

# **VAWEST**

## **BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE COALITION**

### **LEGISLATIVE POLICIES FOR 2012 GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

#### **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERS**

Bedford Area, Charlottesville Regional, Danville/Pittsylvania County, Greater Bluefield, Harrisonburg-Rockingham, Lexington-Rockbridge County, Lynchburg Regional, Martinsville-Henry County, Montgomery County, Roanoke Regional, Salem-Roanoke County, Smith Mountain Lake, Twin County Regional, and Wytheville-Wythe-Bland

A UNITED VOICE FOR WESTERN VIRGINIA ON ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

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## KEY PRINCIPLES

The VA WEST Business & Legislative Coalition works as a unified voice on issues that affect the business community.

VA WEST:

- Supports financially sound principles for all aspects of budget planning and long-term strategic planning.
- Supports the retention of Virginia's Aaa financial bond rating.
- Believes that state mandates on localities must be fully funded.
- Supports continued state tax restructuring to find permanent, long-term solutions to meet our region's and the Commonwealth's growing transportation and education needs.
- Supports two-term governorship as a step toward improving long-term strategic planning efforts.
- Supports Virginia's Right-to-Work Laws.

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a core service of government that is not being adequately funded. Because congestion and decreased mobility threaten Virginia's economic competitiveness and quality of life, all funding mechanisms should be seriously examined.

VA West supports:

- Long-term, sustainable, and dedicated revenue sources that are indexed for inflation and efficient to collect.
- Continued investment in existing infrastructure.
- Expansion of passenger rail from Lynchburg to Roanoke and the New River Valley.

VA West opposes:

- Mandates that would devolve responsibility of maintenance, construction, and operations for Virginia's secondary roads to county governments.

VA WEST supports appropriate investment in all modes of transportation, including highways and bridges, air, transit, passenger and freight rail, roads, and intelligent transportation systems, with an emphasis on:

- Highways/Bridges
  - Widening/improvements for I-81, with short & long-term improvements.
  - Building I-73 and upgrading 220 from I-64 to the North Carolina line.
  - I-77/I-81 seven mile overlay upgrade
  - Improvements to U.S. 501
  - Completion of the U.S. 58 corridor.
  - Completion of all work on U.S. 29 limited access bypasses at Lynchburg (southern portion) and Charlottesville.
  - Improvements to U.S. 460.
  - Completion of the Meadowcreek Parkway.
  - Completion of the Southeast Connector/Stone Springs Road extension to US33.
  - Funding for the Smart Road Demonstration Project.

- Rail
  - Crescent Corridor, Heartland Corridor and Elliston Intermodal Facility.
  - Permanent funding source for passenger rail capital improvements and operations.
- Air:
  - State leadership initiatives on air service to maintain and expand current levels of service at regional airports in Charlottesville, Danville, Lynchburg, Roanoke, and the Shenandoah Valley.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGIONAL COOPERATION

The VA WEST Coalition is strongly committed to results-oriented programs that attract investment in technology infrastructure, enhance regional economic development planning and workforce training, and promote cooperative city and county efforts to maintain or attract businesses to the Piedmont, Southside, Southwestern, and Western Virginia.

VA WEST supports:

- Funding for Virginia’s enterprise zones, particularly in high unemployment areas.
- The statewide efforts of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and regional economic development groups, including: Roanoke Regional Partnership, Region 2000 Economic Development Partnership, Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation, Shenandoah Valley Partnership, Thomas Jefferson Partnership, Mount Rogers Partnership, and Virginia’s @Corridor.
- Sustained or increased funding for the Governor’s Opportunity Fund, the Virginia Jobs Investment Program, the Department of Business Assistance, and the Angel Investor Tax Credit.

VA West opposes:

- Unfunded mandates that impose inflexible regulatory burdens and penalties on local governments related to stormwater management.

## WORKFORCE

VA WEST recognizes the vital importance of maintaining and developing new and innovative workforce development programs to prepare citizens for job opportunities associated with the knowledge economy.

VA WEST supports:

- Adequate funding for adult education.
- Continued funding of Workforce Services through the Department of Business Assistance, and flexibility to use funds for training of new workers and re-training of existing workers.
- Sustained funding for: Bedford Science and Technology Center, Botetourt Center at Greenfield Workforce Training Center, Blue Ridge Community College, Dabney S. Lancaster Workforce Training Center, Danville Community College, Roanoke Higher Education Center, Franklin County Workforce Consortium, Central Virginia Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, Patrick Henry County Community College, Roanoke County/Bedford Regional Alternative Education Center, Piedmont Virginia Community College, “Piedmont Works,” Plecker Workforce Center at BRCC, Virginia Western Community College and all community college satellite facilities, and the Wytheville Community College Workforce Training Center.
- Flexibility in the use and leveraging of the federal Workforce Investment Act funds to ensure services are focused on skills development responsive to the current needs of business.

# TOURISM: Drivers of Economic Vitality

Tourism represents an \$18.9 billion industry and generates more than 204,000 jobs in Virginia. Museums and attractions, including “heritage tourism”, “agri-” and “eco-tourism” throughout the Piedmont, Western, South-west, and Southside Virginia, provide unique cultural and educational opportunities that catalyze economic development and help attract young business professionals.

VA WEST Supports:

- Supports equitable funding for quality of life entities, including state and non-state agencies, museums, and cultural and historical attractions, specifically Ashlawn-Highland, the Danville Science Center, Heritage Preservation Center, Nat’l D-Day Memorial, VA Museum of Natural History, Monticello, Montpelier, Piedmont Arts Association, VA Horse Center, VA Museum of Transportation, Art Museum of Western Virginia, The Arts Council, Blue Ridge Zoological Society of Virginia, Inc., Harrison Museum of African American Culture, History Museum & History Society of Western Virginia, Heritage Museum of Harrisonburg-Rockingham and Explore More Childrens’s Museum, and Science Museum of Western Virginia.
- Supports state funding of the Virginia Commission for the Arts.
- Supports funding for the Virginia Tourism Corporation’s Cooperative Marketing Program.
- Supports continued growth and further development of the wine industry throughout central and Western Virginia. Viticulture and winemaking are successful examples of agribusiness and agri-tourism.

# EDUCATION: Foundation for the Commonwealth’s Future

The VA WEST Coalition clearly recognizes the importance of sustained funding for educational programs (K-12), post secondary, and higher education programs as the foundation of workforce and economic development.

VA WEST supports:

- Increasing state investment and support for university research programs including public-private partnerships in areas such as “green” technology, alternative energy, bio-technology, math, engineering, and advanced healthcare.
- Increasing state support for community colleges to accommodate greater enrollment and improve faculty-to-student ratios.
- Increased funding for Tuition Assistance Grants (TAG) for private colleges and universities.
- Expanding access to pre-K education.
- Allowing localities to determine how to spend state allocations for education with proviso that no local reductions in expenditures can occur.
- Continued full funding of the Standards of Quality, support for and review of the Standards of Learning, and verified credit for nationally credited programs.

## SOUND FISCAL PRACTICE

The VA WEST Coalition believes that governmental services must be structured to available resources.

VA WEST supports:

- Comprehensive tax reform that is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic development, and promotes prosperity for all Virginians.
- Restructuring the local Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) tax based on net income instead of gross receipts.
- Reducing or repealing the machinery and tools tax to increase capital investment.
- Equalization of taxation authority of cities and counties.

VA West opposes:

- Homestead Exemption or any other legislation that would establish different tax rates for residential and commercial real estate.

## HEALTHCARE

Virginia West supports innovative legislation that promotes personal responsibility, improves the quality of health care while eliminating waste and abuse, and expands affordable insurance coverage options for employers.

VA WEST supports:

- Efforts to lower costs through pooling, medical savings accounts, and allowing the purchase of health plans from other states.
- Caps on medical malpractice liability awards.
- Fully funding state share of Medicaid so costs are not shifted to the business community in the form of higher premiums.

VA WEST opposes:

- Additional healthcare mandates that dictate that insurance products include certain benefits.
- Mandated percentage of healthcare costs to be paid by businesses for their employees.

## ENERGY

VA West supports the development of cost-effective, alternative, and renewable energy sources while keeping Virginia competitive in the energy market. VA West further supports the expansion of nuclear energy, the continued development of clean coal technology, exploration for oil and natural gas off of Virginia's coast, and incentives for implementation of sustainable business practices.

## WESTERN, SOUTHWESTERN, AND SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA CAUCUS:

The VA WEST Coalition advocates a bi-partisan legislative caucus to represent the Western and more rural portions of the state. This cooperative effort can be effective in dealing with common issues such as transportation, workforce, education, and economic development.

# NOTES

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# VAWEST

## BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE COALITION

*Virginia West Business & Legislative Coalition members work together to help the western region speak with a unified voice for business. Virginia West represents over 7,000 businesses in over 10,000 square miles.*

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### LEGISLATORS

Senator Charles W. Carrico  
Senator R. Creigh Deeds  
Senator John S. Edwards  
Senator Tom Garrett  
Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.  
Senator Stephen D. Newman  
Senator Mark Obenshain  
Senator Bryce Reeves  
Senator Phillip P. Puckett  
Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr.  
Senator Ralph Smith  
Senator Bill Stanley  
Delegate Robert B. Bell  
Delegate Dickie Bell  
Delegate Kathy J. Byron  
Delegate Ben Cline  
Delegate Anne B. Crockett-Stark  
Delegate Matt Fariss  
Delegate Scott Garrett

Delegate C. Todd Gilbert  
Delegate Greg Habeeb  
Delegate Christopher Head  
Delegate R. Steven Landes  
Delegate Danny Marshall  
Delegate Donald Merricks  
Delegate William Morefield  
Delegate Israel O'Quinn  
Delegate Charles Poindexter  
Delegate Lacey E. Putney  
Delegate Nick Rush  
Delegate Edward Scott  
Delegate David Toscano  
Delegate Onzlee Ware  
Delegate Tony Wilt  
Delegate Joseph Yost

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Virginia West Business & Legislative Coalition

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