



2019 County General Assembly Position Responses

Each year, in addition to developing its own legislative priorities for the next General Assembly session, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce also takes positions, where appropriate, on legislative proposals made by the Arlington County Board and School Board.

The Chamber does not make a response to every policy position; generally, it only comments on issues that substantially affect budget or public-policy matters related to the business community and economic development.

As with its own legislative policy positions, the Chamber's policy responses emanate from the Government Affairs and Economic Development Committee, which forwards its recommendations to the Chamber's Board of Directors for final approval.

Below please find selected County Board and School Board policy statements and legislative requests, and the Chamber's responses to them:

Finance

- Local Taxing Authority **County Board Position:** Preserve all current local taxing authority, including business license, and machinery and tools tax administration, real estate and rate making authority. Any modifications to local taxing authority must include an alternative revenue authority with reliable, sustainable revenue sources. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- Equal Taxing Authority **County Board Position:** Grant counties the same taxing authority as cities to provide a level playing field among localities. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position but supports a comprehensive evaluation and reorganization of existing state and local tax mechanisms and structures.
- On-Line Travel Companies/Modifying State Sales and Local Transient Occupancy Taxes **County Board Position:** Ensure localities and the state can collect all state sales and local Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) levies associated with on-line travel sales by on-line travel companies (OTCs). **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- Communications Sales and Use Tax **County Board Position:** Reset the rate to the same level as the state sales tax and broaden coverage to include services that have become available since the original law was adopted. Oppose transfers of these revenues to the state general fund for purposes other than those stipulated in the Code of Virginia. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Transportation

- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) **County Board Position:** Maintain sufficient, sustainable and dedicated funding sources for WMATA's long-term needs, ensure the state meets its funding commitment to WMATA's capital program, and ensure that year-over-year growth in state WMATA capital and operating assistance allocations tracks WMATA's needs, and are within the allowable growth dictated by the General Assembly. Work with the state to ensure that localities and WMATA are not penalized for increasing transit service. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- Revenue Sharing **County Board Position:** Support the Virginia Department of Transportation's Revenue Sharing program at the rate of \$150 million on an annual basis. This popular matching fund has enabled Arlington and many other localities to fund transportation projects that otherwise would not have been constructed. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Education

- Dual Enrollment **School Board Position:** Support legislation that would provide for articulation between local school divisions and the Virginia Community College System in areas such as dual enrollment, transcripts, credit and transfer pathways, and mathematics intervention services. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- Education Funding **School Board Position:** Support a review and update of the State education funding formula to ensure that it reflects the actual costs and needs of providing quality education. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- At-Risk Add-on **County Board Position:** Support an at-risk add-on that would provide additional funding based on the number of students who meet that criteria. **School Board Position:** Support additional funding for the at-risk add-on that would provide that additional funding based on the number of students who meet the criteria. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- Unfunded Mandates **School Board Position:** Support the full funding of the Standards of Quality and of all new mandates passed by the General Assembly. **Chamber response:** Just as the Chamber opposes unfunded state and local mandates on the private sector, the Chamber supports this position.
- Support Services **County Board Position:** Eliminate the artificial funding cap placed on support positions, and restore the inflation factor for non-personal support costs. **School Board Position:** Support the return to the General Assembly's prior practice of funding support services to school divisions based upon actual local school division practices. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- Preschool Programs **School Board Position:** Support increasing the flexibility of the Virginia Preschool Initiative funding to allow its use in other preschool programs. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

- Cost of Competing School Board Position: Support continuation of the Cost of Competing factor. **Chamber response**: The Chamber supports this position.

General Government

- Short-term Rental Properties (aka On-line Short-term lodging) County Board Position: Preserve local authority to regulate short-term rentals, audit tax collections and enforce zoning laws. **Chamber response**: The Chamber supports this position.
- Unfunded Mandates County Board Position: Oppose any mandates that are not fully funded, including additional administrative burdens on local governments. **Chamber response**: Just as the Chamber opposes unfunded state and local mandates on the private sector, the Chamber supports this position.
- Nonpartisan Redistricting County Board Position: Depoliticize the drawing of congressional and state legislative district boundaries by supporting an approach that advocates for fairness, transparency and accountability, keeps the residents’ interests in mind, and encourages healthy debate and participation by the public in the process. **Chamber response**: The Chamber supports this position.

Land Use and Housing

- Land Use Policies County Board Position: Support the authority of local governments to plan, zone, and enforce land use regulations, without restricting local zoning authority or the zoning process. **Chamber response**: The Chamber opposes this position.
- Housing Trust Fund County Board Position: Increase budget for Housing Trust Fund by at least \$20 million, and support a permanent source of funding. **Chamber response**: The Chamber supports this position.

Civil Rights Initiatives

- Voting Access County Board Position: Expand voting access by enhancing accessibility for people who may need assistance with registering and/or casting a ballot. Enact no-excuse absentee voting. **Chamber response**: The Chamber supports expansion of access and accessibility for individuals requiring assistance to vote but takes no position on the issue of no excuse absentee voting.

Energy and the Environment

- Permanent Power Purchase Agreements County Board Position: Replace current pilot program for third-party renewable energy power purchase agreements with a permanent provision that allows PPAs to all customer classes without limits on system size or program capacity. **Chamber response**: The Chamber supports the broad framework of this proposal.
- Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard County Board Position: Enact a mandatory renewable portfolio standard (RPS) to provide a market incentive for renewable power in Virginia to keep Virginia competitive with neighboring states. **Chamber response**: The Chamber opposes this position as it would raise utility rates in the Commonwealth.

- Net Metering **County Board Position:** Prevent any additional hindrance to existing net metering laws; remove the 1 percent cap on the total amount of solar that can be net-metered in a utility service territory; allow governmental net metering such that excess renewable energy generation at one town, city, or county site can be credited to another governmental account at retail value, including non-contiguous sites; allow all customers to attribute excess renewable energy generation to meters on contiguous property owned by the same customer; allow all customers to install a net-metered system sufficient to meet future demand, rather than requiring that such systems be limited to a size sufficient to meet past demand. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- Energy Efficiency and Recurrent Flooding **County Board Position:** Support forthcoming Department of Environmental Quality rule to regulate CO2 emissions from the electric power sector in Virginia through a market-based emission mechanism, such as participation in the existing Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Support use of proceeds from the market for carbon reduction to (1) incentivize greater energy efficiency and renewable energy investments, and (2) address public health, integrity of property, and economic and infrastructure resilience amid climate change. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position as it subjects Virginia to standards above and beyond federal law.
- Study opportunity for a Green Bank initiative in Virginia **County Board Position:** Direct the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME) to study the feasibility, costs, and benefits of establishing a “Green Bank” of public and private funds to serve as a catalyst for innovation and implementation of advanced energy efficiency practices, renewable energy deployment, and other environmental programming throughout the Commonwealth. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports study of this concept.
- Preserving Trees **County Board Position:** Support legislation to provide greater incentives for tree canopy preservation in the context of compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and related environmental laws. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position as an incentive-driven approach, but remains wary of mandates to the same effect.
- Recycling **County Board Position:** Encourage adoption of local option authority to develop incentives or regulations to decrease or otherwise regulate the distribution, sale or offer of disposable plastic bags. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Human Services

- Long-Term Care Workforce **County Board Position:** Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates to provide sick days, a living wage, and on-going training to long-term care workers which in turn will provide a better quality of life for Virginia’s older adults and people with disabilities. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- Child Care Center Quality **County Board Position:** Work with the appropriate state agencies to improve the quality of both child care centers and home-based day care centers by increasing technical assistance & trainings related to health and safety, including emergency preparation and English as a Second Language classes (important for safety). **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.