

VAWEST

BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE COALITION

2020 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Established in 1993, VA WEST is a coalition of chambers of commerce providing a focused business voice on key legislative issues in Western Virginia. The coalition has evolved to 14 chambers and a key facilitator of dialogue between lawmakers and the business community in Central, Southwestern and Southside Virginia.

VA WEST works on behalf of its members to support public policies that strengthen free enterprise and economic and job growth throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia – we feel strongly we can achieve economic success by focusing on the following policy initiatives:

Economic Development & Regional Cooperation

VA West 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 Piedmont, Southside, Southwestern, Shenandoah Valley, and Western Virginia. **VA WEST SUPPORTS:**

- VATI funding for public-private partnerships to expand affordable and accessible broadband and telecommunication services across the commonwealth to support economic development, telework, telemedicine, and tele-education access to underserved populations.
- Funding for economic development programs available through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and GO Virginia.
- Tax reform measures to strengthen and defend Virginia's business climate.
- Expanded incentives for angel and venture capital investments in Virginia businesses and increased funding to commercialize regional research spinoff and startup businesses.
- Protection of Virginia's existing Right-to-Work laws.
- Investment in job training, education, and in-demand skills as means to higher earning potential, with regard for the implications of higher minimum wage mandates on jobs and small business operations.
- The continued safe development of cost effective, traditional and renewable energy sources to meet business needs.

Workforce Development & Education

VA West recognizes the vital importance of maintaining and developing new and innovative workforce and job development programs to enhance and attract human capital. **VA WEST SUPPORTS:**

- Increased FastForward funding and support for the G3 program.
- Initiatives that strengthen connections among students, parents, educators, and guidance counselors of career and technical education (CTE) opportunities and regionally in-demand careers.
- Efforts to improve coordination between Virginia's employers, job training programs, and education communities to meet industry, workforce, and student needs.

- Funding for regional career and technical education communities.
- Emphasis on STEM-H courses in K-12 and Virginia’s colleges and universities.

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. **VA WEST SUPPORTS:**

- Expansion of passenger rail from Lynchburg to Bedford and Roanoke to New River Valley, and continued exploration of expansion to Bristol.
- Timely allocation of funding to accelerate improvements identified through the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan.
- Continued exploration of innovative and sustainable funding mechanisms and additional SMART SCALE weighting to meet transportation needs in our VA West communities.
- Initiatives to expand air service at regional airports in our VA West communities.
- Construction of Interstate 73.

Healthcare

VA West remains concerned about the uncertainty surrounding the implementation of the PPACA and its impact on Virginia’s business community. VA West 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. **VA WEST 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.

VA WEST Represents the Following Chambers:

Greater Augusta Regional, Bedford Area, Botetourt, Danville/Pittsylvania County, Harrisonburg-Rockingham, Lexington, Buena Vista, & Rockbridge County, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, Martinsville & Henry County, Montgomery County, Roanoke Regional, Shenandoah County, Smith Mountain Lake Regional, Two Virginias, and Wytheville, Wythe, Bland.