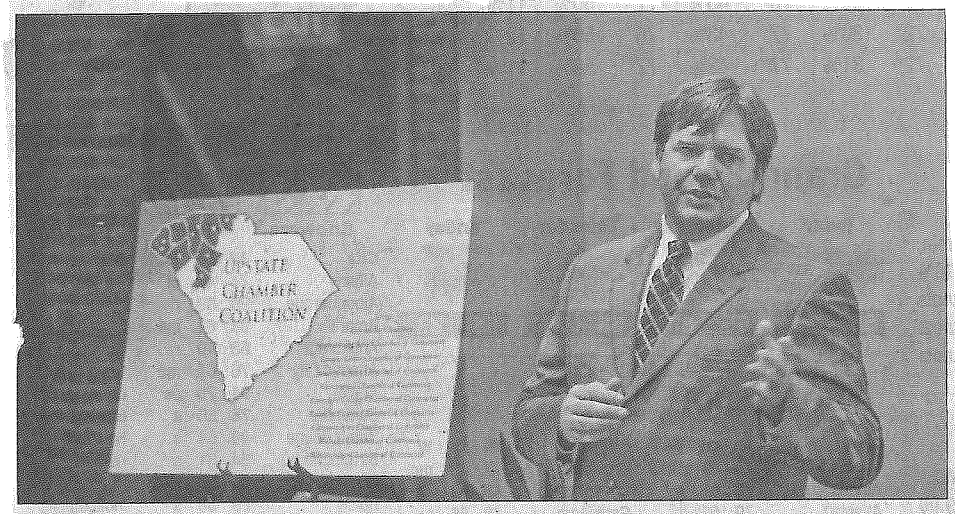


GEORGE GARDNER / Staff

John DeWorken announces the new Upstate Chamber Coalition.

Coalition provides voice for small business

By Jenny Munro
BUSINESS WRITER
jmunro@greenvillenews.com

Ten area chambers of commerce have partnered to create a unified business voice to emphasize job creation, affordable health care and comprehensive tax reform – all major concerns for small businesses.

The Upstate Chamber Coalition, which began about eight years ago with Greenville and Spartanburg chambers and then added the Greer Chamber, has recently added seven additional chambers, said John DeWorken, Coalition lobbyist.

The Coalition is "a collective voice, speaking for business about issues critical to our region," he said. Chambers pay fees ranging from $3,000 to about $40,000 to become a Coalition member. The Greenville Chamber pays a higher fee because the Coalition is based in Greenville.

Creating jobs for the Upstate is the primary goal, DeWorken said. The July unemployment rate in the eight counties with participating chambers ranged from 17 percent to 10.1 percent

"At the end of the day what we're trying to do is raise the standard of living for everyone in the state, especially in the Upstate," said Roy Chamlee, vice chair of public policy with the Greenville Chamber and a board member with the Greer Chamber.

Chamber lobbyists – DeWorken and Sunnie Harmon – determine the issues of concern to small business in the region through electronic surveys and meetings with chamber representatives, Harmon said. Last year about 20 percent of the recipients returned the survey.