

VAWEST

BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE COALITION

LEGISLATIVE POLICIES FOR 2015 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, Salem-Roanoke County, Smith Mountain Lake, and Wytheville-Wythe-Bland

A UNITED VOICE FOR WESTERN VIRGINIA ON ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

KEY PRINCIPLES

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

VA WEST Supports:

- Virginia's AAA financial bond rating.
- Virginia's Right-to-Work Laws.
- Two-term governorship.
- A regulatory environment that promotes economic growth and innovation.
- Ethical and transparent governance and steps to reduce the partisan influence over the redistricting process.

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:

- 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 Roanoke and the New River Valley.
- Constitutional Amendment to allocate Transportation Trust Fund monies solely for purposes related to transportation improvements and projects

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/Bridges
 - Widening/improvements for I-81 to improve safety and capacity.
 - Funding for additional preliminary engineering for I-73 and upgrading 220 from I-64 to the North Carolina line.
 - Improvements to U.S. 501
 - Completion of the U.S. 58 corridor
 - Completion of all work on U.S. 29 limited access bypasses at Lynchburg (southern portion)
 - Improvements to U.S. 460 to improve access to the Port of Virginia

- Rail:
 - Development of intermodal facilities to enhance connectivity with the 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 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:

- 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, the Department of Business Assistance, and the Angel Investor Tax Credit.

VA West opposes:

- Unfunded mandates that place inflexible regulatory burdens and penalties on local governments related to stormwater management.

WORKFORCE

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 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 improve coordination between Virginia’s employers and job training programs.

- Sustained funding 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, and the Wytheville Community College Workforce Training Center.

- Flexibility in the use and leveraging of the federal Workforce Investment Act funds to ensure services are focused on skills development responsive to the current needs of business.

VA West opposes:

- Efforts to expand 'ban-the-box' requirements to the private sector.

TOURISM: Driver of Economic Vitality

Tourism represents an \$21.25 billion industry and generates more than 213,000 jobs in Virginia. 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, and craft beer industry throughout central and Western Virginia.

EDUCATION: Foundation for the Commonwealth’s Future

The VA WEST Coalition clearly recognizes the importance of sustained funding for educational programs (preK / K-12), post secondary, and higher education programs as the foundation of workforce and economic development.

- Increasing state investment and support for university research programs including public-private partnerships in areas such as “green” technology, alternative energy, bio-technology, math, engineering, and advanced healthcare.
- Increasing state support for community colleges-
- Increased funding for Tuition Assistance Grants (TAG) for private colleges and universities.
- High quality, evidence based early childhood education programs & practices that improve school readiness, including childhood literacy initiatives.
- Continued emphasis on STEM-H courses in K-12 and Virginia’s colleges and universities.
- Continued full funding of the Standards of Quality, support for and review of the Standards of Learning, and verified credit for nationally credited programs.
- Allowing local school boards to adopt school calendars based on local or regional needs.

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.

TAXATION

VA WEST supports:

- Comprehensive tax reform that is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic development, 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 evaluate effectiveness.
- Permissive legislation to allow localities to establish a minimum threshold reporting requirement for business personal property tax collections to reduce onerous recording costs.

VA West opposes:

- Homestead Exemption or any other legislation that would establish different tax rates for residential and commercial real estate.

HEALTHCARE

Virginia West remains concerned about the uncertainty surrounding the implementation of the PPACA and its impact on Virginia's business community. 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.

For more information, visit the VAWEST website:

<http://www.vawest.org/vawest/vawestindex.htm>



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BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE COALITION

Virginia West Business & Legislative Coalition members work together to help the western region speak with a unified voice for business. Virginia West represents over 7,000 businesses in over 10,000 square miles.

LEGISLATORS

Senator Charles W. Carrico
Senator Ben Chafin
Senator R. Creigh Deeds
Senator John S. Edwards
Senator Tom Garrett
Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.
Senator Stephen D. Newman
Senator Mark Obenshain
Senator Bryce Reeves
Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr.
Senator Ralph Smith
Senator Bill Stanley
Delegate Les Adams
Delegate Terry Austin
Delegate Robert B. Bell
Delegate Dickie Bell
Delegate Kathy J. Byron
Delegate Jeffrey Campbell
Delegate Ben Cline

Delegate Matt Fariss
Delegate Scott Garrett
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Delegate Greg Habeeb
Delegate Christopher Head
Delegate R. Steven Landes
Delegate Danny Marshall
Delegate William Morefield
Delegate Israel O'Quinn
Delegate Charles Poindexter
Delegate Sam Rasoul
Delegate Nick Rush
Delegate Edward Scott
Delegate David Toscano
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