

The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce

Legislative Agenda 2018

Every year the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce works with local, state, and congressional officers on various 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 2018 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 a dynamic, diverse employer base as well as having a strong pipeline of talent 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
- The New College Institute 2020 Vision and state funding to accomplish the vision, direction and goals therein
- 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 and the expansion of the definition of training under WIOA to include 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 applicable Virginia localities. The Chamber further supports:

- Completion of widening US 58 between Stuart and Hillsville
- Proposed funding for the construction of Interstate 73
- 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





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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 and public/private partnerships
- Existing Right to Work laws and minimum wage laws
- Small business development by removing roadblocks to growth
- State and federal funding to redevelop meaningful industrial and commercial sites
- Providing local areas with taxing authority to ensure that they may maintain service levels and public safety
- Increased funding for the Commonwealth Opportunity Grant
- Continued funding and/or programs for tourism attractions that are essential to economic growth in our region reconstituting funding to 2008 levels
- The development of cost effective, safe, alternative and renewable energy sources while keeping Virginia competitive in the energy market
- The Online Sales Simplification Act (OSSA) provision which defines where the tax should be imposed: 1) The State is the origin State for the remote sales; 2) The tax is applied using the origin State's tax base applicable to non-remote sales; 3) The State participates in the State tax clearinghouse

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 and substance abuse in the Commonwealth including partnerships with community-based outpatient detox centers to provide cost effective long term success