

The Top of Virginia Regional Chamber of Commerce Public Policy Positions:
The Public Policy Positions of the Top of Virginia Regional Chamber of Commerce are presented by the Chamber's Public Policy Committee. As the Chamber seeks to demonstrate its ability to represent the business interest of our community, we have outlined general positions to assist our business community's growth and the prosperity of our community.

The Chamber represents a diverse membership of large and small businesses and organizations. This diversity also provides diverse opinions on particular or specific issues. However, the Chamber is presenting positions which represent the greater organization with two requirements:

- Is it important to its member?
- Does it reflect the opinion of the clear majority of the business community?

We respect our members and understand some may disagree, however, as issues evolve and the environment changes, positions may also change. With this evolution, the Chamber welcomes and encourages well informed discussions on the issues facing business. We also encourage the expression of various opinions from our members and participation with our Public Policy Committee as we educate, communicate, and advocate on the following:

GOVERNMENT REGULATION

Position Statement: The Chamber supports a reduction in harmful regulations placed by government upon businesses and generally opposes efforts to increase governmental regulations.

The Chamber supports a reduction in the level of current government regulation, and opposes further regulatory action except in the most necessary of circumstances. Of course, the Chamber realizes there are limited circumstances in which it is necessary for the government to take regulatory action. The Chamber realizes governing officials strive to serve the legitimate needs of those by whom they are elected. However, no matter how important the goal, it is not wise or fair for the cost of measures meant to promote the general welfare to be borne solely or primarily by the business community. Thus, the Chamber hopes all parties will agree to strike a fair and just compromise.

TAXATION

Position statement: The Chamber supports a revenue system fostering a favorable business climate and encourages the economic development, which means taxes should be few in number and should not disproportionately burden one sector of the economy over another. Taxes administered should maintain a balance between tax growth, population growth and economic activity.

The Chamber supports local and state tax policy encouraging business opportunities and investments for general business. Industry-specific taxes should generally be avoided. Income taxes should not have a high marginal tax rate nor have excessive brackets. The Chamber supports a competitive sales tax rate applied to a broad base and designed to encompass true consumption. The Chamber also supports the continuation of the long-standing state policy of not placing a sales tax on goods acquired for production.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Position Statement: The Chamber believes a strong education system and the availability of technically skilled people are vital to our region's future prosperity and quality of life. Business has a critical role to play, in partnership with our educational institutions and those providing workforce training services, to ensure we have the talent to remain competitive.

The Chamber supports continued education and training at all levels, including pre-K-12 education, post-secondary education, adult literacy, vocational and certification programs, as well as on-the-job and customized training programs. The involvement of business in workforce development is essential to our attractiveness and effectiveness as a business location.

TRANSPORTATION

Position Statement: The Chamber supports increased long-term investment in transportation infrastructure to promote economic development and quality of life in the region.

Effective transportation systems are essential to continued economic growth and development in the upper Shenandoah Valley region as well as Virginia. All modes of transportation are becoming increasingly important to the prosperity, health, education. Safety, security, environment and overall quality of life--but the resources are not available to meet demands. The Chamber supports increased investment in transportation infrastructure and coordinated land-use planning, with appropriate emphasis and funding given to the Shenandoah Valley region, to support the growing economy and population. Further, the Chamber supports the development of a comprehensive, long-term solution addressing the following criteria: transportation safety and security; improvement in the mobility within and across all travel modes; community goals as it relates to economic development; maximizing transportation operations and efficiency in the region; and providing adequate funding for roadway maintenance, maintenance of secondary roads and balances concerns with respect to aesthetics.

INTERSTATE 81

Position Statement: The Chamber supports conservative, cost-effective solutions of improving Interstate 81.

The solution should be as least costly and as conservative as is required to meet the legitimate needs for upgrade, repair and improvement of Interstate 81. Solutions requiring expensive and wholesale changes along the length of Interstate 81 without justifying a need are not favored by the Chamber. The aesthetic beauty of our home region provides our residents with enjoyment and tourism is vital to our economy and livelihoods. Any solution should minimize the impact of construction and repair on our natural resources.

MINIMUM WAGE

Position Statement. The Chamber opposes any effort to establish a minimum wage higher than the federally mandated minimum wage for the Commonwealth of Virginia, or any of its localities.

The proponents of these so-called “living wage ordinances,” while perhaps well-meaning, ignore certain economic realities. First, these measures put the state or locality at a competitive disadvantage in comparison to its neighbors. Second, increases in the minimum wage intended to address poverty can actually have an adverse effect of increasing poverty by eliminating certain entry-level jobs. Finally, these “living wage” laws hurt both the businesses who must divert funds away from job creation and benefits to fund the mandate, and their employees who miss out on these benefits and opportunities. Instead, the Chamber encourages localities and businesses to focus on providing people with workforce training and advancement opportunities so employees can get the skills needed to advance in the workplace and earn more without a mandate.

HEALTHCARE

Position Statement: The Chamber supports public and private initiatives undertaken to ensure that high quality and affordable health care for the people living in the region can be sustained over time.

Delivery of health care locally should reflect cost efficiencies, accountability, and excellence in the delivery of services. We believe long term sustainability and viability of our businesses, both small and large, will be dependent upon management of health care costs. Affordability of medical care significantly affects the quality of life for people living in our region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Position Statement: The creation of jobs and economic prosperity through expansion of existing businesses and the attraction of new business activity to the area is a priority for the Chamber. Effective economic development includes removing unnecessary regulation, tax burdens and governmental interference to allow free enterprise to work. The Chamber also recognizes, in some cases, economic development may require governmental support in the form of enhanced infrastructure of tax adjustments to attract new businesses.

Local governments need the ability to make decisions for creating a climate which is attractive for business and conducive to expanded business activity by both new and existing companies. The Chamber believes an economic development program is crucial to success for our communities and businesses -- and such a program is best conceived and conducted through a cooperative and supportive partnership between the public sector and the business community.

RIGHT-TO-WORK

Position Statement: The Chamber would oppose any effort to weaken Virginia’s right-to-work laws. Virginia’s economy has improved under the state’s pro-growth focus. As one of 21 Right-to-Work states, we pride ourselves on a positive labor relations climate.

The Chamber opposes efforts at the federal level to change the process through which workers decide whether or not they want to be represented by a labor union. Today’s process assures workers a secret ballot election overseen by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Their long-protected

right to make their decision privately and in secret -- free from public scrutiny, visible goading, or tacit manipulation -- would be stripped away. We believe that the right to a secret ballot is a cornerstone of our democracy.