The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce representing nearly 2,000 businesses, is dedicated to serving its members and communities by advocating and supporting the economic business interest of the region.

The Chamber’s 2016 legislative agenda is produced by members of the Public Policy Advisors and business stakeholders and approved by the Chamber’s Board of Directors. This document outlines the Chamber’s positions on critical issues affecting our businesses and the business community. We look forward to working with our stakeholders and the General Assembly to continue to help bring prosperity to Hampton Roads.
BUSINESS CLIMATE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Position: Support legislation that strengthens Virginia’s competitive standing in the global economy.

Support: • Increased resources and diversity for Virginia’s Economic Development incentive programs

• New incentives that help Virginia target future growth industries

• Virginia’s Right to Work laws

• International marketing for tourism and business relocation/expansion

• Policies and initiatives that grow and support small business job creation

• An expansion of domestic travel marketing and tourism infrastructure

• An Unemployment and Workers’ Compensation system that is efficient to all stakeholders

• Post Labor Day start to schools

• Changes that will modernize Virginia’s tax structure.

• Virginia Small Business Development Center

IMPORTANCE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:
Economic development initiatives are an essential component of a healthy business environment. Without business and job growth, our celebrated quality of life will be negatively impacted. Legislative policies and actions that provide businesses of all sizes with the tools and talent they need; will help increase their competitiveness, and additionally, stimulate growth while continuing to attract new industries to our region. We encourage state-level efforts to ensure our region and state are in the most competitive position possible for future growth through sound, pro-business, job-creating legislation.
ENERGY

Position: Enhance the Commonwealth’s energy resources to promote stable rates, economic development, energy independence and environmental protection

Support: • Opportunities for gas infrastructure investment to spur economic development

• The development of renewable (ie. Solar and Wind) as long as all such new energy supply projects do not negatively impact the mission or training for the Department of Defense.

IMPORTANCE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:
There is a need for additional natural gas infrastructure. The Atlantic Coast Pipeline Project would improve gas supply for Mid-Atlantic markets, thereby promoting price stability and enhancing economic opportunity. The ACP would also create more than 2,200 permanent, full-time jobs in Virginia and North Carolina.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Position: Support the Commonwealth’s K-12 public education systems and higher education systems to develop college-ready and career-ready citizens that strengthen Virginia’s workforce. High performing K-12 public education systems drive economic development by growing existing businesses, attracting new employers, and ensuring the workforce to support them.

Support: • Full funding of early childhood education programs

• World-class standards of excellence in Virginia’s education system by maintaining the current Standards of Quality funding formula requiring the Commonwealth to pay 55% of the prevailing cost of education

• State contributions to assist local school divisions with creating 21st century-learning facilities that keep pace with growth in enrollment and new technologies

• Efforts to generate more graduates with a credential in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics field)
• Policies that aide in the recruitment and retention of STEM teachers.
• Private sector workforce solutions
• Strengthening vocational training
• Private/public partnerships
• Full funding for construction of a Regional Workforce Development Center at the Tidewater Community College’s Virginia Beach Campus

**IMPORTANCE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:**
Investment in our education system must be of the highest quality for students to compete in today’s global economy. Aligning our educational and publicly funded workforce development systems with business and industry demand is critical to our success. Ensuring Virginia has a competitive K-12 education system and high quality colleges and universities will enable Virginia to meet future workforce needs.

**HEALTH CARE**

**Position:** The Certificate of Need Program in Virginia should not be eliminated or substantially modified until the General Assembly can guarantee that doing so will not adversely impact access, quality, public safety or the cost of health care to Virginia’s businesses.

**Support:** • Certificate of Need Program

**IMPORTANCE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:**
Hospitals are required to provide care to every individual who seeks care in the emergency room, regardless of ability to pay. Government programs, such as Medicaid and Medicare, reimburse hospitals and physicians at rates far below the costs of treating their beneficiaries. Hospitals absorb many of those costs themselves, but a substantial portion is passed on to large and small businesses in the form of increased health insurance premiums for employees. The Certificate of Need program is one of the single best ways to help keep rising health care costs in check, making sure there is a real, true need for a new hospital or expensive equipment before any money is spent.
TECHNOLOGY

**Position:** Enhance policies that support innovation and job creation in the technology sector

**Support:**
- Favorable tax policies for technology start-up businesses/ventures
- An enhanced entrepreneurship culture
- Private sector partnerships with colleges and universities to increase commercialization

**IMPORTANCE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:**
Technology-based industries and businesses create tremendous growth and opportunity and are essential to competing in an interconnected world. The Chamber supports policies that foster investment in the technology industry.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Position:** Support a balanced investment in the Commonwealth’s transportation system that ensures the efficient and effective development of all modes of transportation infrastructure.

**Support:**
- Viable and transparent public/private partnerships
- Port growth and development/multimodal systems
- Improved and expanded use of technology
- Higher speed rail
- Strategic and expedited use of the new regional transportation revenues to address congestion
- Using smarter project and service delivery methods to efficiently connect communities across the region with transit infrastructure and services.
• Flexibility and diversity of funding sources and financing options, including new dedicated regional transit funding, with the ability to leverage resources to make each available dollar go farther.

**IMPORTANCE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:**
Nearly 2,000 businesses which are members of the Chamber believe transportation is a state-wide problem and should be dealt with on a state-wide basis. Sustainable long-term funding for transportation is still necessary on a state-wide basis for the Commonwealth to remain competitive and to sustain our significant military and federal presence.

**MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Position:** Protect and grow Virginia-based military and federal assets through support of targeted military strategic initiatives.

**Support:**
• Veteran job transition
  • Marketing of military workforce to potential employees
  • Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) related infrastructure investments/land acquisitions
  • Increased educational and workforce opportunities targeted to Veterans and their families.
  • Continued support for cyber security infrastructure

**IMPORTANCE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:**
The Department of Defense (DoD) is a leading driver of our economy, serving as the region's most significant industrial cluster and heavily influencing the region's economic well-being. The business community stands behind our military personnel and the services and industry which support their activities.