

The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce Legislative Agenda 2017

Every year the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce works with local, state, and congressional officers on a number of different public policies. The Chamber's membership is surveyed and asked what issues are most important to them. While the Chamber will continue to work diligently on all issues that have a significant impact on the business community, **the Chamber's main legislative activities for 2017 are education and workforce development, transportation, economic development and healthcare.**

Workforce Development and Education

A qualified workforce is key to a community's economic strength. Employees able to meet demand of an ever-changing diverse employer base as well as having a strong pipeline of students ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of doing business are vital. That being said, the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce Supports:

- Expansion of the Career and Technical Education programs in K-12 as well as higher education institutions
- Early childhood investments that enhance opportunities for all children to realize the benefits of K-12 education and become work ready
- Exploration of the New College Institute's partnering with a four year university as an affiliate or satellite campus
- Continued funding of the New Virginia Economy Workforce Credentials Grant, SCHEV study of applied baccalaureate degrees offered by Patrick Henry Community College, as well as restoration of funding cuts to community colleges since 2009
- A workforce system that is business driven and locally administered as highlighted in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. We further support the expansion of the definition of training under WIO to include all supportive services necessary to remain in training and to include the cost of assessments and staffing directly related to training activities including business services activities, in an effort to improve service delivery to businesses.

Transportation

To advance long-term solutions to overcome the Virginia transportation challenges, the Chamber supports a dedicated, statewide revenue stream to meet critical transportation needs. The Chamber is not opposed to user fees dedicated to new transportation projects as long as incremental revenues are distributed in an equitable manner to all Virginia localities. The Chamber further supports:

- Regional cooperation to form a Transportation Authority to accelerate I-73 construction beginning at the North Carolina border in Henry County.
- Recognizing the economic impact of the Blue Ridge Regional Airport, the Chamber supports legislation that gives the Virginia Aviation Board the discretion to allocate carryover funding from the air carrier/reliever fund to any approved but unfunded capital projects to the general aviation fund
- Completion of widening US 58 between Stuart and Hillsville





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Economic Development

The Chamber believes that strong economic development goes hand in hand with regional cooperation as well as viable funding opportunities and few regulatory burdens. The Chamber supports:

- The GO Virginia Initiative and their results oriented approach that encourages regional cooperation
- Existing Right to Work laws and minimum wage laws
- Continued funding and/or programs for tourism attractions that are essential to economic growth in our region
- The development of cost effective, safe, alternative and renewable energy sources while keeping Virginia competitive in the energy market

Healthcare

Virginia needs a plan for healthcare that is affordable, accessible and sustainable. Eighty percent of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce's membership is small business, many of which have to endure the burden of the Affordable Care Act. Therefore, the Chamber strongly supports:

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