



The Roanoke Regional Chamber’s Legislative Agenda is a set of policy goals that guide the advocacy by our Vice President of Public Policy during each legislative session. The agenda is developed through the priorities identified by the Chamber’s Board of Directors and its Public Policy Council, surveys of members throughout the year, and by input and feedback from our membership.

The Roanoke Regional Chamber uses this Legislative Agenda as a tool to work on behalf of its members to create a thriving business climate, strengthen private enterprise and improve the region’s quality of life. Specifically, the 2016 Legislative Agenda reflects our support for the need to:

- Address gaps in the region’s workforce and programs that are bringing educators and business owners to the table.
- Continue exploration of innovative transportation funding and ensuring our region’s share of the CTB funds
- Continue dialogue to solve the rising health care and insurance costs impacting employers and small business owners.
- Develop cost-effective traditional and renewable energy resources
- Develop results-oriented economic development programs that encourage regional cooperation to retain and attract business

We are your voice in the legislative chambers. In addition to advocating this legislative agenda, we are the watchmen for your interests by being your “defense” against bad bills and by supporting the passage of positive legislation that impacts our regional business community.

We invite you to study this agenda and encourage you to get involved in the political discussion. We encourage you to contact your elected representatives on issues of importance to your business. In doing so, you play a significant role in the legislative process and strengthen the Roanoke Regional Chamber’s voice in Richmond.

Thank you for your investment in the Roanoke Regional Chamber.

Joyce Waugh, CEcD
President and CEO

Ken Randolph
2016 Board Chair

Education and Workforce Development

We Advocate:

- For necessary enhancements to Pre K-12 and higher education to prepare all students for careers and all regional businesses with a skilled workforce
- For exploration of additional opportunities for collaboration between the business community and Pre K-12, community colleges and mentoring programs
- To engage skilled trade businesses with Pre K-12 career and technical advisors to create a dialogue on workforce tracks
- For funding for post-secondary education to provide essential workforce training and continuing education opportunities and increased funding for the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) program

Economic Development

We Advocate:

- Support for the GO Virginia Initiative and for results-oriented economic development programs that encourage regional cooperation is vital to the economic future of the Commonwealth.
- Expansion of tools for entrepreneurs including accelerators to provide support for small business development in our region.
- The Commonwealth's existing Right-to-Work laws.
- A comprehensive review of Virginia's tax structure and competitive tax environment with greater transparency and oversight of Virginia's tax incentives.
- Efforts to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for business.
- Restructuring the local Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) tax based on net income instead of gross receipts with consideration given to the fiscal impact on local governments.
- Passage of the Marketplace Fairness Act or a similar version to even the playing field for online and brick-and-mortar retailers and also allow each state to collect sales tax on purchases made from out of state vendors.
- For legislation on workplace safety that protects businesses, their employees, customers and suppliers.

Transportation

We Advocate:

- Continued exploration of innovative funding approaches, including regional transportation funding source, mileage-based user fees, and electronic tolls.
- Alignment of transportation funding to meet the prioritized needs in our region.
- Support of all of our region's applications in the HB2 process. Specifically, we look to advance these infrastructure priorities:
 - Safety and capacity improvements to I-81, especially MM 140-143 auxiliary lane addition.
 - Improvements and congestion relief on U.S. 220, specifically 419 to Blue Ridge Parkway
 - Development of an intermodal facility and inland port in the Roanoke region
 - Steps to reduce congestion on the Orange Ave/U.S. 460 corridor from I-581 to U.S. 220(A)
 - Timely expansion of passenger rail to Roanoke and additional study of expansion to the New River Valley
- The continued study of the possibility of construction of a replacement of the current multi-modal hub in downtown Roanoke and maintenance of a multi-modal transportation network as a core service of local, state, and federal governments.

Health Care

We Advocate:

- Legislation that promotes personal responsibility, incentivizes fee-for-performance care, improves the quality of health care while eliminating waste and abuse, and expands affordable health insurance coverage options for employers.
- For passage of the PACE Act in Virginia to help protect small and medium sized businesses by continuing to define "small businesses" as those with 50 or fewer employees.
- Accessing available federal funding to reform and expand Virginia's Medicaid program, including market based alternatives that will limit the shifting of the escalating and unsustainable costs of uncompensated care on the business community.
- A continued dialogue between state and federal lawmakers on flexibilities to expand Medicaid in the Commonwealth.

Energy and Environment

We Advocate:

- The continued safe development of cost effective, traditional and renewable energy sources.
- Evaluating energy legislation and regulation with due consideration given to economic feasibility, natural assets, and benefits such as air and water quality improvements and greenhouse gas emissions
- Reasonable and economics-based efforts to incentivize energy conservation
- Fairness, equity and respect for property owners, the developers and the environment in the permitting process for energy sources to facilitate project development.

Federal Priorities

We Advocate:

- Passage of a new long-term Federal Highway Authorization bill
- Reauthorization of the U.S. Export-Import Bank
- Immigration reform directed to increasing business development, foreign investment and job creation such as H1B cap expansion, efficient multinational manager and executive visa opportunities, increased access to employment based green cards, and increased opportunities for investment visas.

Roanoke Regional Chamber

believes that if something impacts *your business* and the growth and success of *our region*, *It's Our Business* too.

Josh Baumgartner

Vice President of Public Policy

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