LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL PRIORITIES FOR 2020
The Halifax County Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization that develops its legislative focus from the priorities of its membership. The Chamber serves over 360 businesses employing approximately 11,000 people. The Chamber provides representation and advocacy for our membership on issues that have the ability to impact the business community. The Chamber serves as the ‘Voice of Business.’

The Board of Directors has adopted public policy positions on business issues affecting Chamber members as defined in this document. The Chamber’s government affairs committee uses these policies as a guideline when reviewing local development projects and legislative issues to determine Chamber support or opposition, as well as the type and intensity of Chamber response.

Top Priorities that Frame the Legislative Agenda:
- Business and Economic Development
- Education and Workforce Development
- Health Care
- Transportation

The Chamber believes that successes depend on investments and priorities that stimulate and advance economic growth and prosperity. Each year, the Chamber frames key policy goals for the year. The current plan includes:
- An environment where business can prosper;
- Talent development for the region’s workforce;
- Quality of life that attracts and retains residents and workers; and
- Collaboration that leads to economic prosperity in the region.

For the 2020 session, the Halifax County Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests our legislators support the following priorities:

**Business and Economic Development**

Economic development initiatives are an essential component of a healthy business environment. The Halifax County Chamber of Commerce supports legislative policies and actions that provide businesses of all sizes the tools and talent they need to increase their competitiveness and stimulate growth while continuing to attract new industries to our region. The HCCC supports:
- Continued support to maintain Virginia’s status as the #1 state for business and pro-business policies with an emphasis on protection of right-to-work laws.
- A fair minimum wage that is not burdensome for business and based on regional cost of living standards.
- Full funding for GO Virginia and other economic development programs available through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.
- GO Virginia’s work to restore Virginia’s position of economic leadership by growing and diversifying the state’s economy through the creation of state financial incentives.
- Tax reform that is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic development, and promotes prosperity for all Virginians.
- Expanded funding for rural broadband to ensure competitive economic advantages.
- The Governor’s Opportunity Fund and other state-directed incentive programs.
- Performance-based business incentives policy to keep Virginia competitive.
• Existing enterprise zones in Halifax County.
• Integration of small business and entrepreneurship development in statewide economic planning efforts.
• Tax incentives, venture capital formation, and financing for small business development.
• Continued safe development of cost effective, traditional, and renewable energy sources while keeping Virginia competitive in the energy market.
• Continuation of the moratorium on uranium mining and drilling in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Education and Workforce Development
An educated and skilled workforce with a strong work ethic and sense of values is the foundation of a competitive economy. Communication skills, math, science, and other academic fundamentals, as well as the practical skills of today’s workplace, are imperative for the economic health of Halifax County.

The Halifax County Chamber of Commerce encourages legislation that will support and create workforce programs, as well as initiatives that address labor supply and demand. The Chamber supports an emphasis on incumbent and transitioning worker training and workforce skill development. The HCCC supports:

Pre-K to Graduation

• Improved access to high quality, evidence-based early childhood education, which is a key determinant of both school readiness and third grade reading attainment.

• A stronger engagement of the K-12 system in workforce development initiatives and strategies that focus on a reduction in the high school dropout rate, an increase in the number of students who graduate from high school or receive a GED, and high school graduates who are prepared for higher education and/or the workforce with the skills required in a global economy.

• Active involvement of businesses and business people in the administrative, teaching, and enrichment activities of schools and on state and local boards, policy-making bodies, and advisory groups.

• Providing sufficient resources to ensure the best buildings, equipment, materials, and instructional personnel to include teacher recertification.

• Initiatives that strengthen connections among students, parents, educators, and counselors of career and technical education (CTE) opportunities and regionally in-demand careers.

• Increased funding for internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities.

Post-Secondary and Workforce Training

• The Governor’s “Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back” initiative, or “G3” program, which will provide financial support to cover tuition, fees, and books for eligible students at the Commonwealth’s two-year public institutions.

• State policy that aggressively tackles the skills gap, especially in the ‘middle skill’ occupations which require more than high-school, but not a four-year degree.

• Investment in job training, education, and in-demand skills as a means to higher earning potential.

• Continued support of the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center.

• Expanded funding for certified training programs and non-credit workforce training.

• The recognition and designation of localities and regions that achieve the “Certified Work Ready Community” goals as established by ACT, Inc.
Health Care
To maintain a healthy and productive workforce and to preserve the quality of life in Halifax County, it is imperative to address the well-being and human service needs throughout the region. The Halifax County Chamber of Commerce separates health care into two major areas: (1) the ability to foster initiatives that support healthier communities and (2) access and cost containment. The HCCC supports:

- Legislation that allows the creation of Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs), which offer health plans to support health care affordability and accessibility for employers and employees.
- Initiatives and additional resources to address the future of mental and behavioral health treatment in the Commonwealth.
- The growth and funding of local workforce training programs to help address the current shortage of nurses and allied health professionals in Halifax County and rural Virginia.
- The Virginia Certificate of Public Need (COPN) program’s aim to ensure that market inequities do not restrict access to necessary healthcare services in the Commonwealth for all payor populations.

Transportation
Transportation needs are statewide in scope and must be addressed on a statewide basis. Virginia's regions are interdependent - each region benefits from the economic health of every other region. The statewide economy and regional economies are best served by a transportation system that is cohesive, integrated and interconnected. The Halifax County Chamber of Commerce regards transportation issues as central to its ability to maintain a healthy business climate. The Chamber focuses on transportation issues that facilitate movement of product and the mobility needs of employees. The HCCC supports:

- Retention of the present Transportation Trust Fund Allocation formula.
- Identification of long-term, sustainable resources to build and maintain a strong transportation network that meets current and future needs, without placing additional burdens on local governments.
- The consideration of rural areas of the Commonwealth in the continued process of planning for future roads and transportation needs.
- The upgrade of U.S. Route 501 to a four-lane highway from the North Carolina line to link with the Interstate network in Virginia with immediate emphasis on spot safety improvements as agreed by the Rt. 501 Coalition.
- Efforts of the SoVA CME regional transportation project to expand bus service throughout Southern Virginia.
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