

ABOUT VA WEST

VA West is business and legislative coalition comprised of 16 chambers in central, southside, Shenandoah valley, and western Virginia, representing over 4,500 businesses and covering over 8,000 square miles. VA West supports public policies that strengthen free enterprise and regional collaboration efforts that promote economic development.

MEMBERSHIP

Bedford Area Chamber
Botetourt County Chamber
Danville Pittsylvania Chamber
Greater Augusta Regional Chamber
Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber
Lexington, Buena Vista, and
Rockbridge Chamber

Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance
Martinsville & Henry County Chamber
Montgomery County Chamber
Roanoke Regional Chamber
Salem-Roanoke County Chamber
Shenandoah County Chamber
Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber
Chamber of the Two Virginias
Wytheville, Wythe, Bland Chamber

REPRESENTATION

Delegate Leslie R. Adams
Delegate Terry L. Austin
Delegate John Avoli
Delegate Robert B. Bell
Delegate Kathy J. Byron
Delegate Jeffrey L. Campbell
Delegate Ronnie R. Campbell
Delegate James E. Edmonds II
Delegate C. Matthew Fariss
Delegate Wendell Walker
Delegate Todd Gilbert
Delegate Christopher T. Head
Delegate Chris Hurst
Delegate Terry G. Kilgore
Delegate Chris Runion
Delegate Daniel W. Marshall III
Delegate Joseph P. McNamara
Delegate James W. Morefield
Delegate Charles D. Poindexter
Delegate Sam Rasoul
Delegate L. Nick Rush
Delegate Tony O. Wilt

Senator Todd Pillion
Senator Benton Chafin
Senator Creigh Deeds
Senator John Edwards
Senator Emmett Hanger
Senator Steven Newman
Senator Mark Obenshain
Senator Frank Ruff
Senator Bill Stanley
Senator David Suetterlein



2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGIONALISM

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:**

- A strategic plan for additional Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) funding for public-private partnerships to expand affordable broadband and telecommunication services in unserved areas to support economic development, telework, telemedicine, and tele-education access necessary for a modern workforce.
- 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 so that employees are not compelled to pay union dues as a condition of employment.
- Investment in job training, education, and in-demand skills as means to higher earning potential.
- Delaying the minimum wage increase as passed during the 2020 General Assembly session until the economy recovers to pre-pandemic levels.
- 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 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.

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** a coordinated strategic transportation plan, to include:

- Expansion of Amtrak passenger rail from Lynchburg to Bedford and Roanoke to New River Valley, and continued exploration of expansion to Bristol.
- Continued efforts toward timely implementation of the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan (CIP)
- Reconsideration of a regional intermodal freight facility
- Continued exploration of innovative and sustainable funding mechanisms and additional VDOT 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.

HEALTHCARE

VA West 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. 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.

COVID-19 AND OTHER HEALTH EMERGENCIES

VA West continues to push for measures to help businesses recover and operate during the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies.

VA WEST SUPPORTS:

- Accurate and prompt COVID-19 testing.
- Legal liability protections for businesses who follow health protocols.
- Continued affordable and reliable access to Personal Protective Equipment.
- Measures to reshore manufacture of critical medical equipment and pharmaceuticals.
- Continued recognition of regional differences as they relate to potential outbreaks and strategies to mitigate viral spread.
- Reducing roadblocks for permitting/licensing childcare providers so that parents can continue to work during public health emergencies.