



The Virginia Chamber of Commerce is the only association that speaks for the entire Virginia business community. Our membership ranges from Fortune 500 firms to small, family owned businesses.

Most of Virginia's local chambers of commerce and many industry-specific trade associations are also members of the Virginia Chamber. Our members share a common understanding that improving Virginia's good business climate is the key to our future prosperity.

Our combined and continued efforts have not gone unnoticed. Virginia has been recognized in recent years by several prominent sources as a good place to live and work. *Forbes.com*, for example, has ranked Virginia the "Best State for Business" in the nation - three years running.

These rankings do not occur by accident. They are the result of many people making the right choices. With your support and advice, we can ensure that Virginia moves forward and remains the best state for business and a great place to live.

Recent Accomplishments

TRANSPORTATION – In recent years, the Chamber has spent considerable time urging the General Assembly to enact comprehensive legislation that **addresses our critical transportation needs statewide and brings relief to the congestion-plagued Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads regions.**

In the wake of the Virginia Supreme Court decision invalidating major portions of 2007's transportation package, the Chamber brought together members of the business community to urge the General Assembly and the Governor to address the problem - now. It's a work in progress that will continue into the fall elections and the 2010 General Assembly.

The Chamber continues to stress that the ongoing upgrading of a world-class, multi-modal transportation system in Virginia is a top priority for the business community, and the Chamber will continue to speak out strongly in support of efforts to that end.

WORKPLACE LAWS – The Chamber has successfully blocked big labor's efforts, on more than one occasion, to extend collective bargaining rights to state and local government employees and has on many occasions blocked or rewritten workplace laws that would have a negative impact on business. With the new Congress in place, and working with our allies, we have turned our attention in recent months to stopping the "card check" bill dead in its tracks. **The Chamber is often the only business organization responding to state workplace issues.**

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – The Chamber spearheaded successful efforts in 2006 to better coordinate and manage Virginia's diverse and fragmented workforce development and training resources. Legislation championed by the Chamber establishes the Governor as the chief workforce development officer in the Commonwealth and empowers him to appoint a senior

advisor to coordinate efforts statewide and report directly to him. In 2008, the Chamber enthusiastically endorsed the actions of the Governor to vest responsibility and accountability for workforce development in the Virginia Community College System. **In recent years, the quality of the labor force has become the primary determinant of employer satisfaction; consequently, the Chamber will continue to emphasize the critical nature of Virginia's response to this demand.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - The Chamber was “in the van” in 2009 in support of critical legislation to improve the marketing capability and fiscal incentives available to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. Of particular importance was the Chamber's aggressiveness in support of legislation enabling the Commonwealth to compile and control large prospective industrial sites, as well as the fiscal incentives required, to compete for so-called “mega projects”. **Controlling physical infrastructure is essential in winning these major job-producing projects. Rural and distressed areas of Virginia stand to benefit enormously from this legislation.**

HEALTH CARE – The Chamber has played a major role in recent years in defeating proposals to remove cost cutting incentives for doctors to participate in health care plan networks. The Chamber also has successfully, and repeatedly, opposed state health insurance mandates that drive up costs, and in 2009 helped broker a new health insurance product for small business owners that is devoid of most of the state mandates. **The Chamber is relentless in its efforts to find viable, market based solutions that hold the line on costs because we fully recognize that the rising cost of health care is a chief concern of businesses owners.**

IMMIGRATION REFORM – Since 2007, the Chamber has worked with allied employer groups to either rewrite or defeat state bills aimed squarely at employers who inadvertently hire illegal workers. **We continue to believe that immigration reform is a federal issue requiring a comprehensive federal response.**

TAX ADMINISTRATION – In 2005, the Chamber successfully proposed a major improvement in the process for local business tax appeals which should speed up the process and put pressure on local taxing authorities to act fairly. In 2004, the Chamber proposed three other successful bills on local business tax administration including authority for local Commissioners of Revenue to accept offers in compromise. In 2009, the Chamber won a case before the Virginia Supreme Court that makes clear when a local government can charge and collect BPOL taxes attributable to a company's work performed in another locality. The ruling resulted in a sizeable refund for the affected Chamber business and put an end to illegal taxation going forward. **The Chamber is often the only business group working on these issues.**

FIXING & REPEALING THE “DAY OF REST” LAW – A Chamber member discovered that the 2004 General Assembly accidentally eliminated a long list of business exemptions to Virginia's “Day of Rest Law”, setting up a situation where businesses would have a difficult time operating on some days. A Chamber-backed court challenge and warnings to its members prompted the General Assembly into special session to fix the problem. **In 2005, the Chamber was a critical player in a large business coalition that finished the job by repealing the entire law.**

BUSINESS TAXES – The Chamber led the fight in 2004 against efforts to tax Virginia manufacturers on their out-of-state sales and strongly opposed efforts to impose the sales tax on billions of dollars worth of manufacturing inputs and business services. The Chamber also led the effort in 2004 to make sure that any approved tax increase was not aimed unfairly at business and would not harm Virginia’s business climate. The Chamber participated in efforts in 2006 that resulted in a budget directive to change the way Virginia applies the sales tax to government contractors (i.e., the “True Object Test.”). In 2008, and again in 2009, the Chamber led an impressive and successful business effort to defeat a constitutional amendment that would have likely cost Virginia businesses \$1 billion. The wildly popular “homestead exemption” was defeated twice in 2008, the second time by only two votes! In 2009, the same measure failed to muster even one vote in a House subcommittee; its Senate companion bill was withdrawn. The Chamber will devote attention in 2009 and 2010 to a two year study looking at Virginia’s corporate income tax. **The Chamber will continue to be vigilant to assure businesses assume only their fair share of the state tax burden.**

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE - The Chamber has repeatedly defeated or diverted to a study commission bills that would have substantially increased unemployment taxes on all Virginia employers. In 2009, a Chamber led business coalition short-circuited a late effort to expand benefits to new classes of claimants – part time workers and those in “approved” job training programs - saving employers millions of dollars while protecting an insurance program from unwarranted expansions. **The Chamber is the only statewide business organization that staffs and maintains a task force devoted solely to understanding and responding to unemployment compensation issues.**

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION - **The Chamber houses and runs the only statewide business coalition on workers’ compensation and has done so since 1993.** Through its efforts, unfavorable bills have never seen the light of day while improvements to the law are made each year. The coalition has also been successful in seating judges on the Commission who understand their role in administering the law in a fair and consistent manner.

TOURISM FUNDING – The Chamber served as the chief catalyst to obtaining \$2.5 million in additional marketing funds for the Virginia Tourism Corporation during the 2009 Session. In December of 2008, our Economic Leadership Conference, “*Moving Virginia Tourism Forward*”, was attended by legislators and senior money committee staff who clearly were struck by the message that Virginia was losing its edge in tourism marketing nationally. That awareness led to a significant increase in funding in the ’09-’10 budget approved in that session. **We will maintain our vigilance in preserving the Commonwealth’s competitive posture in this vital component of Virginia’s economy.**

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION & ENERGY POLICY – In 2006, the Chamber contracted with an outside advocacy firm to provide enhanced representation in the environmental regulation and energy policy arena. **That representation continues to raise the Chamber’s profile to that of a key advocate in environmental and energy issues whose opinion is sought by policy makers.**

Activity in these areas is intensifying daily. Misguided efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - at both the state and federal level - pose a grave threat to economic growth and future prosperity. During the 2009 General Assembly, for example, the Chamber was successful in defeating bills that would mandate reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and impose

June 15, 2009

unachievable requirements for business to reduce electricity consumption. We also enacted energy conservation legislation aimed at developing achievable, cost-effective energy conservation and demand response targets that can realistically be accomplished.

The Chamber recently established a working group on global warming and cap-and-trade legislation to advocate to the Virginia Congressional delegation. In the near future, a second working group will be established on Chesapeake Bay issues. Our goal is to ensure that policy makers and elected officials understand the risks to future prosperity and employment, take into account the concerns of the business community, and implement affordable, commonsense solutions.

VIRGINIA CHAMBER POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (VCPAC) – The Virginia Chamber formed its PAC in 2003. Funds are used to supplement the Chamber’s lobbying efforts by allowing the Chamber to support pro-business legislators. Contributions are invited and welcomed!

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