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SLC PRESIDING OFFICERS TRAVEL TO CHINA TO PROMOTE GREATER ECONOMIC COOPERATION

(Atlanta, Georgia) — In a visit designed to enhance economic cooperation and greater understanding between states belonging to the Southern Office of The Council of State Governments (CSG), the Southern Legislative Conference (SLC), and China, a delegation of SLC state presiding officers, including Alabama Speaker Pro Tem Victor Gaston, Arkansas Speaker Robert S. Moore, Jr. and North Carolina Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger, recently traveled to China. The visit was sponsored by the Hong Kong-based China-U.S. Exchange Foundation and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) with the Atlanta-based SLC, coordinating and organizing the trip's details. The 2011 delegation visit was the third consecutive year that the SLC had coordinated a visit to China by SLC presiding officers. Both in fall 2009 and 2010, two SLC presiding officer delegations from a total of eight Southern states had very successful visits to Beijing and Shanghai.

The SLC delegation began its formal program at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing with a briefing led by Robert S. Wang, Ph.D., Deputy Chief of Mission and key Embassy staff on the latest developments in the U.S. – China relationship. Later that day, the delegation met with the vice president of the CPAFFC and senior officials with the Chinese Ministries of Commerce and Foreign Affairs.

From Beijing, the delegation traveled to Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province, touted as China's "entrepreneurial" province, and visited the CHINT Group's solar manufacturing facility for a briefing on the company's latest solar development activities. The delegation then visited a high-performing secondary school in Hangzhou. This school visit was particularly important because it provided students the opportunity to interact with the presiding officers and pose a range of questions to them about life in the United States. That evening, the delegation had a formal meeting and dinner with the secretary of Zhejiang Provincial Committee, one of the highest public officials in the province. The next day, Zhejiang Provincial officials arranged for a forum entitled "Cooperation between Zhejiang and American Southern States" so that the delegation could engage local individuals in the private, education and public sectors on developments related to U.S. – China trade and educational standards.

The delegation's next stop was Shanghai, a two-hour bus ride from Hangzhou. In Shanghai, the delegation met with Dr. Yang Jiemian and a number of scholars from the prestigious Shanghai Institute for International Studies. The delegation engaged in a discussion on a range of topics including global economic trends, U.S. – China relations, U.S. fiscal and monetary policy and the role of social media in politics. The delegation was then hosted to a formal meeting and dinner with the chairman of the Shanghai People's Congress. The final agenda item on the delegation's formal program was a meeting with officials with the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in Shanghai. The meeting with AmCham Shanghai officials—an office established in 1915, the third American Chamber established outside the United States—was particularly important to delegation members since they obtained an enormous amount of detail on the most efficient and effective strategies for states to engage and promote trade and investment with China.