



## 2017 – 2018 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

### PRIORITY ITEMS

**Workforce Development & Education:** The Chamber supports education and training programs that develop a workforce possessing the skills and business-recognized credentials aligned with industry’s current and future business needs.

**Economic Development:** The Chamber supports aggressive, well-funded economic development to ensure that Virginia maintains a favorable business climate and policies that encourage business opportunities and investment.

**Early Childhood Investment:** The Chamber supports investment in early childhood programs that enhance the opportunity for children to realize the benefits of their future education and become workforce-ready.

**Healthcare:** The Chamber supports policies to address rising healthcare costs.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- The Chamber supports efforts to ensure that Virginia maintains a favorable business climate and policies that encourage business competition, opportunities and investment.
- The Chamber supports aggressive, well-funded economic development and workforce development efforts.
- The Chamber supports reasonable policies that encourage entrepreneurship and the creation and growth of small businesses.
- The Chamber supports policies focused on job creation.
- The Chamber supports policies that promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

## **SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS**

### **▪ Economic Development & Business Growth**

- Business Development
  - The Chamber supports funding and maintaining the Commonwealth's Development Opportunity Fund and other business development incentive funds for large and small businesses.
  - The Chamber supports policies that allow regions within Virginia to promote industry clusters that are key for each region.
  - The Chamber supports policies that promote manufacturing industries, innovation and technology.
- Technology & Research
  - The Chamber supports policies that foster creation of high-technology-related jobs, foster a high-technology economy, and increase scientific literacy.
  - The Chamber supports policies that encourage university and private research and commercialization of that research.
- Broadband Technology
  - The Chamber supports policies that encourage private sector investment leading to universal access to broadband communication through the use of all available technologies, including wireless, fiber optics and cable.
- Tourism, Cultural Arts, Entertainment, & Sports
  - The Chamber supports film and television production incentives to encourage selection of filmmaking locations within Virginia.
  - The Chamber supports efforts to increase regional tourism.
  - The Chamber supports public funding for tourism, cultural arts, history, entertainment and sports activities, and urges continued support of public/private partnerships benefiting these programs.
  - The Chamber supports current law requiring Virginia public schools to open after Labor Day.
  - The Chamber supports efforts to promote sports tourism and healthy lifestyles through organized sporting events and other athletic activities.
- Government Contracting
  - The Chamber supports acquisition and procurement reform initiatives that streamline the contracting and purchasing process and maximize the business opportunities for the private sector with governments. The Chamber opposes legislation that would unduly harm the contracting community and create more barriers to entry.

### **▪ Education & Workforce Development**

- Education & Workforce Pipeline
  - The Chamber supports efforts to enhance education and development of workforce skills at all stages of life, from cradle through career
  - The Chamber supports careful allocation of funds that ensures that each dollar spent directly impacts the educational system.
  - The Chamber supports curriculum and strategies focused on increasing STEAM-H (science, technology, arts, engineering, mathematics, and health) competencies from cradle through career.
  - The Chamber supports high quality, safe, and cost-effective learning environments for all ages.

- Early Childhood Development
  - The Chamber supports funding access to quality home visitation.
  - The Chamber supports expansion of funding of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.
  - The Chamber supports the funding and full implementation of a statewide quality rating system.
  - The Chamber supports necessary and adequate funding of early childhood development initiatives including Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Virginia Preschool initiative.
- K-12 Education
  - The Chamber supports a rigorous curriculum in elementary, middle, and high schools.
  - The Chamber supports proposals that decrease the dropout rate.
  - The Chamber supports increased funding and support for career and technical education and career pathways at local and regional levels.
  - The Chamber supports strategies that ensure all high school graduates are college or workforce ready.
  - The Chamber supports proposals that assist in the attraction and retention of quality teachers, including those with skills based on experience in the general workforce.
  - The Chamber supports policies that provide all students with appropriate alternatives to traditional education.
  - The Chamber supports providing quality after-school programs, including enrichment and physical fitness.
- Higher Education
  - The Chamber supports efforts to fund higher education leading to degrees or workforce credentials.
- Workforce Development
  - The Chamber supports education that facilitates career transitions.
  - The Chamber supports proposals that address workforce shortage issues.
  - The Chamber supports policies that attract and retain a talented, well-qualified workforce to our region.
  - The Chamber supports strategic education and workforce policies and programs focused on strengthening U.S. education performance and workforce competitiveness, including, but not limited to, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
  - The Chamber supports efforts that promote life-long learning.
  - The Chamber supports efforts and funding to provide a workforce with business-recognized credentials that facilitate employment.
  - The Chamber supports workforce development efforts for veterans, including recognition of military work history in obtaining civilian credentials.
  - The Chamber supports policies that facilitate appropriate training and integration of people with criminal backgrounds into the workforce.
- **Health, Safety & Welfare**
  - Sustainable Neighborhoods
    - The Chamber supports funding of housing trust funds and other reasonable public policy measures that encourage and incentivize the development of affordable housing for workers and their families.
    - The Chamber supports efforts to implement economic initiatives that encourage and support the continued development of appropriate mixed-use sites, commercial and retail uses and neighborhoods.
    - The Chamber supports policies that address food deserts and access to nutritious food.
  - Crime & Public Safety
    - The Chamber supports adequate staffing for law enforcement and constitutional officers.

- The Chamber supports community policing.
    - The Chamber supports policies to combat human trafficking.
  - Environment
    - The Chamber supports efforts to ensure a clean and healthy environment that are scientifically based and economically reasonable.
    - The Chamber supports and encourages sustainable development in the construction and development of new public projects
  - Health Care
    - The Chamber supports policies to understand and address drivers of rising healthcare costs and to help businesses provide affordable coverage for employers and their employees.
    - The Chamber supports policies that assist businesses in promoting employee physical and mental wellness.
    - The Chamber supports policies that provide funding, access, and coverage for mental health services.
    - The Chamber supports policies and practices that encourage businesses and employees to access available data so they can manage the quality and cost of care more effectively.
    - The Chamber supports sustainable mechanisms for providing healthcare coverage for additional people who currently are uninsured, using available federal funds.
    - The Chamber supports policies that address substance abuse disorders, including the opioid epidemic.
  - Parks & Greenways
    - The Chamber supports continued public funding for renovating public parks, community centers and green spaces.
    - The Chamber supports green infrastructure – the thoughtful and intentional mapping of areas designated for open space, parks, preserves and the enjoyment of our region’s natural resources.
- **Labor**
  - Competitive Workforce
    - The Chamber supports Virginia’s right to work law.
    - The Chamber supports maintaining the state minimum wage tied to the federal minimum wage.
    - The Chamber opposes policies relating to employee classification that discourage business growth and hiring.
  - Immigration
    - The Chamber supports comprehensive immigration reform that establishes a temporary worker program and an earned pathway to work or citizenship for undocumented residents while also improving border security and employee verification systems.
    - The Chamber supports rational and reasonable immigration reform that takes into account the need for essential workers and does not place an undue burden on businesses.
    - The Chamber supports programs that give employers the ability to access and keep talent necessary to compete in the global market.
- **Regulatory & Government Reform**
  - Judicial and Tort Reform
    - The Chamber supports policies that promote a strong and efficient judicial system and discourage frivolous lawsuits.
    - The Chamber supports expanded use of depositions, interrogatories, and affidavits in support of summary judgment motions.
    - The Chamber supports legislation further limiting the use of nonsuits.

- The Chamber supports capping of non-economic and punitive damages.
    - The Chamber supports continued reform of Virginia’s venue laws to ensure cases are heard in courts with a substantial connection to the cause of action.
    - The Chamber supports continuation of the doctrine of contributory negligence.
    - The Chamber supports replacing the concept of joint and several tort liability with proportional liability based on percentage of fault of all defendants and non-parties.
  - Regulatory Reform
    - The Chamber supports streamlining government laws and regulations that fairly balance their objectives with the costs and burdens they impose.
    - The Chamber supports governmental disclosure of public access information such as meeting notices through traditional and new media.
  - Government Reform
    - The Chamber supports the passage of a constitutional amendment that would permit two consecutive gubernatorial terms.
    - The Chamber supports a non-partisan redistricting process in the Commonwealth.
    - The Chamber supports efforts that facilitate responsible public/private partnerships in government contracting for capital improvements including, but not limited to, bridges, buildings, roads and schools.
    - The Chamber supports continued cooperation and collaboration between elected and appointed officials within jurisdictions and across geographical lines.
    - The Chamber supports clear and reasonable state and federal ethics requirements that define appropriate interactions between public officials and businesses.
    - The Chamber supports fair processes that provide expeditious review of development proposals and permit applications.
  - Taxation
    - The Chamber supports fiscal responsibility in government, including taxes that provide critical revenue without unduly burdening taxpayers. Such taxes should be broad-based and equitable, and should not place a disproportionate burden on businesses.
    - The Chamber supports a comprehensive review of the tax structure for the Commonwealth, including the corporate income tax, BPOL tax, and machinery and tool tax. Such review should identify alternative revenue sources that could be used to offset reductions or elimination of any tax.
    - The Chamber supports uniform, fair standards for taxing out-of-state businesses that do business within a state, regardless of whether they have a physical presence within that state.
    - The Chamber supports reduction of the federal deficit through a long term, comprehensive approach.
    - The Chamber supports tax incentives for the rehabilitation and redevelopment of aging and blighted areas.
- **Transportation & Infrastructure**
  - Transportation
    - The Chamber supports establishment of long-term, dedicated sources of adequate funding for construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.
    - The Chamber supports establishment of reliable, efficient passenger rail between Richmond and Washington and higher speed rail from Richmond-Washington, Richmond to Hampton Roads, and into North Carolina.
    - The Chamber supports a regional transportation authority for the Greater Richmond region.

- The Chamber supports continued funding for the local and regional priority transportation projects as identified by the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission and Transportation Planning Organization (RRPDC/TPO).
  - The Chamber supports policies that promote alternative modes of transportation including cycling and walking.
  - The Chamber supports the adoption of a regional plan to identify and fund transportation priorities throughout the Richmond region.
- Mass Transit
  - The Chamber supports adequate funding for mass transit.
  - The Chamber supports public policy measures and funding to expand mass transit within our region and the Commonwealth of Virginia in conjunction with GRTC and the RRPDC/TPO's regional transit vision plan.
- Energy
  - The Chamber supports efforts to encourage the responsible and efficient use of natural and energy resources.
  - The Chamber supports responsible energy proposals to expand domestic nuclear, oil, coal, and on and offshore gas production; invest in alternative and clean energy technologies; and improve the energy infrastructure, including natural gas pipelines.
  - The Chamber supports the development of sustainable alternative energy sources.
- Infrastructure
  - The Chamber supports the expansion of public water and sewer infrastructure to address the needs of development, and funding for addressing combined sewer overflow.
  - The Chamber supports efforts to develop and promote regional consensus on infrastructure projects that benefit the Capital Region.
  - The Chamber supports funding for widening and deepening Virginia's main port channels to 55 feet.