



LEGISLATIVE POLICIES FOR 2016 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Chamber of Commerce Members

Bedford Area, Botetourt County, Charlottesville Regional, Danville/Pittsylvania County, Greater Bluefield, Harrisonburg-Rockingham, Lexington-Rockbridge County, Lynchburg Regional, Martinsville-Henry County, Montgomery County, Roanoke Regional, Smith Mountain Lake Regional, and Wytheville-Wythe-Bland

KEY PRINCIPLES

The VA WEST Business & Legislative Coalition works on behalf of its members to support public policies that strengthen free enterprise and economic growth throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VA WEST Supports:

- Virginia's AAA bond rating
- Virginia's Right-to-Work Laws
- A regulatory environment that promotes economic growth and innovation
- Regional collaboration efforts to strengthen economic development

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a core service of government that is critical for safe, efficient citizen mobility, further economic growth, and facilitating the efficient delivery of goods and services. While VA West applauds the recent efforts of the General Assembly to transition to more sustainable funding sources, the Commonwealth must remain proactive in meeting the challenge of growing demand on its aging infrastructure.

VA WEST Supports:

- Long-term, sustainable, and dedicated revenue sources that generate revenue from all users of Virginia's transportation system.
- Continued investment in existing infrastructure
- Timely expansion of passenger rail from Lynchburg to Bedford to Roanoke and the New River Valley.

VA WEST Opposes:

- Efforts to repeal or delay key funding provisions contained in the 2013 omnibus transportation funding act.
- Mandates that would devolve responsibility of maintenance, construction, and operations for Virginia's secondary roads to county governments.

VA WEST supports these key regional projects:

Highways

- Widening/improvements for I-81 to improve safety and capacity.
- Funding for additional preliminary engineering and upgrading 220 from I-64 to the NC line
- Improvements to U.S. 460 to improve access from as far west as New River Valley to Port of Virginia
- Improvements to U.S. 501 and 221 corridors
- Completion of the U.S. 58 corridor from Stuart to I-77
- Completion of all work on U.S. 29 limited access bypasses at Lynchburg

Rail

- Development of intermodal or inland port facilities to enhance connectivity with global economy.

Air

- Initiatives on air service to maintain and expand current levels of service at regional airports in Charlottesville, Danville, Lynchburg, Roanoke and the Shenandoah Valley.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGIONAL COOPERATION

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

VA WEST Supports:

- Funding for Virginia's enterprise zones, particularly in high unemployment areas
- The statewide efforts of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and regional economic development groups, including: Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development, Mount Rogers Partnership, Region 2000 Economic Development Partnership, Roanoke Regional Partnership, Shenandoah Valley Partnership, and Southern Virginia Regional Alliance.
- Sustained or increased funding for the Governor's Opportunity Fund, the Virginia Jobs Investment Program, small business and supplier diversity, and the Angel Investor Tax Credit
- The Go Virginia initiative to strengthen private-sector growth and job creation through regional collaboration.

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. The VA WEST coalition also recognizes the importance of sustained funding for educational programs (PreK/k-12), post-secondary, and higher education as the foundation of workforce and economic development.

VA WEST Supports:

- Reasonable investment by the Commonwealth of Virginia for enhanced industry-recognized workforce credentialing as outlined in the Virginia Community College System watershed report to the General Assembly – *“Workforce Credentials: The Pathway to Virginia's New Middle Class.”* We support building Virginia's existing workforce by establishing effective performance-based programs led by Virginia's community colleges, to train and prepare an adequate, on-going and growing number of our fellow Virginia citizens with industry-recognized workforce credentials.
- Continued funding of Workforce Services through the Department of Business Assistance, and flexibility to use funds for training of new workers and re-training of existing workers.
- Efforts to align worker training with employer needs, employee skills and in demand certifications and credentials.
- Sustained funding and increased support for: Bedford Science and Technology Center, Botetourt Center at Greenfield Workforce Training Center, Blue Ridge Community College, Dabney S. Lancaster Workforce Training Center, Danville Community College, Roanoke Higher Education Center, Franklin County Workforce Consortium, Central Virginia Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, Patrick Henry County Community College, Roanoke County/Bedford Regional Alternative Education Center, Piedmont Virginia Community College, “Piedmont Works,” Virginia Western Community College and all community college satellite facilities, New River Community College and the Wytheville Community College Workforce Training Center.
- Flexibility in the use and leveraging of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds to ensure services are focused on skills development responsive to the needs of business.
- Continued emphasis on STEM-H courses in K-12 and Virginia's colleges and universities.

TOURISM

Tourism in the VA WEST regions represents approximately a \$2 Billion industry and is a driver of economic vitality. Museums and attractions, including “heritage tourism,” “agri-tourism,” and “eco-tourism” throughout the piedmont, Western, Southwest, and Southside Virginia, provide unique cultural and educational opportunities that catalyze economic development and help attract young professionals and families.

VA WEST Supports:

- State funding of the Virginia Commission for the Arts.
- Funding for the Virginia Tourism Marketing Leverage Program.
- Continued growth and further development of the wine, cider, spirits and craft beer industry throughout central and Western Virginia.

TAXATION

VA WEST Supports:

- Comprehensive tax reform that is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic growth, and promotes prosperity for all Virginians.
- Restructuring the local Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) tax based on net income instead of gross receipts.
- Reducing or eliminating the machinery and tools tax to increase capital investment with greater autonomy given to local governments to replace revenue.
- Equalization of taxation authority of cities and counties.
- Greater transparency and oversight of Virginia’s tax incentives to determine effectiveness.

ENERGY

VA West supports the development of cost-effective, alternative, and renewable energy sources while keeping Virginia competitive in the energy market. VA West further supports the expansion of nuclear energy, the continued development of clean coal technology, exploration for oil and natural gas off of Virginia’s coast, and incentives for implementation of sustainable business practices.

HEALTHCARE

VA WEST supports efforts to reform Virginia’s Medicaid program and continued dialogue on market oriented approaches for accessing federal funds under the PPACA. VA WEST believes steps must be taken to limit the shifting of uncompensated care onto the business community and oppose any additional healthcare mandates.