

Chamber Day 2026 – Key Takeaways (VACCE Update)

It was good to be back at **Virginia Chamber of Commerce Chamber Day** alongside many of you. As always, the value was hearing directly—often candidly—how current policy discussions and statewide initiatives are shaping Virginia’s business environment.

Thank you to the Virginia Chamber staff and leadership and our associate members WiseChoice Healthcare Alliance, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, Luman Strategies, and Chambers for Innovation and Clean Energy for going above and beyond during Chamber Day. Their added gatherings and support created valuable space for connection and conversation among VACCE members and are appreciated.

A few notable takeaways by speaker:

Legislative Perspective

- **Terry Kilgore**, *House Minority Leader, Virginia House of Delegates*, emphasized the cumulative impact of policy decisions on employers—particularly around affordability, housing, workforce availability, and rising operating costs.
- **Ryan T. McDougle**, *Senate Minority Leader, Virginia Senate*, was direct in outlining areas chambers should be watching closely, including taxes on digital goods and services, energy costs and reliability, paid family and medical leave, expanded litigation exposure, and collective bargaining implications for local governments and public institutions. His message underscored the need for active business engagement rather than assumption.

Executive Branch & Workforce Alignment

- **Ghazala Hashmi**, *Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, framed education as workforce and economic development policy, with emphasis on talent pipelines, regional differences, and career-connected learning.
- **Carrie H. Chenery**, *Secretary of Commerce and Trade for Virginia*, focused on economic resilience, affordability, housing supply, and the importance of working through existing frameworks and partnerships—acknowledging chambers as key connectors between policy and real-world business impact.

Blueprint Virginia 2035

- **Susan Horne**, *President & CEO, Lead Virginia*, reinforced that Blueprint Virginia is intended to be action-oriented, with continued emphasis on regional collaboration.
- **Monica Schmude**, *President, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Virginia*, shared updates on implementation, highlighting industry councils as the primary vehicle for advancing priorities tied to workforce, housing, healthcare access, energy reliability, and the business climate.

Save the Dates (Announced):

- **March 12, 2026** – Women in Business Leadership Forum
- **June 3, 2026** – Healthcare Conference

Workforce Highlight

A special announcement at Chamber Day was the launch of **InternshipsVA**, a new statewide initiative designed to help Virginia employers create and expand **high-quality, paid internship programs** for higher education students.

Governor **Abigail Spanberger** led the announcement in Richmond, joined by leaders from the **Virginia Chamber of Commerce**, **Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)**, **Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC)**, and the **State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)**.

For full details on the program and resources, visit: <https://vedp.org/internshipsva>