

The Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce recognizes the challenges faced by the General Assembly to find funding each year for the vast number of project requests. Respectful of the difficulty of that task, most of these requests are not new. We are looking for a strong commitment to actively pursue funding mechanisms that see prioritized projects through to completion and solve issues of long standing impact that affect the ability of business to succeed in the Commonwealth. Proactive and creative solutions are required now if we are to move our economy forward in a way that benefits the growth and sustainability of business and the quality of life for all our citizens.

With that in mind, following are our priorities for the 2018 Legislative Session....

Transportation and Infrastructure

Support the development and utilization of dedicated resources to address our Interstate 81 & 64 deficiencies. There must be a commitment toward both innovative and traditional revenue channels. The I-81 corridor is the primary north-south freight corridor along the eastern part of the US, handling more truck traffic than I-95 does south of Washington DC. Our Interstate highway system must provide safe, efficient and effective transportation for our communities. Revenues from fuel tax increases, smart tolling and those generated through the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority are to be utilized as solutions for the construction of safe and adequate highway capacity to support our current and future residents and economy.

Recognizing an integrated and coordinated effort is required, we support increased revenue, coupled with innovative multi-modal transportation activities, inclusive of passenger and freight rail initiatives, in conjunction with innovative smart road technologies that will address longstanding challenges to the vibrancy of our culture and economy in the Shenandoah Valley.

Education and Workforce Development

Support continued funding for the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant providing affordable credential attainment in high-demand fields through community colleges.

Support funding for the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) program which provides annual grants to Virginia residents who are full-time students at a private college or university.

Support funding for programs that leverage public private partnerships to increase workforce training for targeted industry sectors relevant to our region.

Support state and local efforts to improve the transferability and quality of dual enrollment courses, to enhance K-12 and higher education partnerships like the Career Pathways consortium, and to promote joint workforce focused educational activities that support career and technical education leading to advanced standing in associate degree technical training programs that are sought by local businesses.

Economic Development

Support the goals of Blueprint VA, the strategic plan of the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, as well as the strategic plans of both the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and the Shenandoah Valley Partnership (SVP). In particular, help to establish the VEDP's initiative for a turnkey, customized workforce recruitment and training program to rapidly respond to new and growing businesses in the Commonwealth.

Support for the GO Virginia initiative and results-oriented economic development programs that encourage regional cooperation and support workforce development efforts.

Support policies that help create a culture of entrepreneurship, including the development of business incubators, shared workspaces and other resources for new businesses.

Healthcare

Support for the development of funding models necessary to effectively address behavioral health issues and improve coordination of behavioral health services.

Support the careful evaluation of Virginia's health regulatory framework, including potential impacts if changes to the current system were to occur.

Taxes and Regulation

Support efforts to review existing regulations and tax burdens in order to reduce unreasonable barriers to business development and growth.

Support work to ensure environmental regulations are clear, achievable and provide reasonable timelines for businesses to achieve compliance.

In addition to these priorities the Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce is a stakeholder in the Virginia Chamber **Blueprint Virginia 2025** and the **VA West Business & Legislative Coalition 2018 Legislative Agenda**.



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