



2017 State Legislative Policy

VISION

The vision of the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce is an energized region with a vibrant, customer-centered culture.

MISSION

The mission of the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce is to serve our members and improve the business environment by providing leadership, products, programs and services which promote the success of our members.

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2017 LEGISLATIVE POLICY

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce represents approximately 700 businesses employing almost 23,000 people in the Danville and Pittsylvania County region. The Chamber works to project a unified voice on issues that affect the business community in our region.

For the 2017 session, the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce recognizes the Virginia General Assembly and Administration face difficult decisions due to the budget shortfall. Our Chamber believes that the Commonwealth's and our region's success depend on investments and priorities that stimulate and advance economic growth and prosperity. We respectfully request our legislators support the following priorities:

- Investments in agriculture and forestry, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and information technology.
- Support of an effective workforce development strategy.
 - Funded based on performance metrics;
 - Supportive of certified training and non-credit training with continued funding for the New Economy Workforce Credentials Act;
 - Consisting of internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities;
 - Occurring in partnership with our K-12, community college, technical schools, and four-year college systems.
- Encouragement for a well-funded system of public education that begins at birth and strengthens the focus on early childhood education.
- Continued support to maintain Virginia's pro-business policies with an emphasis on support for the "right-to-work" law.

Our sincere goal is to one day again become net contributors to the Commonwealth. Strategic programs with targeted measurements and goals will move us closer to this day. If legislative progress could be made on these priorities in the 2017 session, Southern Virginia would continue on a path towards prosperity.

BUSINESS CLIMATE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce is strongly committed to economic development in our region. With the continually changing economic times and the constant emergence of new technology, the Chamber supports programs which encourage investments in technology infrastructure, support regional economic development planning, or otherwise promote cooperative regional efforts to strengthen and expand our economy. We support 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, technical support, and other assistance that will encourage collaboration on private-sector growth and job creation by business, education, and government in each region.

Incentives / Investments

- Support the Governor's Opportunity Fund and other State directed incentive programs.
- Continue to focus on performance-based business incentives in a responsible manner.
- Support targeted investments designed to create new jobs and assist existing industry in distressed rural communities.
- Support new incentives that demonstrate their effectiveness and help target future growth industries while protecting existing businesses.
- Support existing enterprise zones in Danville and Pittsylvania County.
- Continue support of the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance.
- Support investments in research and development at The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research.

Small Business / Entrepreneurship

- Promote the integration of small business and entrepreneurship development in statewide economic planning efforts.
- Encourage more small business development financing, venture capital formation, and tax incentives.
- Strengthen access to Virginia's current incentive programs for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Manufacturing

- Support the continued development and marketing of large-scale industrial parks that serve multiple jurisdictions and foster enhanced collaboration within a region.

Tourism

- Strengthen programs that support tourism product development and infrastructure.
- Continue to support the state's efforts to maintain and expand domestic and international travel market and motion picture production.

Industry Sectors

- Cultivate a strong environment for research and development and new company formation.
- Support innovation hubs around concentrated areas of activity to grow new companies.
- Expand opportunities in agriculture and forestry, advanced manufacturing, healthcare and information technology.

Pro-Business Policies

- Support Virginia's "right to work" law and oppose any efforts to repeal or modify it.
- Support Virginia's doctrine of employment-at-will.
- Support Virginia's unemployment and workers' compensation systems that balance the needs of employees and employers.
- Encourage the development of a regulatory climate that is consistent, predictable, and comprehensible; that is responsive to the needs of both new and existing businesses; and that provides a level playing field in relation to surrounding states.
- Support an equitable and fair legal system.

Taxes

- Support continued tax reform that is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic development, and promotes prosperity for all Virginians.
- Support local authority to restructure, reduce, or eliminate the local business, professional and occupational license (BPOL) tax.
- Reduce or eliminate the machinery and tools tax to increase capital investment with greater autonomy given to local governments to replace revenue.
- Equalize taxation authority of cities, towns, and counties.
- Support permissive legislation to allow localities to establish a minimum threshold reporting requirement for business personal property tax collection to reduce onerous recording costs.

Energy

- Support the development of cost-effective, alternative, and renewable energy sources while keeping Virginia competitive in the energy market.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development is one of the most critical issues facing our nation, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and our region. The Commonwealth must develop programs, processes, and procedures that focus on demand-driven jobs with the adequate resources to prepare our current and future workforce for those jobs. Access to and the delivery of workforce development programs must be streamlined to maximize their availability for businesses and job seekers. Programs which receive public dollars should ensure our workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow broadly shared prosperity.

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber recognizes that the availability of a technically skilled, trainable labor force is the most persuasive location and expansion factor sought by business today and seeks to establish programs and policies that will achieve such a workforce across the state.

Demand-Driven

- Recognize the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) as an industry-recognized credential.
- Support the recognition and designation of localities and regions that achieve the “Certified Work Ready Community” goals as established by ACT, Inc.
- Support a private sector led Virginia Board of Workforce Development to foster regionally designed workforce development programs that meet the needs of the business community.
- Promote internships, apprenticeships and other work-based learning experiences. Utilize the expertise of the private sector in redesigning curricula, identifying relevant credentials, and developing training programs for both technical and “soft skills” education.

Regional Solutions

- Support stronger linkage between workforce and economic development at the state and regional levels.
- Increase capacity of regions to develop and support industry sectors and sector strategies that address specific industries’ needs.

Training

- Expand funding for certified training programs and non-credit workforce training.
- Continue funding of Workforce Services through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership for training of new workers and re-training of existing workers.

Targeted Sectors & Populations

- Provide adequate funding for adult education.
- Support 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.

EDUCATION

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber recognizes that a strong public education system and the availability of technically skilled people are vital to Virginia's future prosperity and quality of life. The Chamber also recognizes the critical role that business and industry must play to ensure that schools and workforce training programs are of the highest quality.

We commend and encourage initiatives that promote cooperative partnerships between business/industry, K-12, and institutions of higher education, such as the partnership between our K-12 school systems with Danville Community College and the Institute for Advanced Learning & Research in advanced manufacturing.

The Chamber supports increased funding for public education programs including early childhood education, K-12 education, and post-secondary/higher education. Increased funding for education helps to ensure all students have access to a first-class education which provides the best-possible opportunities for graduates to obtain and create good jobs and contribute to a successful workforce in Virginia.

Early Childhood Education

- Improve access to high quality, evidence-based early childhood education which is a key determinant of both school readiness and third grade reading attainment.
- Improve the flexibility of existing state funding for at-risk preschoolers (the Virginia Preschool Initiative) to allow it to be more fully used at the local level.

K-12

- Celebrate our current success in K-12 reform and accountability while recognizing the importance for further improvement to maintain our competitive advantage nationally and improve our standing globally.
- Support 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.
- Encourage the use of management and staffing models that will minimize bureaucracy and administrative staff and maximize quality and quantity of personnel at the classroom level.
- Build on and support initiatives to promote STEM-H education programs.
- Provide sufficient resources to ensure the best buildings, equipment, materials, and instructional personnel.
- Facilitate the 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.

- Support a continued commitment to addressing the disparities in programming and funding in the Commonwealth through the use of a funding mechanism such as the Local Composite Index.

Post-Secondary / Higher Education

- Continue funding and support of the New Economy Workforce Credentials Act.
- Build on our core assets – Danville Community College and Averett University – as a critical gateway to both post-secondary education and the workforce for high school graduates and mid-career adults.
- Minimize program duplication and competition for scarce resources.
- Increase higher education focus on requirements associated with future workforce needs.
- Promote and support efforts to increase the percentage of Virginians, particularly in rural and Southern Virginia, who have a college education.
- Increase the number of graduates and certifications in all STEM-H disciplines.
- Increase state investment and support for university research programs including public-private partnerships in areas such as alternative energy, bio-technology, engineering, advanced manufacturing, and advanced healthcare.
- Preserve Virginia's tradition of unique, semi-autonomous colleges and universities.
- Increase the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant Funding as a tuition equalization plan.
- Support the Virginia Community College's Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative in their efforts to reach rural students and transition them into higher education.

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.

Funding

- Retain the present Transportation Trust Fund allocation formula.
- Support a constitutional amendment to restore trust in the Transportation Trust Fund by solely using TTF funds for their intended use.

Highways

- Support and fund a long-term, sustainable solution to address the transportation issues around Charlottesville as this section of US 29 is a highway of national significance that impacts travel time and safety for the entire 29 corridor.
- Expeditiously complete upgrades to the U.S. 58 corridor from Stuart to Hillsville.
- Expeditiously upgrade Route 29 to interstate status.
- Consider a northwest bypass study for Route 58 west to Route 29 north around Danville that evaluates future transportation needs.
- Continue funding for design and construction of I-73.
- Consider comprehensive legislation to encourage all localities to develop local planning and zoning to assure planned limited access along major transportation arteries.

Air and Rail

- Provide state leadership initiatives on air service to maintain and improve current levels of service at regional airports with continued support for Essential Air Service Funding for Danville Regional Airport.
- Support current Amtrak routes which serve Danville and central Virginia with consideration for an additional Amtrak route to serve the Danville market.

HEALTH CARE

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce supports innovation to transform Virginia's health care system into a competitive advantage through improvements in population health, cost, access, and quality.

Population Health and Wellness

- Use population health improvement as a key lever in cost containment and a driver for savings.
- Promote public policy and private efforts to improve individual wellness and population health, including but not limited to, managed care for public health program participants, employee wellness efforts, or community health efforts.

Quality, Access, and Cost

- Focus on the value of care – defined as quality and cost.
- Continue the dialogue between state and federal lawmakers on flexibilities surrounding the Medicaid program in the Commonwealth to help reduce cost shifting onto insured patients and employers for the cost of treating the uninsured. This includes supporting rate adequacy through inflation adjustments and options for increasing the rate to the Upper Payment Limit.
- Support expanded access to care as a means for controlling costs and improving quality, recognizing that the hospital emergency room is the least appropriate and most expensive place to provide routine access to care.
- Support 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.
- Support further options for increasing the number of residency slots in the Commonwealth in order to train the physicians necessary to provide adequate access for Virginians.
- Strengthen the individual and small insurance market through public and private innovation.

ENVIRONMENT

A basic tenet of the Chamber's mission is to support efforts that bring jobs, economic growth, and a higher standard of living to the people who live in our service area of Southside. We also recognize the intrinsic value of a clean environment, conservation, historic preservation, and maintaining our agricultural traditions.

Water

- Support legislation to strengthen the requirements for lined storage facilities of coal ash and other safeguards that could help prevent potential future disasters.
- Continue to encourage wise stewardship of water resources and supplies.

Air

- Continue to strike a balance between economic growth and air quality for Virginia's citizens.

Sustainability

- Encourage sustainable business practices through approaches, such as environmental management systems; reuse and recycling programs; green buildings; reporting and disclosure; and goal setting.

Government

- Promote a balance between appropriate government oversight and permitting with economic expansion and commerce.
- Encourage the development of a regulatory climate that is consistent, predictable, and comprehensible; that is responsive to the needs of both new and existing businesses; and that provides a level playing field in relation to surrounding states.

Uranium Mining and Milling

- Strongly encourage the continuation of the moratorium on uranium mining and milling in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Oppose the development of a uranium permitting program and regulatory framework that would effectively end the state's moratorium.

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