



Responses to Arlington County 2026 General Assembly Legislative Package

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 initiatives and positions made by the Arlington County Board and School Board.

The Chamber does not make a response to every policy position; 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:

Legislative Initiatives

- **Compensate for Federal Cuts to Public Safety and Emergency Management:** Cover emergency management shortfalls created by cuts at the federal level, including those to the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), among others, and study options for funding these efforts on a permanent basis at the state-level. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this initiative.
- **Increase Local Authority Over Affordable Housing:** Allow localities increased flexibility to promote affordable housing through housing solutions tailored to fit local needs, including but not limited to negotiating affordable set-asides through a collaborative local process, which includes interested parties. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes seeking authority over affordable housing before the County Board convenes stakeholders to develop specific housing policy.
- **Preserve and Expand Tree Canopy:** Provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests in recognition of their ability to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, lower energy use, mitigate invasive plant species effects, and mitigate urban heat islands. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this initiative as an incentive-driven approach but remains wary of mandates to the same effect.
- **Update and Improve Tourism Improvement District Law:** Amend the state code on Tourism Improvement Districts to allow for greater cooperation and synergy with local governments and their efforts to promote tourism. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this initiative.

Legislative Positions

A. Economic Development

- **Assist Workers, Organizations, and Businesses Affected by Federal Actions:** Push for initiatives to provide support to workers, organizations, and business affected by actions at the federal level including, contract cancelations, mass layoffs, and cuts to grants and programs. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Enhance Access to Cultural Experiences:** Improve accessibility in communities where transportation and income gaps currently limit participation. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Increase Virginia Economic Development (VEDP) Funding:** Increase funding for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to attract out-of-state companies. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Promote Tourism:** Invest in marketing efforts to attract visitors to Virginia. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Redevelop Vacant and Obsolete Office Space:** Fund the Urban Public-Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund to leverage existing developed spaces for business development or residential purposes. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Support the Needs of Arlington's Workforce:** Utilizing holistic, wraparound services, ensure Arlingtonians have access to the tools they need including broadband, affordable child care, and paid Family Medical Leave. Emphasize upskilling existing workers and support the creation of programs tailored to the specific talents and needs of former federal workers. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports greater broadband access, affordable child care, upskilling programs for existing workers, and the creation of programs for former federal workers.
- **Incentivize Child Care Subsidy Implementation:** Increase local reimbursements for the state's childcare subsidy program to account for administrative costs and the actual cost of tuition in a locality. Direct the Virginia Department of Education to incentivize participation of child-care providers in mixed delivery programs while maintaining local flexibility to administer or expand support services. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

B. Education and Youth (County Board and School Board Positions)

- **Educate for the Future:** Provide the resources and flexibility needed by localities to ensure students are prepared to be good citizens in our increasingly digital world and prepared to participate in the modern economy. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Invest in the Next Generation:** Fund efforts to provide youth-focused programming, promote mental and physical well-being among young people and treat youth mental health challenges. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Unfunded Mandates:** The Arlington School Board opposes legislation that would impose new unfunded mandates on public schools. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

- **Local Composite Index:** The Arlington School Board opposes eliminating the 0.5 cap on the Local Composite Index for the Virginia Preschool Initiative. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Sales Tax for School Construction:** The Arlington School Board supports extending the Halifax Model of 1% sales tax for school construction and modernization to all school divisions. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes this position.
- **Federal Funding Cuts:** The Arlington School Board supports backstopping any federal funding cuts, particularly relating to support for schools in with higher levels of economic need, English Learners, teacher development, and adult education. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Teacher's License Reciprocity:** The Arlington School Board supports expanding the application of licensure reciprocity for endorsements to a teaching license. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Individual Rights:** The Arlington School Board supports policies and practices that protect individual rights and protect students and employees from discrimination due to gender expression, gender identity, sexual harassment, and transgender status. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

C. Environment

- **Promote Clean Air:** Enhance air quality, reduce noise pollution, and improve health outcomes through the adoption of strategies like pushing for the decarbonization of portable lawn equipment use. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes strategies that place an unnecessary restriction on equipment used by businesses.
- **Push for Energy Affordability:** Ensure energy affordability is a key consideration in all energy and utility policy discussions. **Chamber response:** The Chamber recognizes the importance of an affordable energy supply for maintaining and growing Virginia's economy.

D. Fiscal

- **Keep Existing Local Procurement Rules:** Avoid enacting procurement mandates that are not fully funded, including those that impose additional administrative burdens and other costly requirements on local governments. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Maintain Local Tax Authority:** Preserve all current local taxing authority, including, but not limited to business license, real estate and rate making authority, sales, and property. Any modifications to local taxing authority must include an alternative revenue authority with reliable, sustainable revenue sources. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

E. Good Governance

- **Leverage Emerging Technology:** Seek to responsibly and efficiently use AI to enhance capabilities that improve operations, service delivery, and other functions of effective government. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

- **Modernize Meeting Access:** Permanently allow virtual participation to allow public bodies to meet by electronic means under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

G. Housing & Land Use

- **Adequately Fund Affordable Housing Initiatives:** Ensure the Virginia Housing Trust Fund and local housing initiatives are adequately resourced and have the flexibility they need to address housing needs. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Create and Maintain Inclusive Housing Standards and Planning:** Make sure housing policies consider the needs of individuals from all backgrounds, including older Virginians and those with disabilities, and that anti-discrimination policies are enforced. **Chamber response:** The Chamber broadly supports inclusive housing standards.
- **Protecting Tenants:** Strengthen tenants' rights by providing additional recourse, including local enforcement, for inadequate health and safety conditions and access to legal resources during eviction proceedings. Support measures to keep housing costs affordable, including anti-rent gouging protections. **Chamber response:** The Chamber opposes the implementation of any form of rent control in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- **Provide Maximum Flexibility for Addressing Housing Affordability and Quality:** Allow for creative solutions for developing more housing and for flexibility in dealing with housing quality issues such as inadequate heating or A/C causing risks during extreme heat or cold. **Chamber response:** The Chamber will consider proposed solutions to address housing quality and affordability on a case-by-case basis.

H. Individual Rights and Civil Liberties

- **Foster Racial Equity:** Tackle the issues and policies that lead to poorer outcomes and other disparities experienced by people of color, immigrants, and refugees. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Support Persons with Disabilities:** Promote measures to ensure persons with disabilities maintain their independence and enhance their quality of life. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Protect and Expand LGBTQ+ Rights:** Protect existing legislation that codifies rights and protections for LGBTQ+ Virginians. Support any proposed expansions to those rights and reinforce school boards in their efforts to allow LGBTQ+ students freedom of expression. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.
- **Support Gender Parity:** Support all efforts to promote gender equity and combat gender discrimination. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position.

J. Transportation

- **Provide Robust Transportation Funding:** Advocate for long-term, sustainable, dedicated funding and expanded revenue opportunities to meet the growing needs of public transit in our region, including funding for Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), and other regional transportation initiatives. **Chamber response:** The Chamber supports this position (2025).