

2019 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce

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 is benefits the growth and sustainability of business and the quality of life for all our citizens. Following are our **top priorities** for the 2019 Legislative Session.

Transportation

The GARCC supports:

Making Interstate 81 a top priority in this Session resulting in approval of a dedicated funding solution for improvements that ensure safe, efficient and effective transportation on one of Virginia's most heavily trafficked arteries. There must be a commitment toward both innovative and traditional revenue channels. We support the recommendations of the I-81 Improvement Plan completed by VDOT and approved by the CTB.

Infrastructure

The GARCC supports:

Promoting public-private partnerships to expand broadband infrastructure that will increase the capacity for economic development, startups, tele-work, tele-health, and tele-education in under-served and rural areas. As part of this process we support the recommendations of local groups such as the Augusta County IT/Broadband Committee. Access to fast and reliable broadband service is critical to attracting and retaining businesses in the 21st Century.

Education and Workforce Development

The GARCC supports:

Education and workforce initiatives that prioritize addressing the employment needs of business and industry. Solutions that demonstrate a proven track record of meeting industry needs include:

- Continued funding for Virginia's Fast Forward Program, providing high demand credential attainment across the Commonwealth.
- Adequate funding for public and private higher education, providing access to a better life for countless Virginians.
- Funding for innovative public private partnerships that increase workforce training in targeted industry sectors that demonstrate a significant shortfall of talent in the pipeline.
- The implementation of JLARC recommendations to improve higher education and postsecondary training in Virginia.

Economic Development

The GARCC supports:

Economic development programs that help return Virginia to the top of the rankings for the best state for business. We believe the economic development strategies of the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Go Virginia Board, the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia, secondary and post-secondary education and training providers, the Shenandoah Valley Partnership, and local governments in the Commonwealth to promote Virginia's vast business resources. We encourage the General Assembly to establish legislation that fosters regional cooperation and which rewards these various agencies for working together to address barriers to economic prosperity.

Healthcare

The GARCC supports:

Reductions in government regulations that inhibit the health care system from operating more efficiently. The Chamber seeks a health care environment that fosters access and affordability. The COPN procedures ensure affordable access for health care and should not be altered without significant research on the potential unintended impacts of such changes. Improvements in the delivery of behavioral health and substance abuse services is a high priority for ensuring more Virginians are able to work.

Taxes and Regulation

The GARCC supports:

Efforts to review existing regulations and tax burdens in order to reduce unreasonable barriers to business development and growth. 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 2019 Legislative Agenda**.



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