



2017 VA WEST LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Established in 1993, VA WEST is a coalition of chambers providing a focused business voice on key legislative issues in Western Virginia. The coalition has evolved to 13 chambers and a key facilitator of dialogue between lawmakers and the business community in Central, Southwestern and Southside Virginia.

VA WEST works on behalf of its members to support public policies that strengthen free enterprise and economic and job growth throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia – we feel strongly we can achieve economic success by focusing on the following policy initiatives:

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

VA WEST recognizes the vital importance of maintaining and developing new and innovative workforce and job development programs to enhance and attract human capital. **VA WEST SUPPORTS:**

- Continued funding and support of the New Economy Workforce Credentials Act
- Efforts to improve coordination between Virginia's employers and job training programs.
- Regional Career and Technical Governors Schools in Western Virginia.
- The Profile of a New Virginia Graduate pathway for high school students.
- Emphasis on STEM-H courses in K-12 and Virginia's colleges and universities.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a core service of government that is critical for economic development and facilitating the efficient delivery of goods and services. The Commonwealth must remain pro-active in meeting the challenge of growing demand on its aging infrastructure. **VA WEST SUPPORTS:**

- Alignment of transportation funds to meet economic development needs in Western Virginia.
- Timely expansion of passenger rail from Lynchburg to Bedford and the Roanoke and New River Valleys.
- Continued exploration of innovative funding mechanisms that help Western Virginia compete with Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads for transportation dollars.
- Development of an inland port in Western Virginia.
- Initiatives on air service to expand service at regional airports in Western Virginia.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

The VA WEST Coalition is strongly committed to results-oriented programs that attract investment in technology infrastructure, enhance regional economic development planning and workforce training, and promote cooperative city and county efforts to maintain or attract job growth to the Piedmont, Southside, Southwestern, and Western Virginia. **VA WEST SUPPORTS:**

- Support for the GO Virginia Initiative and the proposed regional districts.
- Funding for Virginia's enterprise zones, particularly in high unemployment areas.
- Constitutional amendment codifying Virginia as a right-to-work state.
- The expansion of broadband and telecommunication services across the commonwealth to support economic development, telework and telemedicine access to a growing population.
- Policies that promote efficient and long-term public-private partnerships.
- Funding for economic development programs available through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.
- Tax reform to restructure Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) tax based on net income instead of gross receipts and state initiatives to ensure businesses aren't overpaying their BPOL tax.

HEALTH CARE:

VA West supports efforts to reform Virginia's Medicaid program and continued dialogue on market oriented approaches for accessing federal funds under the PPACA. Virginia West believes steps must be taken to limit the shifting of uncompensated care onto the business community and other unsubsidized users of Virginia's hospitals and health care providers. **VA WEST SUPPORTS:**

- A continued dialogue between state and federal lawmakers on flexibilities surrounding the expansion of Medicaid in the Commonwealth.
- Legislation that promotes personal responsibility expands affordable health insurance coverage options for employers and improves quality and access to health care while also eliminating waste and abuse.
- Initiatives and additional resources to address the future of mental-health treatment in the Commonwealth.