

## ABOUT MARTINSVILLE-HENRY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce is a five-star accredited member of the US Chamber of Commerce. Our Chamber represents over 730 businesses in the Southside Virginia region. The MHC Chamber supports public policies that strengthen free enterprise and regional collaboration efforts that promote economic development.

## BOARD OFFICERS

Anne Smith (Hooker Furnishings), Chair  
George “Jay” Dickens, (The Lester Group), Immediate Past Chair  
Mary Handy (Bassett Mirror), Secretary/Treasurer  
William Kirby, IV (American National Bank), Vice Chair of Economic Development  
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## REPRESENTATION

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Delegate Daniel W. Marshall, III  
Delegate Wren Williams  
Senator Bill Stanley

Congressman Bob Good  
Congressman Morgan Griffith  
Senator Tim Kaine  
Senator Mark Warner

# 2023 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION

The Chamber recognizes the vital importance of maintaining and developing new and innovative workforce and job development programs to enhance and attract human capital. **THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:**

- o Initiatives that strengthen connections among students, parents, educators, and guidance counselors of career and technical education (CTE) opportunities and regionally in-demand careers beginning in middle school or earlier to increase talent pipelines.
- o Incentives to encourage affordable workforce housing to meet workforce demands.
- o Funding to ensure quality and affordable childcare and childcare tax credits to support needs of our workforce.
- o Efforts to improve coordination between Virginia's employers, job training programs, and education communities to meet industry, workforce, and student needs.
- o Funding for regional career and technical education communities.
- o Emphasis on science, technology, engineering, math and health (STEM-H) courses in K-12 and Virginia's colleges and universities, in addition to coursework in areas of business and economics to encourage the next generation of small business owners.
- o Immigration policies that support workforce needs.
- o Increase the amount and flexibility of Lottery funding for both at-risk and per-pupil accounts which is critical.
- o Increased funding for FastForward program/New Virginia Economy Workforce Credentials Grant at Patrick Henry Community College to meet workforce demands.
- o Continued support and funding of the New College Institute as a premier center for degree programs, industry relevant training and certification and non-certification to prepare learners for employment in high-demand occupations throughout the Commonwealth.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGIONALISM

The Chamber 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 Southside Region. **THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:**

- o Significant additional funding to enhance the high -tiered industrial sites in economically depressed communities.
- o Funding for economic development programs available through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and GO Virginia particularly in rural areas.
- o Tax reform measures to strengthen and defend Virginia's business climate, especially for small businesses.
- o Expand grants and resources available to fiscally stressed localities to aid in the encouragement of entrepreneurship.
- o Develop supply chain strategies to avoid overreliance on imported products such as pharmaceutical and semiconductor products.
- o Expanded incentives for angel and venture capital investments in Virginia businesses and increased funding to commercialize regional research spinoff and startup businesses.
- o Protection of Virginia's existing Right-to-Work laws so that employees are not compelled to pay union dues as a condition of employment.
- o Investment in job training, education, and in-demand skills as means to higher earning potential.
- o The continued safe development of cost effective, traditional and renewable energy sources to meet business needs.
- o Continue funding broadband expansion to support economic development, telework, telemedicine, and tele-education access necessary for a modern workforce.

## 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. **THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS** a coordinated and equitable strategic transportation plan, to include:

- o Fund the Martinsville Southern Connector project which unanimously approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board and regional population and business. It will correct a half century old US 220 accident corridor while removing the most severe economic development bottleneck from I 77 to US 29 and from I 81 to I 73 vertically.
- o Funding and completion of widening US 58 between Stuart and Hillsville.
- o Funding the Blue Ridge Regional Airport runway expansion to 6,000 feet to serve larger business aircraft and increase revenues in the region and in the Commonwealth of Virginia as they impact our economy and recruitment potential.
- o Continued exploration of innovative and sustainable funding mechanisms and additional VDOT SMART SCALE weighting to meet transportation needs in Southside region.
- o Initiatives to expand air service at regional airports in our Southside communities.
- o Funding for electric charging stations for vehicles.

## HEALTHCARE

The Chamber remains concerned about the uncertainty surrounding the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) and its impact on Virginia's business community. The Chamber 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. **THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:**

- o Exploring the use of opioid settlements to fund long term care rehabilitation centers for substance abusers.
- o Initiatives and additional resources to address the future of mental and behavioral health treatment in the Commonwealth including expansion of mental and behavioral health telehealth.
- o Initiatives and additional resources to assess and address the need for telehealth medical services as a current need and in the future, as a long-term strategy.
- o Legal liability protections for businesses who follow health protocols.
- o Incentives to reshore the manufacturing of critical medical equipment and pharmaceuticals.