



2020 Responses to Arlington County General Assembly Positions

Each year, in addition to developing its own legislative priorities for the 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.

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.

Transient Occupancy Tax Dedicated to Travel and Tourism Promotion: **County Board Position:** Request that the General Assembly renew, without a sunset, the .25% transient occupancy tax on hotel rooms that funds travel and tourism promotion in Arlington. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports 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.

Long Bridge Project: **County Board Position:** Secure state funding to support the expansion of passenger rail across the Long Bridge for more efficient Virginia Railway Express service, and the improvement of all Amtrak and commuter rail from Washington, DC to the south. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Education

Support Personnel: **County Board Position:** Eliminate the artificial funding cap placed on support positions and restore the inflation factor for non-personal support costs. The **Arlington School Board** supports the return to the General Assembly's prior practice of funding support services to school divisions based upon local school division practices. **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. The **Arlington School Board** supports the consolidation of the At-Risk Add On and Prevention, Intervention, and Remediation funds into a single, expanded At-Risk Add On Equity fund within the SOQ. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Cost of Competing Factor: The **Arlington School Board** supports the continued use of the Cost of Competing factor, including the restoration of funds for the inclusion of all support staff, in the reimbursement formula for Planning District Eight. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

General Government

Unfunded Mandates: **County Board Position:** Oppose any mandates that are not fully funded, including additional administrative burdens on local governments. The **Arlington School Board** requests that the General Assembly determine the financial impact of legislation on local school divisions and fully compensate local school divisions for all state-directed mandates.

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.

Legal Assistance Information to Accompany Eviction Notifications: **County Board Position:** Require eviction notices (five days' notice for payment issues and 21/30 notices terminating rental agreement in 30 days if the issue is not remedied in 21 days) to include contact information for legal assistance helplines and organizations. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Housing Choice Vouchers: **County Board Position:** Provide income tax credit for landlords in certain Arlington census tracts who participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. **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. Expand 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

Energy

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 supports incentives to promote investment in renewable energy, but opposes a mandatory renewable portfolio standard.

Net Metering: **County Board Position:** Prevent any additional hindrances 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. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Energy Efficiency Resource Standard: **County Board Position:** Enact a mandatory Energy Efficiency Resource Standard (EERS) that requires utilities in Virginia to meet annual, long-term targets for reducing energy use through end-use efficiency. An EERS adds a performance-based target to utility spending on efficiency programs. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.

Environment

Climate Response and Resiliency: **County Board Position:** Support Department of Environmental Quality rule to suppress or mitigate 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) allocate up to twenty (20%) percent of the gross proceeds from such program to fund climate-response, mitigation and adaptation and/or infrastructure projects that reduce emissions and increase climate resilience. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position as it subjects Virginia to standards above and beyond federal law.

Establish Virginia Bank for Energy and Resilience: **County Board Position:** Direct the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) to create an “Energy and Resiliency Bank” using public and private funds to serve as a catalyst for innovation and implementation of advanced energy efficiency practices, renewable energy deployment, increased resiliency, and other environmental programming throughout the Commonwealth. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports study of this concept.

Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF): **County Board Position:** Increase funding for SLAF to meet local water quality needs, restore creeks and streams, reduce localized flooding and protect property values. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Preserving Trees: **County Board Position:** Support legislation to provide greater incentives for tree canopy preservation and planting in the context of compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and related environmental laws. Tree preservation legislation should provide local governments with greater flexibility in the reforestation, conservation, preservation, and management of urban forests to include incentives to developers to maximize tree preservation and planting to offset tree removal. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position as an incentive-driven approach, but remains wary of mandates to the same effect.

Plastic Pollution: **County Board Position:** Enact 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 Staffing Standards: **County Board Position:** Improve Long-Term Care standards by providing living wages, paid sick days, overtime pay, and training for workers, as well as funding to meet state and national staffing standards for Ombudsman staff to patient ratios. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

Child Care: **County Board Position:** Increase funding for the state's child care subsidy program and direct the Virginia Department of Social Services to enact program changes that increase participation of child care providers (e.g., reduce the administrative burden on participating providers) and increase participation of families (e.g., eliminate child support requirements). **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.