \$3.98 reported for 2009.

SunTrust operates a number of branches in the Savannah area and in Bluffton and Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Maintain your nonprofit status

The Georgia Center for Nonprofits will host a workshop Thursday, Feb. 24, to review current tax considerations for nonprofit organizations and what criteria are required to maintain tax-exempt status.

The program will be presented from 1-4 p.m. at the Goodwill Industries, 7220 Sallie Mood Drive.

Advance registration is required; no walks-ins permitted. Call 912-234-9688 for more information or to register.

how to submit

To submit information about your business, including press releases, go to businessinsavannah.com and fill out the form. Entries may be edited. Questions? Call Managing Editor Gale Baldwin at 912-652-0300 or e-mail gale.baldwin@savannahnow.com.

Legalizing gay marriage could ease Georgia budget woes

With the recent repeal of the military's don't ask, don't tell regulation, it's time to move forward at the state level and legalize gay marriage as well.



Gregory J. Brock

What better way to improve the Georgia budget without raising taxes than to allow all Georgia citizens to be married?

What happens when marriage, like birth, becomes an automatic certificate from a local government and then a celebration of the event in any way you want to? Hundreds of millions of dollars stream in to the Georgia economy and state budget.

Wedding halls, bakers, airlines, cosmetic companies and, since I am in Statesboro, bridal gown vendors all get a huge increase in business (James & Miel, 2008).

As gay couples spend 20 percent more than their straight counterparts and 10 percent more on their marriages, according to PlanetOut (Semuels, 2008), Georgia is losing revenue to other states such as Massachusetts, where such marriages are legal.

As economist Gary Becker pointed out long ago, it is not only the couple who suffer but those supporting the discrimination as well (James & Miel, 2008).

California's gain of \$370 million dollars over a three-year period following legalization (Semuels, 2008) is a lot of teacher furloughs foregone in any state.

Bipartisanship with the new Congress and the new urgency of changing the political rhetoric after the murders in Arizona can be built on common issues such as gay marriage.

Log Cabin Republicans in Georgia (www.lcrga.com) are already organized to work with Democrats to stimulate the Georgia economy to

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full recovery without a tax increase by further limiting the role of government in the private lives of Georgia citizens.

We all know that there will come a time soon when we will look back on this current moment and wonder why gay marriage was ever an issue, why it was ever illegal in the first place.

We will also wonder why millions of dollars and hours were spent debating an issue that hurts everyone and cuts revenue during the Great Recession.

Georgia is losing tax dollars and valuable human capital as long as the discrimination remains in place.

Entrepreneurs are losing customers who not only will spend above average amounts on their weddings but also will probably add to the bill because of being able to do so legally in a "red" state.

We know from other countries and antiquity that gay marriage has been around a long time and strengthens the institution of marriage while providing children with loving couples to raise them.

Finally, Georgians should legalize marriage for all these reasons and simply because it is the right thing to do.

Gregory J. Brock is a professor of economics and director of the Center for Economic Education. He can be reached at gbrock@georgiasouthern.edu.

Frozen yogurt store opens at Eisenhower Square



Courtesy of Centro Properties Group

A 1,215-square-foot Menchie's Frozen Yogurt recently opened at Eisenhower Square on the northeast corner of Eisenhower Drive and Waters Avenue, Centro Properties Group (ASX:CNP) has announced. Ashley Smith, of Colliers Neely Dales, represented Menchie's. Centro Properties Group, the owner of Eisenhower Square, was represented by Josh Durigan with Centro Properties Group. For leasing information at Eisenhower Square, contact Josh Durigan at 407-903-7939 or josh.durigan@centroprop.com.