



Alliance for a
Better
Local
Economy

Press Release

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NHC CITIZEN GROUP DEMANDS AGENCIES' TRANSPARENCY

WILMINGTON, NC, AUGUST 25, 2010: A recent report issued by Moody's Economy.com lists the Wilmington, NC metro area as being number two on a list of only 22 national cities; and the only city in North Carolina, slated to head into a double dip recession, due to various factors such as low paying and unavailable jobs, housing indicators, and other economic data. The findings in the report stand in staunch contrast to the long-standing city and county policy of aggressively funding and supporting a wide variety of taxpayer-funded, nonprofit economic development agencies; whose purpose is to attract sustainable jobs and to facilitate an environment of economic viability.

Several taxpayer-subsidized agencies, such as Wilmington Industrial Development (WID), Wilmington Downtown, Inc.(WDI), Cape Fear Future, Southeastern Economic Development (SEDC), and others have been contracted by the governments of both the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County to provide economic incentives and programs that theoretically attract new companies and jobs in the Southeastern North Carolina corridor. However, this approach, even with a diverse variety of agencies

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attempting to achieve the same goal, has not worked - given the dire economic report published by Moody's. The Alliance for a Better Local Economy (ABLE), a citizen's grassroots organization, and registered PAC in New Hanover County, is committed to discovering why; with so much focus on taxpayer-subsidized economic development; is the Wilmington area expected to sink into double dip recession? Given that local politicians, bureaucrats, and lobbyists successfully justify the funding for these organizations year after year; the fruits of their labor - and the taxpayers' money - should result in a productive and vibrant economic climate - rather than the grim forecast predicted currently. Southeastern North Carolina is perennially plagued with much lower than average paying jobs, and unemployment hovering around 10 percent. In contrast, WID's Director, Scott Satterfield, earns a salary in excess of \$300,000 a year; plus benefits. With compensation that exorbitant, WID's economic results for the region should be much more beneficial for its citizens; and should display a solid track record of higher paying and more abundant employment opportunities.

ABLE is demanding that the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County immediately stop all taxpayer funding to all economic development organizations; and that a full investigative, and comprehensive audit be conducted by an out-of-state firm on each one of these economic development agencies that receive any amount of taxpayer money. The scope of the audit is to include at least the past 10 years, cover all transfers of funds, analyze which companies received contracts for services, and report on the political implications of these and other activities. It is imperative that such an audit be executed immediately, given the severe threat of obfuscation, manipulation, and the destruction of material evidence and financial data. It is historical fact that the members of the boards of these agencies frequently transfer from one board to another, become selected to occupy seats on public boards such as the Cape Fear Public Utility

Authority, and even serve in elected political positions - which can then be used to appoint political allies to public boards, thus completing the cycle. Average citizens are intentionally kept out of the proceedings and not appointed to these boards, and members appear to be selected based on their political and/or business alliances. Given the culture of corruption that exists at the city, county, and state level; simply placing elected officials on these boards is not sufficient in providing transparency and accountability to the taxpayer and citizen. If there is resistance and impedance to submitting and completing such an audit; then such will be interpreted as being indicative of the secretive and suppressive nature of these agencies and their operations. In the interest of serving the public good, displaying transparency and good faith toward the citizen, and demonstrating that there is nothing to hide; these agencies should willingly succumb to such a comprehensive audit and reveal their operations to the public.

ABLE is conducting a citizen petition for the above purpose, which can be accessed via the web at: <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/wilm-transparency/>. ABLE is a citizens grassroots registered PAC whose mission is to identify and recruit candidates for office that will serve with the best interest of the people as their first and foremost priority. Their website can be found here: <http://www.ABLE-NC.com>. Contact Ben McCoy, Communications Director, for more information.

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