



The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce Legislative Agenda 2019

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 2019 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:**

- Funding innovative initiatives that strengthen understanding among students, parents, educators and guidance counselors of Career and Technical Education opportunities and regionally in-demand careers beginning in middle school or earlier to increase talent pipeline.
- Continued funding of the FastForward program/New Virginia Economy Workforce Credentials Grant at Patrick Henry Community College as well as restoration of funding to community colleges since 2009 cuts.
- Recognizing its potential to promote economic development within our community and region, continue to support the development and funding of the New College Institute in its current location in Uptown Martinsville; and urge that any funding reductions to the New College Institute, if considered, be minimized to the greatest extent possible
- Workforce development efforts by providing funds for programs directed to workforce re-engagement, youth and opioid affected citizens in Virginia
- Efforts and funding to improve coordination between our regions employers, job training programs, and education communities to meet industry, workforce and student needs.

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 supports:**

- Funding and completion of widening US 58 between Stuart and Hillsville.
- Funding and completion of the Martinsville Southern Connector project which would create a direct route from the North Carolina line and Commonwealth Crossing Business Center to the Route 58/Route 220 bypass.
- Proposed funding for the construction of Interstate 73.
- Recognizing the economic impact of the Blue Ridge Regional Airport and funding two critical projects: (1) Aircraft apron expansion to handle visiting aircraft and (2) Runway expansion to a 6,000-foot runway to serve the larger business aircraft and increase revenues in the region and Commonwealth of Virginia.



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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:**

- Increased funding for and creation of new economic development incentives that allow the state and localities to be more competitive with neighboring states, including and not limited to Virginia Investment Performance Grant (VIP) program, Commonwealth's Development Opportunity Fund (COF) and Opportunity Zone Tax Credits.
- Expand grants and resources available to fiscally stressed localities, and to business development entities in such localities, to aid in the encouragement or development of small and entrepreneurial businesses.
- Additional funding to support GO Virginia Initiative and their results-oriented approach that encourages regional cooperation and public/private partnerships.
- Increased funding and/or programs for tourism attractions that are essential to economic growth in our region including the Virginia Museum of Natural History and Martinsville Speedway.
- Support funding the expansion of broadband service to underserved areas.
- The development of cost effective, safe, alternative and renewable energy sources while keeping Virginia competitive in the energy market.
- Incentivize local governments to consolidate services.
- Limiting tariffs to not more than 10%.

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 supports:**

- Recognition of opioid problem as a serious issue affecting all communities and the need for state and federal assistance in addressing long term effective treatment options including facilities.
- 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.
- Initiatives and additional resources to address the future of mental-health in the Commonwealth.