



**Virginia General Assembly
Session Report
January 31, 2024**

The 2024 Virginia General Assembly session began on January 10. To be considered for adoption, all bills must pass their chamber of origin by Tuesday, February 13 – the date of crossover.

The Chamber's policy priorities end in a positive position with the General Assembly. Here is a summary of the Chamber's priority legislation during the General Assembly session.

Government and Business Climate

The Chamber is opposing HB951 (Lopez)/SB247 (McPike), which would allow localities to institute new mandates for retention of building service contract staff of buildings in that locality. This would allow localities to create unreasonable restrictions on building service employers, limiting employers' abilities to choose their employees upon beginning new contracts for building services. HB951 is in the House Commerce & Labor Committee, while SB247 remains in the Senate General Laws Committee.

Economic Development

The Chamber strongly supports Commonwealth efforts to facilitate major valuable economic development projects. The Chamber has been a strong proponent of HB1125 (Carr)/SB217 (Locke), the Virginia Business Ready Expedited Permitting Act. The Act would permit the Department of Economic Development to select up to ten economic development sites or projects and allocate resources to expedite all local permitting needed to achieve those projects. These bills are in House General Laws and Senate Finance & Appropriations, respectively.

The Chamber is additionally supporting HB1514 (Torian)/SB718 (Surovell), which would establish the Virginia Sports and Entertainment Authority and Financing Fund. This Authority would be empowered to issue bonds, backed by Virginia's AAA credit rating, for the purpose of raising funds for the proposed Potomac Yards entertainment district. The Chamber supports the entertainment district as a significant opportunity for Northern Virginia right at Arlington's doorstep. HB1514 is in the House Appropriations Committee, and SB718 is in the Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee.

Housing Affordability and Workforce Housing

The Chamber supported the Faith in Housing for the Commonwealth Act, backed by Delegate Carr (HB1124) and Senator Hashmi (SB233). The Act would remove regulatory red tape that pertains to houses of worship who currently own land or property and wish to develop affordable housing on their property. The Chamber supports the Act as legislation removing restrictions and encouraging houses of worship to contribute housing units to their communities if they choose to. SB233 was continued in the Senate General Laws Committee, for consideration in

the 2025 session. HB1124 remains in the House General Laws' Housing & Consumer Protection Subcommittee.

The Chamber opposes legislation that would create rent control policies that would harm the rental housing market and discourage much-needed investment in rental housing. HB721 (Clark)/SB366 (Boysko) would allow localities adopt provisions intended to mitigate "rent price gouging," but would implement rent control measures. HB721 is currently in the House Courts of Justice Committee, up for consideration on January 31. SB366 is in currently in Senate General Laws.

Land Use, Zoning and Planning

The Chamber is strong champion for SB13 (Favola)/HB281 (Reaser), which would remove regulatory red tape to allow office buildings to include child care facilities. This would encourage employers and commercial real estate owners to permit much-need child care facilities, benefiting their employees and reducing vacancy rates. SB13 passed the Senate unanimously, and HB281 will be up for final passage on January 31.

Transportation

The Chamber has been active in the past year in working with other business groups and government stakeholders to develop a long-term solution to WMATA funding. As such, we support SJ28 (Ebbin), which would commence a JLARC study to investigate the best policy solution possible to create dedicated funding for WMATA and Metrorail. SJ28 is currently in the Senate Rules Committee, which has not been called into a meeting yet.

Business and Community Infrastructure

The Chamber is opposing SB14 (McPike)/HB458 (Callsen), legislation that would permit localities to levy a new sales/use tax for further school construction. SB14 passed the Senate on January 30 by a vote of 27-13, while HB458 is still in the House Finance Committee.

Additionally, the Chamber is opposing HB1287 (McClure), legislation that would enact requirements for towing companies operating solely within counties to be subject to new permit requirements. The Chamber does not believe in adding additional regulatory burdens to businesses. HB1287 is currently in an ad-hoc subcommittee in the House Transportation Committee, and no subcommittee meeting has been called.

Energy and Environment

The Chamber opposes HB28 (Jones), legislation that would institute a full moratorium on all fossil fuel projects in the Commonwealth. This legislation went against the Chamber's policy position of urging availability to consumers of a diverse range of energy choices. This legislation remains in the House Rules Committee, which has not been called into a meeting.

Taxes and Fiscal Policy

The Chamber is advocating for the passage of SB556, creation of a tax credit for buildings and areas under historic preservation. The Commonwealth of Virginia has many valuable historic properties that are part of our community as well as being major drivers of tourism. This bill

would facilitate investment in these iconic landmarks. SB556 is currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Education and Workforce Development

Child care policies were a major workforce priority for the Arlington Chamber. In addition to SB13/HB281, the Chamber supports HB1216 (McClure), which incentivizes employers to invest in their employees' child care by providing employers with matching funds from the Commonwealth. We support such policies that incentivize businesses to invest in their workforce's needs. HB1216 will go before the House Appropriations Committee on January 31, having been reported out of the Elementary & Secondary Education Subcommittee.

Regarding secondary education, the Chamber supports HB1009 (Lovejoy)/SB199 (Diggs), which would require the Board of Education to create a list of workforce credentials that students may pursue while counting towards credits needed for a high school diploma. This legislation would broaden the scope of how students can prepare in their high school education for any type of career they plan to pursue. HB1009 and SB199 are in the House Education Committee and Senate Education and Health Committee, respectively.

Hospitality and Tourism

The Chamber is advocating for the passage of HB688 (Leftwich)/SB635 (Rouse), which removes the sunset on the permission of restaurants serving cocktails to-go. This was a policy supported by our restaurants, who have found takeout cocktails to be a significant opportunity for sales. HB688 have been read on the House floor, and will be subject to a House vote this week. SB635 has been read on the Senate floor, and will also be voted on by the Senate this week.