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CHAMBER CALLS A WIN FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THOSE AROUND THE STATE

Blacksburg/Christiansburg, Virginia, November 9, 2020– The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce calls a legislative win in the 2020 Legislative Session with the support of Senator John Edwards in changing the Virginia Code and Conflict of Interest.

The Legislative Committee Chair, James Creekmore, shared, “the Chamber has been working on this change for over four years with little relief through the Conflict of Interest Committee for local business owners. The Code and Conflict of Interest stated that any business with a spouse or key employee married to a Virginia Tech employee must complete a conflict of interest form. All proposed purchases would have to be approved by the President of Virginia Tech, in this case. This was true for all state colleges and universities around the Commonwealth. We were able to work with Virginia Tech to solicit support for this change. Mary Helmick, Director of Procurement, was involved with the requested change, and she rallied the support of purchasing agents around the Commonwealth. The Chamber staff was able to reach out to Chamber executives in the Commonwealth with state colleges or universities to garner support for the action”.

The victory was announced last week at The Chamber’s Eggs & Issues program. The delayed announcement was due to a new process being designed to serve the affected business community. Virginia Tech was able to develop its process in September. Creekmore shared, “the pandemic slowed everything down.” According to Mary Helmick, Virginia Tech has created a petition waiver request from university employees with a personal connection with our small local businesses.

The qualifications for approval to the petition by a senior VT Administrator will be based on prices and value being advantageous to the university. The contract involves a small local business that relies on the university for purchases due to its proximate location to the university. The company is a sole source for the product or service needed by the university or is uniquely qualified in offering a good or service that would benefit the university.

Virginia Tech will co-host a training session with The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce on November 17 at 8:00 am via zoom.

Aaron Harris-Kirby, 2020 Board Chair, shared, “this is a huge win for our business community. Many of our small to medium-sized businesses have key employees who have partners who work at Virginia Tech. In a community our size, Virginia Tech, is often what brings families to our area. I am proud of the tenacity that the Chamber has demonstrated to bring this action to fruition. We also appreciate Virginia Tech working with us to make this happen, and finally, we are so appreciative of Senator Edwards's work”.

For more information on the workshop, visit the chamber website at www.montgomerycc.org, Facebook page, or call The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce at 540.382.3020.

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