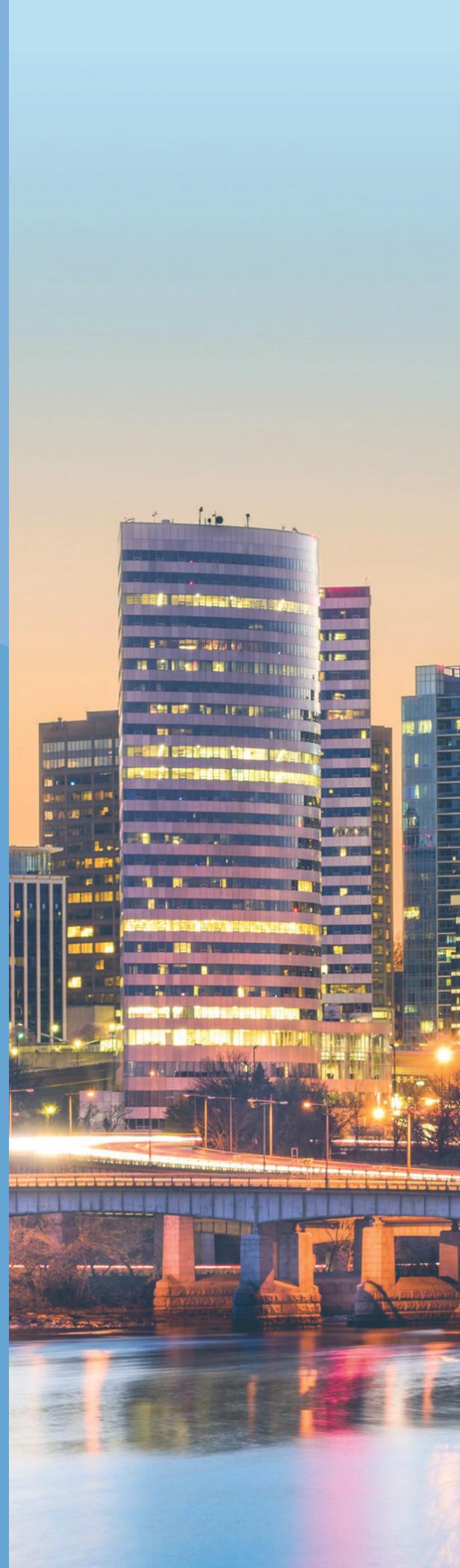


2020

General Assembly Policy Positions

ARLINGTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

 **The
Chamber**
Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Opportunity. Leadership. Results.



2020 General Assembly Priorities

To the Virginia General Assembly,

The Arlington Chamber is Commerce is pleased to share with you our legislative priorities for the 2020 General Assembly session, slated to commence on January 8, 2020. The Chamber advocates for these policies in furtherance of our mission **to strengthen businesses and the economic environment for those who work, live, and do business in Arlington**, and throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Welcoming Amazon's new headquarters was the highlight of the past year, and we thank the General Assembly for your support of this investment. As we look ahead to 2020, these policy recommendations look to build on our shared success to realize Arlington, and the Commonwealth's, full economic potential.

The Chamber recommends all of the policies in this document, calling particular attention to these top priorities for Arlington and Virginia's economic wellbeing:

- **Economic development programs** to broaden and to diversify our economic base, including appropriate incentives for businesses of all sizes, support for regional cooperation among economic development agencies, and increased funding to market Virginia as a business destination
- **Funding necessary improvements for transportation infrastructure**, including restoration of local and regional funding sources for transportation projects, improvements to address the current and forecasted need for mass-transit services, and the development and maintenance of aviation, port, and highway facilities
- **Expanding and focusing workforce housing development resources** on regions of the Commonwealth where needs are greater, and the creation of a dedicated funding stream for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund

The Arlington Chamber's Board of Directors adopted these policy priorities, which the Chamber's Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee developed. In addition to the priorities outlined herein, the Chamber will respond separately to the legislative packages proposed by the Arlington County Board and School Board.

We thank the members of Arlington's General Assembly delegation for visiting with our Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee to discuss the upcoming session and their priorities; their support and insights were helpful in preparing this document.

We thank you for your consideration of these proposals and extend our best wishes for a productive 2020 General Assembly session.

Best Regards,



Greg Hamilton
2019 Chair



Scott Ritter
2020 Chair



Kate Bates
President & CEO

Economic Development

The Arlington Chamber supports economic development programs to broaden and to diversify our economic base. Development incentives are investments in our economic future, and Arlington and the Commonwealth of Virginia have realized the return on these investments through increased employment and tax revenues.

The Arlington Chamber supports **appropriate incentives for businesses of all sizes**, knowing that smaller businesses grow if supported. The Chamber additionally supports maintaining a range of economic development programs to include support both for new businesses and existing businesses that relocate or expand operations in Arlington and Virginia. The Commonwealth Opportunity Fund and the Virginia Economic Development Initiative Grant are both crucial to Arlington being able reliably to bring and grow businesses looking at the Washington D.C. area into Virginia.

The Chamber thanks the General Assembly for supporting the Commonwealth's economic development performance agreement for Amazon's new headquarters, tech talent investments, and transportation infrastructure investments in the 2019 session. These investments will have positive benefits for all Virginia businesses in the immediate and continued future.

The successful experience of regional cooperation in attracting Amazon's headquarters demonstrates how collaboration in economic development is possible and can be beneficial to everyone involved. The Chamber encourages the General Assembly and Virginia Economic Development Partnership **to continue to foster cooperation among local economic development agencies**, as appropriate, and supports the GO Virginia initiative as a regional approach to economic development that would lessen competition between Virginia localities. **The Chamber further supports increased funding to market Virginia as a business destination.**

Infrastructure and Transportation

A strong infrastructure, including a robust transportation network, is essential for businesses to grow. The Arlington Chamber supports investments to maintain and to improve Virginia's public infrastructure to sustain the Commonwealth's economic engine. The Chamber supports broad-based approaches to selecting and to funding infrastructure projects. The Chamber applauds the Virginia General Assembly's action to establish a multi-year, stable revenue source for a Capital Trust Fund for WMATA. However, **the Chamber calls for a restoration of local and regional funding sources for multi-modal transportation projects in Arlington and Northern Virginia. The sources for revenues dedicated to transportation should be broad-based** so that the costs are borne by all who will benefit from the transportation services they fund.

The Chamber additionally applauds last year's commitment to improve transportation connections in the Richmond Highway corridor through funding for a second entrance to the Crystal City Metro station, two entrances to the future Potomac Yard Metro station in Alexandria, improvements to Richmond Highway, and the Crystal City Intermodal Connector to Washington Ronald Reagan National Airport. The Chamber asks the General Assembly and Arlington County as well to **provide the funding necessary for improvements to address the current and forecasted need for mass-transit services** in the Rosslyn/Ballston and Columbia Pike corridors, and ultimately into Shirlington, including such **vital projects as a second entrance at the Ballston Metro stations and a new Rosslyn tunnel**. The Chamber additionally supports extending non-traditional operating weekday/weekend hours for public transportation systems to support the travel needs of the 24-hour workforce.

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 further calls on the General Assembly and VDOT to work collaboratively with local stakeholders to deliver transportation infrastructure that meets local needs, and to continue to embrace innovation, leveraging new technological solutions to infrastructure and operational challenges.

Federally-owned facilities, such as Washington Ronald Reagan National and Dulles International Airports, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and Potomac waterfront, contribute greatly to our region's economic vitality. The Chamber asks the Commonwealth to take a leading role in working with the District of Columbia and Federal infrastructure partners, including the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) and National Park Service. The Chamber applauds the significant improvements MWAA is undertaking at Washington Ronald Reagan National Airport and supports leveraging these investments to maintain the level of passenger service there and to enhance multi-modal connections at the airport to the region and the Commonwealth. **Strategic investments that will help realize these connections include a new Long Bridge, improvements to Memorial Bridge, Amtrak regional service, and cross river MARC/VRE operation.**

Housing Affordability and Workforce Housing

Growing and maintaining a diverse housing stock is critical for economic development. Businesses, especially in the service sectors, look for the availability of workforce housing in choosing where to locate, and rely on housing that their employees can afford. Addressing our housing affordability challenges will require a multi-faceted approach. **The Chamber supports both efforts to increase the supply of housing and efforts to ensure access to safe and affordable housing options for our most vulnerable Virginians.** The stock, price, and type of affordable housing varies greatly within the Commonwealth and it makes sense to acknowledge that reality.

The Arlington Chamber supports a regional approach to housing affordability, focusing resources on areas of the state where needs are greater. The Chamber congratulates the Commonwealth for its commitment last year to invest \$75 million over five years for affordable housing, and encourages the Virginia Housing Development Authority commit to investing these funds in Arlington, Alexandria, and surrounding communities.

The Virginia Housing Trust Fund is an important tool to provide support for housing development across the Commonwealth. **The Arlington Chamber supports the creation of a dedicated funding stream for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, and an increase in its budget** to a level that will provide support to all parts of Virginia, including our higher-cost region. The Chamber also encourages providing some additional tools and local flexibility to address and incentivize affordable housing and to help make it more affordable to live in our communities. Examples of such tools include empowering local governments to provide targeted real estate tax abatements tied to activities that promote affordability.

Education and Workforce Development

Advancing locally-flexible education and workforce development policy initiatives will position Virginia as a global leader in workforce readiness, and so we support a forward-looking approach where innovation and creativity foster better outcomes that benefit our community. The Chamber supports funding for teacher professional development and increased efforts by Virginia's community colleges and universities to develop and strengthen undergraduate and graduate teacher-preparation programs in career and technical education and other Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education fields.

Education and workforce development occurs across a lifetime, and so the Chamber encourages establishing consistent and ongoing communication and collaboration among all "pre-K through gray" education providers and the private sector. The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to support school divisions in offering universal, quality pre-K, which is both important for learning development of our children and increasingly being sought by businesses that are determining where to locate their headquarters and operations. The Chamber further supports collaborative initiatives to provide opportunities for adults seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce, including skills training, interview preparation, and also childcare support to facilitate participation.

The Chamber supports funding for career and technical education opportunities. **Basic professional skill development opportunities should be integrated into school curricula, as these skills are transferable across jobs and industries.** The Chamber supports funding for collaborative initiatives between Arlington Public Schools and regional higher education partners, including opportunities for dual enrollment college credits. The Chamber supports funding for the Governor's STEM Academies, which prepare students for in-demand, high-wage, and high-skill careers in Virginia. School divisions should have support in hiring work-based learning coordinators to increase equitable access to internships, apprenticeships, senior capstone experiences, and similar opportunities for students.

The Chamber encourages providing incentives to the private sector to expand work-based learning, including technical and professional apprenticeships. Continuation of an appropriately funded GO Virginia Initiative will help to foster collaborative innovations in technical and professional education and workforce initiatives. Additionally, the continued presence of a **Workforce Development Board dedicated to Arlington County and Alexandria City, distinct from other regions of Northern Virginia, will help to ensure that we can meet workforce needs specific to our area.**

Arlington and the Commonwealth benefit from the many public and private higher education institutions located in and expanding in our region. The Chamber supports enhancing partnerships for cyber, computer science, and technology education at public and private universities across the Commonwealth, such as the Tech Talent Pipeline and Commonwealth Cyber Initiative. **The Chamber asks the General Assembly to commit \$125 million to match privately-raised funding for George Mason University's Institute for Digital InnovAtion.**

Tourism

The Chamber applauds the General Assembly's renewal through 2021 of Arlington County's Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) 1/4% surcharge designated for the purpose of promotion of tourism and business travel. Arlington County and the Chamber have signed a Letter of Agreement to ensure hospitality industry input into the efficient use of these funds. **The Chamber calls on the General Assembly to remove the sunset provision** to bring Arlington in line with other jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth as no other locality's TOT surcharge has a sunset provision.

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 the energy infrastructure essential to meeting the growing energy needs of Arlington County and the Commonwealth. 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, restrictions on the transferability of interests in real estate, or by compelling private building owners to make proprietary and confidential data regarding building energy usage public. The Chamber instead supports voluntary, incentive-based programs to measure and to achieve shared energy efficiency goals.

The Arlington Chamber also acknowledges the need to invest in Virginia's energy system, particularly by modernizing its electric distribution infrastructure. The Chamber supports such investments as a means to improve system safety and reliability while also facilitating the expansion and diversification of Virginia's energy portfolio. While the Chamber welcomes efforts to develop more renewable resources, including those powered by solar or wind energy, it 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.

Taxation and 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 be ranked consistently 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 and streamline business permitting processes and revise the definition of Small, Women-owned and Minority-owned Business** to target procurement and other business opportunities better.

The Chamber further highlights **the multitude of ABC laws as an example of where simplification and lessening of specific regulations may benefit the community.**

Simplifying the process for securing special event licenses, for example, will help promote locally-produced beverages at community events, benefiting Virginia producers.

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.

Zoning and 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.

Governance

The Arlington Chamber supports maintaining Virginia's Right to Work law, which has been one of the key elements that has made the Commonwealth a top destination for business in the United States.

The 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 applauds the General Assembly's actions in 2018 to promote transparency in state government, including broadcasting and making accessible video of legislative Committee meetings. **The Chamber supports expanding the broadcasting and recording program to include legislative Subcommittee meetings.**



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