



2021 Legislative Agenda

Updated 10/5/2020. Contact:

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ABOUT THE CHAMBER

The Chamber promotes regional business by providing invaluable referrals and connections and influencing public policy to benefit all businesses. The Roanoke Regional Chamber believes that if something impacts your business and the growth and success of our region, It's Our Business too. The Chamber was founded in 1889 and represents more than 800 businesses with over 75,000 employees and an estimated payroll of more than \$1.5 billion.

Our Priorities

1. Research and Technology
2. Education and Workforce Development
3. Economic Development
4. Health Care
5. COVID-19 and Other Public Health Emergencies

Do you have questions about our Legislative Agenda? Contact:

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Roanoke Regional Chamber
210 S. Jefferson St.
Roanoke, VA 24011-1702



Research & Technology

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

Critical to our region's future economic growth is an environment that develops and invests in research, technology and innovation. It is essential that our region act swiftly to assist in formation and commercialization of research and innovation opportunities at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC and throughout the Innovation Corridor and Virginia's Blue Ridge region.

THEREFORE, THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

- Expanding incentives for angel and venture capital investments in Virginia businesses.
- Increased funding and technical assistance to commercialize regional research spinoff and startup businesses through:
 1. Commonwealth Research Commercialization Fund
 2. Regional Acceleration and Mentoring Program (RAMP)
 3. Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) and Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)
 4. Promoting public-private partnerships to expand broadband infrastructure to support economic development and startups in underserved areas.



Education and Workforce Development

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

Educated, trained, qualified workers contribute in great measure to the economic strength of the Commonwealth. Employees able to meet the challenges and opportunities of doing business in this century and to fuel growth are critical.

AS A RESULT, THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

- Initiatives encouraging collaboration between the business and education communities for business readiness and soft skills, including apprenticeships, job shadowing, internships, and experiential learning opportunities in K-12, and funding for post-secondary education, workforce training and working remotely
- Private industry efforts to contribute in Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Increased collaboration between school systems and higher education to address regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) needs
- Identification and support of the talent pipeline needed to enhance our regional clusters: manufacturing, life sciences and health care, food and beverage processing, and emerging technologies and IT, to help retain talent from higher education
- Funding for Pre K-12 and STEAM-H education
- The Virginia Values Veterans V3 program, the Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP) and credentialing opportunities to connect employers and veterans.

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Economic Development

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

Economic development thrives where infrastructure is strong, public-private partnerships are highly active, regulatory and tax burdens are few, and cultural assets are vibrant. Businesses locate and expand in areas where these factors exist.

THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

- Virginia's existing Right-to-Work laws
- Transportation funding to meet the prioritized needs of our region. To include:
 1. Continued efforts toward timely implementation of the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan, including safety improvements that enhance motorist visibility, particularly lighting at on-ramps and off-ramps.
 2. Strengthening the connectivity between Roanoke and the New River Valley, Lynchburg, and Greensboro with consideration for the Roanoke Region Transportation Priorities for Economic Development and Growth (TED) Study, including the prioritization of primary roads improvement projects, such as US 460 and Rt 220.
 3. A federal infrastructure package that supports regional funding for interstate improvements and construction
 4. Efforts to improve service and add runway capacity at the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport
 5. Extended Amtrak service in Western Virginia
- The continued safe development of cost effective, traditional and renewable energy sources in an effort to balance economic development, the environment and property rights



Health Care

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A balanced approach is necessary to ensure that health care is accessible, affordable, and sustainable. Sufficient healthcare funding is necessary to ensure the continued viability of healthcare providers who serve the uninsured and underinsured through charity care.

THEREFORE, THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

- Working with lawmakers, federal and state agencies, and providers to effectively address public health, including mental health and opioid and substance abuse.
- Certificate of Public Need (COPN) reform that is comprehensive and takes into consideration changes in the healthcare environment at both the state and federal levels.
- That the enactment of any replacement or reform of the Affordable Care Act should avoid a single-payer system and ensure that caps on Medicaid recognize the unique nature of each state's program and avoid transferring significant programmatic risk to the states and/or the private pay market; and the federal regulatory burden on businesses and health care providers should be streamlined.
- Association health plans or Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements to support health care affordability and accessibility for employers and employees.



COVID-19 & Other Public Health Emergencies

THE CHAMBER SUPPORTS:

- Measures to help businesses recover and operate during the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies, to include:
 1. Accurate and prompt COVID-19 testing
 2. Legal liability protections for businesses who follow health protocols
 3. Continued affordable and reliable access to Personal Protective Equipment
 4. Measures to reshore manufacture of critical medical equipment
 5. Continued recognition of regional differences as they relate to potential outbreaks and strategies to mitigate viral spread
 6. That any moratorium on rental evictions or utility cut-offs be combined with financial assistance or other funding sources to ensure that both tenant and landlord are able to meet fiscal obligations.



