



**Danville Pittsylvania
County Chamber
of Commerce, Inc.**

2010 State Legislative Policy

VISION

The vision of the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce is to energize the Region by creating exceptional business growth and profitability in 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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2010 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. We fight for public policies that are in the best interest of business and a strong economy.

As a member of Virginia West and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, we recognize the importance of regional cooperation and collaboration. Our Chamber was actively engaged in developing the policies which were adopted by Virginia West. As a partner in that regional collaborative, we work closely to ensure the competitiveness of this entire region of the Commonwealth.

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce recognizes the unprecedented fiscal challenges that face our Commonwealth in this session of the Virginia General Assembly. At this crucial juncture, it is imperative that our Commonwealth provide a long-term, thoughtful, sustainable focus on high-priority issues while maintaining the core government services that are essential to maintaining Virginia's economic competitiveness. Now, more so than ever, we must create an environment for improved policy and budget decision-making. We must also increase government accountability, transparency, and performance.

As decisions are made, our elected officials must recognize and acknowledge the diversity across our Commonwealth and the absolute necessity of ensuring that all areas of Virginia have equal opportunities for the economic vitality of their regions. Plagued by declining population and resources in our distressed communities, the Commonwealth must maintain the current funding formulas for the infrastructure, education, and future of all regions of our Commonwealth.

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce believes that our future success depends on the following priorities:

- A strong education system and the availability of technically skilled people that are vital to Virginia's future prosperity and quality of life;
- A workforce development system that ensures our workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow broadly shared prosperity;
- A well-funded, cohesive, and aggressive economic development effort;
- Sound fiscal management at all levels of government; and
- Continued state tax restructuring as a primary means of finding permanent, long-term solutions to meet our region's and our Commonwealth's growing transportation and education needs.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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, promote regional workforce training, or otherwise promote cooperative city and county efforts to maintain or attract businesses.

The Chamber's positions include the following:

- Strong and persistent support for a well-funded, cohesive, and aggressive economic development effort;
- A performance-based business incentives policy to keep Virginia competitive with other southeast states;
- Support for targeted investments designed to create new jobs and assist existing industry in distressed rural communities;
- The establishment of programs and policies that achieve a skilled, trainable, and technically competent labor force to attract new and expanding businesses;
- Support for the existing enterprise zones in Danville and Pittsylvania County;
- An environmental regulatory climate that is consistent, predictable, and comprehensible by the regulated community, that is responsive to the needs of new and existing businesses, and that provides a level regulatory playing field in relation to surrounding states;
- Continued responsiveness to the needs of small business and existing industry;
- Support of tourism awareness and equitable distribution of funding;
- Support for economic development initiatives that target distressed areas;
- Support for investments in research and development at The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research;
- Support for the continued growth of the wine industry in Virginia.

The Chamber recognizes the tremendous long-term investments that the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission has made in promoting economic growth and development in Southside Virginia. The Chamber encourages the continued focus of the Tobacco Commission and supports the current funding allocation that designates 50 percent of the National Tobacco Settlement agreement to be presided over by the Tobacco Commission.

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. In so doing the Chamber supports the following:

- Stronger linkage between workforce and economic development at the state and local levels;
- Expanded funding for non-credit workforce training;
- Continued adequate funding of Workforce Services through the Department of Business Assistance or Virginia Economic Development Partnership for training of new workers and re-training of existing workers;
- A multi-faceted approach to workforce development involving K-12, vocational and proprietary schools, apprenticeship programs, and public and private two and four-year institutions, with an emphasis on industry-recognized credentials;
- Adequate funding for adult education in Virginia;
- Enhancements in the capacity to deliver continuing education to the general population;
- Continued involvement by business in this issue, the solution to which is challenging, long term, but essential to Virginia's attractiveness as a business location.

The Workforce Investment Act was enacted to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs. The Chamber strongly encourages a comprehensive review of the current state agencies and organizations that provide workforce development services so that our workforce system is competitive with other states and other countries. Specifically, the Chamber supports the following:

- A review of all state agencies and organizations that receive public dollars for workforce development to ensure that the Commonwealth maximizes the revenues that reach our job seekers and businesses;
- A review of all state agencies and organizations that provide workforce development services in order to streamline efficiencies of the services provided;
- A system that demands state agencies and organizations work cooperatively to maximize access to and delivery of workforce development programs and services;
- The work of the Virginia Workforce Council in fostering regionally designed workforce development programs with distinct business input;
- Flexibility in the use and leveraging of the federal Workforce Investment Act funds and in implementing the federal WIA regulations to ensure services are focused on skills development that is responsive to the current needs of businesses;
- The development and implementation of metrics to hold our workforce providers and publicly funded workforce agencies accountable for their service delivery.

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 K-12 and institutions of higher education.

Pre-K-12

Students must be expected to achieve at internationally competitive levels with an educational process that ensures the highest levels of quality in instructional content and learning strategies. It is imperative that the Commonwealth retain its existing composite index formula, the measure of the local ability to pay, for the distribution of the Commonwealth's share of the Standards of Quality. Additionally, we must retain other instructional and support methodology for distribution of the Commonwealth's funding to local school divisions for other elementary and secondary education requirements. To realize such quality in Virginia's public schools, the Chamber supports policies and practices that will do the following:

- Strengthen the principle of accountability and the methods of accreditation for all involved in the educational process;
- Judge the performance of our educational system by accepted standards of measurement that identify deficiencies in schools and school systems and that effectively prioritize the allocation of state resources to support local efforts to correct these deficiencies;
- 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;
- Encourage and make more accessible classroom teaching opportunities on a supplemental, adjunct, part-time, or full-time basis to those prepared by business, trade, professional, and life experiences; provide incentives to retain retiring educational professionals on a part-time basis;
- Focus on classroom performance and student achievement with incentives for teachers and administrators who achieve measurable improvements;
- Elevate the educational respectability and academic rigor of technical education to a status that encourages workforce development at all levels;
- 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;
- Encourage and facilitate parental involvement in all aspects of their children's education;
- Support a continued commitment to addressing the disparities in people, programming, and funding in the Commonwealth;
- Support a continued commitment to early childhood education to enhance the likelihood of future academic success.

Higher Education

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber has consistently advocated strong state support for its colleges and universities in preparing more and better skilled workers and doing the research and development that assists Virginia's economy. Continual investments must be made at a level that will ensure these goals.

Specifically, the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber supports efforts to do the following:

- Maintain current levels of funding with a “no loss provision” for the three higher education institutions in Southside Virginia;
- Increase state support for community colleges to deal with greater enrollment;
- 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 Southside Virginia, who have a college education;
- Increase the number of graduates in engineering, health care, and other technical fields;
- Provide more state support for certified training programs and non-credit workforce training programs offered by community colleges;
- Increase state investment and support for university research programs including public-private partnerships in areas such as ‘green’ technology, alternative energy, bio-technology, engineering, advanced manufacturing, and advanced healthcare;
- Expand higher education opportunities for Southside Virginia;
- Preserve Virginia's tradition of unique, semi-autonomous colleges and universities;
- Strengthen governing boards and improve internal management systems;
- Endorse the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant Funding as a tuition equalization plan and urge that it be continued to be made available to the levels of the original plan for all full-time Virginia students;
- Integrate economic development as part of the mission of higher education.

TRANSPORTATION

Virginia continues to face transportation challenges. The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce recognizes that, despite the 2007 transportation initiative, the current transportation system remains inadequate. Therefore, the Chamber urges the following:

- Retention of the present Transportation Trust Fund allocation formula;
- A constitutional amendment to restore trust in the Transportation Trust Fund by solely using TTF funds for their intended use;
- Support for regional transportation needs with an emphasis on the following:
 - Expedient completion of upgrades to the U.S. 58 corridor from Stuart to Hillsville;
 - Design and construction of a limited access bypass around Charlottesville;
 - Upgrades for Route 29 to interstate status;

- Expeditious construction of the replacement of the Robertson Street Bridge in Danville;
- Consideration of a northwest bypass study for Route 58 west to Route 29 north around Danville that evaluates future transportation needs
- Continued funding for design and construction of I-73 now that the Record of Decision (ROD) has been issued and opposition to any amendments that would jeopardize the ROD.
- 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 and continued study of NASA’s Small Aircraft Transportation System (SATS);
- Consideration of comprehensive legislation to encourage all localities to develop local planning and zoning to assure planned limited access along major transportation arteries;
- 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;
- Support for alternative modes of transportation to more efficiently serve Virginia’s citizens;
- Development of a 20-year strategic plan in coordination with existing six-year-plan.

GOVERNMENT

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber supports the following:

- Sound governmental fiscal practice to structure governmental services to available resources. Sound fiscal practice also requires that fiscal balance be achieved by controlling spending before increasing tax rates or adding taxes and additional sources of revenue.
- Full funding of state mandates on localities;
- A constitutional amendment to allow the Governor to serve two terms, balancing the power as needed as a step toward improving long-term strategic planning efforts;
- Involvement of the private sector in the political process and programs or activities that encourage private sector involvement;
- Equalized taxing authority of towns, cities and counties.

WORKPLACE

Right to Work

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber supports Virginia’s “right to work” law and opposes any efforts to repeal or modify it.

Employment at Will

The Chamber supports Virginia’s doctrine of employment-at-will.

Public Employee Bargaining

The Chamber opposes collective bargaining for public employees either through public employee unions or by other means. Specifically, the Chamber opposes “meet and confer” or “meet and discuss” legislation or any legislation that permits direct, formal public employer/employee negotiations.

Unemployment Compensation

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber supports Virginia’s unemployment compensation law, the primary purpose of which is to provide adequate and temporary financial assistance to employees who become unemployed through no fault of their own. The Chamber opposes efforts to extend benefits to workers who through their own actions or inactions become unemployed as a result of an employer initiated lockout or an employee strike.

HEALTH CARE

Health care costs are crippling Virginia’s economy and its businesses. Creative measures are essential to making health care coverage more affordable, especially for businesses, the uninsured, and the elderly.

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce supports the following:

- Efforts to reduce health care costs, including pooling, medical savings accounts, and other measures that make health care more affordable for businesses and individuals.
- Minimizing additional health care mandates on providers by the General Assembly.
- Caps on medical malpractice liability awards.

TAXES

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber supports continued state tax restructuring that includes the reform and repeal of local business, professional and occupational license (BPOL) tax authority, that fosters a favorable business climate and encourages economic development, and that promotes prosperity for all Virginians. Taxes should be few in number, easy to administer and understand, and equitably distributed among all citizens. An equilibrium should be maintained between tax growth, population growth, and economic activity. The Chamber supports the equalization of taxation authority of cities, towns, and counties. The Chamber supports a repeal of deconformity from the IRS tax code.

CIVIL JUSTICE

The Chamber supports measures to reduce the burden of excessive litigation and improve our competitive position in world markets. Therefore, the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber supports the following:

- Retention of the doctrine of contributory negligence. Under this doctrine, injured persons who contribute substantially to their own injury are barred from collecting damages;
- Legislation to abolish joint and several liability in the context of tort law. Under current law, a single defendant may be required to pay an entire award if other responsible parties are unable to pay;
- Legislation to permit the use of depositions in motions for summary judgment. Virginia is the only state that does not allow this practice, thus causing lawsuits to be tried before juries, even when there are sworn statements by the plaintiff that the defendant is not responsible for the injury to the plaintiff;
- Retention of the current statutory cap on punitive damages and the current criteria for being awarded punitive damages.

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.

The Chamber supports the development of alternative fuels to decrease reliance on foreign sources of energy.

While it is believed that property in Pittsylvania County contains heavy deposits of uranium which could potentially provide an alternative fuel source, the Chamber also recognizes the potential harmful impacts of uranium mining and milling. The Chamber supports a neutral, comprehensive, and independent study that takes into account all relevant factors regarding the impact of uranium mining in Pittsylvania County, and commends the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission for undertaking this study. We strongly urge the environmental, safety, social, and economic impact of uranium mining and milling be examined prior to any legislative action. We also request that the Commission seek public input in the affected localities before a study is conducted. We urge our legislators to closely monitor the study as it goes through the legislative process to ensure that the long term interests of the region are protected. We also strongly oppose any efforts to remove the current moratorium on uranium mining and milling in the Commonwealth of Virginia during the duration of the study.

The Chamber supports recycling at all levels and believes environmental laws and regulations should not

unnecessarily interfere with such activities. The Chamber also supports simplification of existing governmental regulations as well as better coordination among regulatory authorities. We oppose more restrictive environmental regulation at all levels of government.

INTERBASIN WATER TRANSFER

The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce recognizes the tremendous need for a good water supply as evidenced in the recent past when many regions of our Commonwealth suffered from drought-like conditions. Because it is critical that our region maintain a strong water supply, the Chamber vehemently opposes the interbasin transfer of water from the Dan River Basin to any region outside the Dan River Basin.

The Chamber continues to oppose a statewide permitting agency which would allow a locality to transfer water between drainage basins which is now controlled by the riparian rights doctrine and supports legislation protecting a locality's water resources and providing legal means for compensation if a statewide agency is created.

Without compromising its opposition on the issue, the Chamber strongly believes that any local governments that may be allowed to use and enjoy the benefits of water transferred from another locality be required to restore such water at its cost and in as good or better condition than when removed according to the same standards demanded of other local governments which currently use water obtained from the lakes, rivers, and streams of the Commonwealth.