



2012 Legislative Agenda



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The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) works as a unified voice on issues that affect the business community. As a guiding principle, LRCC generally supports the public policies of the City of Lynchburg, Virginia West, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and the US Chamber of Commerce.

Sound Fiscal Practice

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce believes that a guiding principle of sound governmental fiscal practice must be to structure governmental services to available resources. Sound fiscal practice also requires that fiscal balance be achieved by controlling non-essential spending before increasing tax rates or adding additional taxes and sources of revenue as outlined in our list of legislative priorities. Comprehensive tax reform that is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic development, and promotes prosperity for all Virginians. LRCC believes that any state mandate on localities must be fully funded.

The Chamber supports:

AAA: The retention of Virginia's AAA financial bond rating.

Funding for education and transportation: State tax restructuring as a primary means of finding permanent, long-term solutions to meet our region's growing transportation and education needs.

The Chamber opposes:

Increased tax burden: any policies that shift the tax burden onto the business community.

Transportation

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce recognizes that funding for current transportation needs remains inadequate. The LRCC supports long-term solutions, with a dedicated revenue stream; to meet critical transportation needs, as well as the retention of the existing Transportation Trust Fund allocation formula. The LRCC encourages State leadership initiatives on air and passenger rail service to maintain and increase current levels of service.

The Chamber supports:

Transportation Trust Fund: A constitutional amendment to restore trust in the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) by using TTF funds solely for their intended use.

TransDominion Express: Sustain funding for the current Northeast Regional Amtrak Train and support future funding to extend the service to Roanoke and on to Bristol, Knoxville and Chattanooga.

Lynchburg Regional Airport: Seek state and federal resources and support to maintain the strength and vitality of the Lynchburg Regional Airport.

Public transit priority: The Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC) is an important component of the area's overall transportation system. The Chamber supports increasing transit funding at all levels in order to expand transit services given the fragile economic state of travel and the need to support sustainable development.

■ The Chamber encourages greater use of "Commuter Choice Benefit" allowing employers to provide employees with a public transit pass as a tax-free benefit.

■ The Chamber supports transportation initiatives or policies that reduce our region's dependence on single-occupancy vehicles (SOV's).

■ The Chamber supports policies that encourage a multi-modal transportation system, including expansion of public transit and bicycle use.

Highway priorities: The following highway improvements to the Lynchburg region:

■ The completion of the US29 Bypass System, including the Charlottesville Bypass.

■ Improvement of existing US 460/29 from the interchange with the US29 Madison Heights Bypass to the interchange with Rt. 501, Campbell Ave. to a multi-lane limited access highway.

■ The completion of the Lynchburg Midtown Connector (formerly referred to as Cross-town Connector).

■ Completion of Route 221 (five lanes) in Bedford County.

■ Completion of the Odd Fellows Road/460 interchange.

Economic Development

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce is strongly committed to regional cooperation and economic development. Programs which encourage investments in technology infrastructure, support regional economic development planning, promote regional workforce training, or otherwise promote cooperative regional efforts to maintain or attract businesses are considered essential for the continued future economic development of our region.

The Chamber supports:

Technology-based Economic Development: Sustained funding and support for technology-based economic development initiatives to promote continued growth and diversification of the region's economy. Specifically, funding for the workforce development programs of Central Virginia Community College and community college satellite facilities. Additional support for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Education (STEM) subjects in K-12 public schools by engaging key stakeholders including business leaders in the proposal, implementation, and funding for programs and initiatives.

Tourism: Increased funding for all tourism based activities including local and statewide efforts. Expanded funding for development and sustainability of historic sites as well as arts, cultural, agri-tourism and eco-tourism efforts.

We further support increased and ongoing funding of the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) and its national and international marketing efforts on behalf of Virginia and its localities. We acknowledge the importance of Virginia's wine industry as a growing driver of visitation to the Commonwealth and offer our support to further their endeavors.

Enterprise Zones: The operation of effective enterprise zones within Lynchburg and, if eligible, surrounding counties.

Education

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce recognizes that the quality of the region's workforce and economic well-being largely depends on the effective and efficient education of primary, secondary, and higher education students as well as the maintenance of an exemplary public education system and private education options.

The Chamber supports:

The Tuition Assistance Grant: Increased funds for Virginia students attending private, nonprofit institutions of higher education. (More than 800 families in the City of Lynchburg alone have students at the Virginia private colleges. There are 2,456 TAG recipients in our region which includes Amherst County, Bedford City and County, Appomattox County, Campbell County, and Lynchburg City. Lynchburg area private colleges have 5,444 full and part time employees.)

Produced in Virginia: The Virginia Community College System's "PRODUCED in Virginia" education effort to aid Virginia's community colleges, that include Central Virginia Community College as well as eight other colleges.

Healthcare

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce supports efforts to reduce healthcare costs, including pooling to increase buying strength, medical savings accounts, flexible spending accounts, and other affordable means.

The Chamber opposes:

Mandated Cost: Mandated percentage of healthcare costs to be paid by businesses for their employees.

Mandated Products: Mandates that dictate that insurance products include certain benefits.

Workforce

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce recognizes the vital importance of maintaining and developing new and innovative workforce development concepts to prepare local unemployed/underemployed citizens for job opportunities associated with the knowledge economy.

The Chamber supports:

Right to Work: Continuance of Virginia's Right to Work laws.

Unemployment Compensation: Virginia unemployment compensation with purpose to provide adequate and temporary financial assistance to employees who become unemployed through no fault of their own. We oppose benefits to workers who through their own actions or choices become unemployed, including employer initiated lockout or an employee strike.

The Chamber opposes:

Minimum Wage: State-mandated minimum wage laws (under guise of any name), which surpass the federally mandated minimum wage.

Energy

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce supports the development of cost-effective, alternative, and renewable energy sources while keeping Virginia competitive in the energy market. The Chamber further supports the expansion of nuclear energy, the continued development of clean coal technology, and the exploration for oil and natural gas off of Virginia's coast.

Local Government

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber understands that local governments face challenges as the 2012 session of the Virginia General Assembly convenes.

The Chamber supports:

Specific Items from the City of Lynchburg 2012 Legislative Agenda:

- The State must continue to meet constitutional and statutory responsibilities to adequately fund the State share of state/local services, especially in education, human services, and public safety. Any shortfall in State revenues should not be shifted to local governments.
- The State's consideration to eliminate programs that remain unfunded in an effort to unburden locality budgets.
- The State should explore ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of state services at the local levels including Social Services and the elimination of inefficient structures such as the Compensation Board.
- The General Assembly should support legislation that provides greater authority to localities in implementing sustainability initiatives especially with regard to land use and transportation planning.

Environmental Stewardship

The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce encourages responsible use of regional environmental assets in order to provide a better community for its citizens.

The Chamber supports:

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO): Funding for continued work toward completion of Lynchburg's CSO project to keep raw sewage from entering the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

College Lake: The Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources' designation of the Commonwealth of Virginia as a "local sponsor" for College Lake work as well as \$150,000 for a Federal Section 206 study for College Lake.

Note: *The Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce thanks our Legislative Affairs Committee for their on-going lobbying efforts and contribution to the legislative process.*