



Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Opportunity. Leadership. Results.

**Arlington Chamber of Commerce
2018 General Assembly
Public Policy Positions**

2018 General Assembly Priorities

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce annually presents its legislative priorities to the county's legislative delegation, and other lawmakers, prior to the start of each General Assembly session. The 2018 session is slated to run from January 10 to March 17.

The priorities below are developed through the Arlington Chamber's Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee, are refined by the Chamber's Executive Committee and are modified and adopted by the Chamber's Board of Directors.

The Arlington Chamber would like to thank the members of the Arlington delegation to the General Assembly for their time in discussing the upcoming session and their own priorities with the Arlington Chamber's Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee.

In addition to the specific priorities outlined below, the Arlington Chamber also will respond separately to the legislative packages proposed by the County Board and School Board.

Tourism

The restoration of Arlington County's 0.25% Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) surcharge for funding tourism promotion served as the cornerstone of the business community's legislative agenda two years ago. As anticipated, the reinstatement of a predictable stream of revenue to support the promotion of tourism has made an immediate impact for Arlington businesses; especially aiding our hospitality and retail members as they compete for tourists and business travelers with Washington, DC and Maryland.

The reinstated surcharge allowed Arlington to generate nearly \$1.3 million in dedicated funds for tourism promotion in FY 2017, and to maintain its position as the top locality in Virginia for tourism economic impact. In 2016, visitor spending in Arlington generated \$119.4 million in tax revenue for the Commonwealth, \$4.5 million more than the previous year.

The Chamber calls on the General Assembly to renew the County's TOT surcharge and remove the sunset provision. This would bring Arlington in line with other jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth as no other locality's TOT surcharge has a sunset provision.

Transit Funding

The development and maintenance of a safe, convenient, efficient, cost-effective and reliable multi-modal transportation network is essential to the economic viability of Northern Virginia and of the Commonwealth as a whole. Metrorail in particular serves as the backbone of Arlington County's transportation management program and as a primary driver of economic development in the Washington metropolitan region. WMATA has identified a need of \$15.5 billion over ten years for critical capital projects. These projects are critical to the success of Virginia and the region and will help restore the system to a state of good repair. Lack of investment will impact safety, reliability, and compliance efforts as well as result in service disruptions and delays in the system. The Chamber calls on the Virginia General Assembly to immediately act and establish a multi-year, stable revenue source for a Capital Trust Fund for WMATA.

The Chamber additionally asks the General Assembly and Arlington County to **provide the funding necessary to address the current and forecasted need for mass-transit services in the Crystal City/Potomac Yard and Columbia Pike corridors, and ultimately into Shirlington.** The Arlington Chamber also urges Virginia to work with the District of Columbia to **advance improvements to the Memorial and Long Bridges and a new Rosslyn tunnel.**

Infrastructure and Transportation

In addition to mass transit, the Arlington Chamber supports the development and maintenance of aviation, port, and highway facilities that will promote and enhance domestic and international commerce, encourage tourism and facilitate the movement of Virginians to work, school, recreation and other activities.

The Chamber urges that investments of limited transportation resources be made judiciously, based on sound data and populations estimates, and that regional funding sources and project selection be designated in such a manner as to prioritize congestion relief and economic development. The Chamber further calls on the General Assembly and VDOT to remain at the forefront of innovation, embracing and leveraging new technological solutions to infrastructure and operational challenges.

Given the regional economic importance of both Reagan National and Dulles International Airports, the Chamber asks the General Assembly to work with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) as they strengthen both airports. The Chamber applauds the significant improvements MWAA is planning for Reagan National Airport and supports leveraging these investments to further **enhance multi-modal connections at the airport to the region and the Commonwealth through other strategic investments in a new Long Bridge, Amtrak regional service, cross river MARC/VRE operation, and pedestrian access to Crystal City.**

Economic Development

The Arlington Chamber supports additional funds being appropriated for the Commonwealth Opportunity Fund and the Virginia Economic Development Initiative Grant. Both of these incentives are crucial to Arlington being able to reliably bring businesses looking at the Washington D.C. area into Virginia. The Arlington Chamber supports efforts by the Commonwealth to provide economic-development assistance and mitigate the impact to localities that continue to lose jobs as a result of federal cuts while simultaneously diversifying Virginia's industry portfolio and planning for future federal actions.

The Chamber calls on the General Assembly to **sustain full funding for Go Virginia program** to realize the benefits of synergistic regional collaboration and lessen competition between Virginia localities. The Chamber further supports **increased funding to market Virginia as a business destination.**

Taxation & Regulation

The Arlington Chamber supports a comprehensive examination and modernization of the Commonwealth's tax structure that recognizes changes in Virginia's economy and promotes prosperity and job creation. The Chamber believes this can be accomplished while maintaining the rational balance of the tax burden in Virginia among businesses, residents and users of services that has led Virginia to consistently be ranked as one of the top business-friendly states in the nation.

The Arlington Chamber supports the Commonwealth simplifying the regulatory process by frequently assessing the need for existing regulations, and only imposing new regulations that achieve a specific need or goal for the community without imposing an undue burden. In particular, the Chamber calls on the General Assembly to **expedite business permitting processes and revise the definition of Small, Women-owned and Minority-owned Business** to better target procurement and other business opportunities. The Chamber further highlights the multitude of ABC laws as an example of where simplification and lessening of specific regulations may benefit the community.

Housing Affordability and Workforce Housing

The Arlington Chamber supports a regional approach to housing affordability, **focusing resources on areas of the state where needs are greater.** The stock, price, and type of affordable housing varies greatly within the Commonwealth and it makes sense to acknowledge that reality. **The Arlington Chamber asks for the creation of a dedicated funding stream for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund** at a level to provide support to all parts of Virginia, including our higher cost region.

Health Care

The Arlington Chamber supports Medicaid reform efforts and coverage expansion that takes full advantage of available federal funding. Closing the coverage gap is critical to ensuring Arlington residents have access to quality healthcare coverage while protecting Arlington businesses from the burdensome increases in healthcare costs. For the Commonwealth to achieve this in a fiscally sensible way it is important that coverage expansion be paired with some private-sector style reforms.

Education & Workforce Development

The Chamber of Commerce supports investment in all levels of quality education. Further, we support a forward looking approach where innovation and creativity fosters better outcomes that benefit our community. Specifically, the Chamber advocates for:

- Advancing locally-flexible education and workforce development policy initiatives that position Virginia as a global leader in workforce readiness;
- Establishing consistent and ongoing communication and collaboration among all “pre-K through gray” education providers and the private sector;
- Establish acceptance of technical and professional apprenticeship programs throughout the Commonwealth and provide incentives to the private sector to expand work-based learning programs;
- Establish incentives to motivate employers to develop workplace learning opportunities for high school students to allow school systems to align with the new “Profile of Virginia Graduate”
- Building and continuing collaborative initiatives between Arlington Public Schools, Arlington County Government, and regional higher education partners. Specifically including expanded opportunities for dual enrollment college credits for all Arlington students and continuing education for Arlington teachers as a part of their program of studies;
- Continuation of an appropriately funded Go Virginia Initiative that fosters collaborative innovations in technical and professional education and workforce initiatives;
- Establishing collaborative initiatives to provide opportunities for adults seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce that support not only skills training and interview preparation, but also childcare support to allow for increased participation rates.
- Extending of non-traditional operating weekday/weekend hours for the Commonwealth’s public transportation systems to support the travel needs of the 24-hour workforce.

Finally, the Chamber supports the continued presence of a Regional Workforce Council dedicated to Arlington County and Alexandria City, distinct from other regions of Northern Virginia.

Governance

The Arlington Chamber supports maintaining the integrity of the Dillon Rule.

Specifically, county governments should not have authority to coerce businesses, of any size, to provide specific wage levels, benefits, or working conditions, outside the framework of applicable federal and state labor law.

The Chamber further supports initiatives to **promote transparency in state government, including efforts to broadcast and record and make accessible video of legislative Committee and Subcommittee meetings.**

Zoning & Planning

The Arlington Chamber urges the General Assembly to **study the impact of outdated locality plans on economic development**, to determine if rewrites to such plans should be required on a regular basis.

Specifically the General Assembly should serve as a backstop and a safeguard against legislative overreach by local governments in their exercise of eminent domain authority and effective takings of private property rights through the limitation of development and redevelopment options via targeted downzoning.

Energy

The Arlington Chamber recognizes the vital importance of abundant, affordable energy supply to maintain and grow Virginia's economy. To this end, the Chamber supports statewide energy-efficiency objectives and policies, but does not support the delegation of that authority to localities, especially as it applies to the adoption of "green" construction codes.

The Chamber believes adoption of "green" construction codes should occur at the state level and be applied in a uniform manner in all localities. Additionally, **localities should not be delegated the authority to regulate energy consumption and usage, either through local building and zoning codes or through restrictions on the transferability of interests in real estate or to compel private building owners to make public proprietary and confidential data regarding building energy usage. The Chamber instead supports voluntary, incentive-based programs to measure and achieve shared energy efficiency goals.**

The Arlington Chamber also supports the expansion and diversification of Virginia's energy portfolio, as well as updated energy infrastructure which increases system safety and reliability, but does not support a mandatory renewable portfolio standard that will unnecessarily restrict the flexibility of the state and its utility partners to keep energy affordable.

Assessment & Equalization

Fair and efficient access to justice for aggrieved taxpayers appealing erroneously high real estate tax assessments is an essential element of a strong local business climate. To this end, the Arlington Chamber asks the General Assembly to **clarify the role of the County Attorney in the real estate tax appeal process and sustain the existing burden of proof on appeal before a local Board of Equalization or Circuit Court** at a preponderance of the evidence standard.

Parking

The Arlington Chamber thanks the General Assembly for approving legislation in 2017 to prevent local governments from adopting onerous and intrusive "second signature" policies and urges the General Assembly to **oppose any effort that would impede property owners from safely managing the parking on their property.** In a community such as Arlington, where space is at a premium, responsible parking management is a vital component of private-property rights.

Chamber Contacts

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