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The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance, collectively representing more than 2,500 businesses, are dedicated to serving their members and communities by advocating and supporting the economic business interest of the region.

The Chambers’ 2014 legislative agenda is produced by members of their Legislative Affairs Committees and approved by the Board of Directors of both Chambers. This document outlines the Chambers’ positions on critical issues affecting our businesses and the business community.

THE CHAMBERS’ KEY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2014 ARE:

- TRANSPORTATION
- INTERREGIONAL & HIGH SPEED PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE
- TOURISM
- POST-LABOR DAY SCHOOL START
- EDUCATION
- SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER
- ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION
- UNIFORM TAXATION
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- MINIMUM WAGE
- GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT
SUPPORT revenue streams that are (1) broad-based, long-term, simple, efficient to collect, (2) sourced from all ultimate consumers including those in-state, out-of-state, wholesalers, retailers, and users of products and services moved over the transportation grid, (3) designed to encourage smart transportation grid use and development and (4) enabling everyone to pay their fair share.

SUPPORT revenue streams dedicated to the Hampton Roads Transportation Project Priorities for the 2034 long-range transportation plan.

OPPOSE fees designated to fund transportation that disproportionately target the business community in Hampton Roads.

Transportation remains a critical priority for businesses throughout the Hampton Roads region. Of equal importance, transportation is crucial to the mission and performance of the 50+ military and other federal facilities in Hampton Roads.

Congestion caused by current transportation conditions is placing all tourism in Hampton Roads at risk particularly for Williamsburg and Virginia Beach, two of the premier tourist destinations in the Commonwealth. Visitors to our area are confronted with lengthy delays, causing many of them to consider not returning for future vacations and conferences. The I-64 corridor must be addressed in any transportation solution for Hampton Roads.

Transportation networks and infrastructure improvements are vital to the future growth of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Another significant source of pride and revenue for Virginia comes from its robust ports. Virginia serves as an intermodal collection point for containers from West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Northern Virginia and elsewhere. The Virginia Port Authority (located in Hampton Roads) is the state’s leading agency for international transportation and maritime commerce.

A multi-modal system approach on regional and state levels enhances the region’s business community and economic development opportunities. Businesses throughout the region depend on a diverse transportation network to remain competitive in the global economy. Business needs a seamless system of highways, mass transit, railroads, seaports and airports to conduct business efficiently, expand, prosper, and create jobs. The efficient movement of people, goods, and services is essential to maintain our favorable business climate and quality of life.

All forms of transportation have a role to play in serving the needs of our citizens. Current levels of congestion outside and within our region are already placing business growth, tourism, port growth and our military facilities at risk.
IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance recognize transportation issues as vital to its ability to maintain a healthy business climate. The Chambers’ applaud the General Assembly and Governor McDonnell and his administration for the successful passage of HB 2313. The passage of this historic legislation will allow the Commonwealth and its localities new revenues to address the growing list of backlogged maintenance projects and construction of new projects in the region.

The more than 2,500 businesses of the Chambers believe transportation is a state-wide problem and should be dealt with on a state-wide basis. Sustainable long-term funding for transportation is still necessary on a state-wide basis for the Commonwealth to remain competitive and to sustain our significant military and federal presence. Transportation is the lifeblood of the economy, and for years the region’s business community has been concerned about the state having sufficient revenue to maintain and improve roads and other modes of transportation deficiencies.

Increasing demands on transportation infrastructure, coupled with a diminishing revenue stream for new construction, put the future of the Commonwealth’s economy at risk. The CNBC “Best State for Business” survey ranking in 2013 dropped Virginia to fifth place because of transportation infrastructure deficiencies.

Analysis conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute for the three Virginia metro areas, referred to as the “urban crescent,” indicated that total congestion over the 28 years from 2013 to 2040 will cost business and commuters $77 billion and 5.6 billion hours of delay.

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance believe it is important that all businesses, be it the military, ports, retail, wholesale, manufacturing and other myriad of businesses, need to be able to travel efficiently. The Chambers wish to keep the momentum on transportation improvements in the 2014 session with the following legislative initiatives:

• The Chambers support changing the present appointment of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) based upon the past practice of designating via the Construction Districts. The Chambers urge the General Assembly to amend the Code of Virginia to have the CTB appointed in accordance with the present Congressional Districts while retaining the current at-large member appointments. This would promote equitable representation for the Commonwealth’s population and allow the CTB to prioritize funds and programs.

• The Chambers support a comprehensive study by Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee similar to the one conducted in 1984 to study the present funding breakdown/levels for modes of public transportation, ports, and airports. Included in this study should be a proper analysis of the present maintenance funding provided to localities.

• The Chambers support the passage of legislation prohibiting VDOT from requiring toll revenue for maintenance on private/public partnership projects and other tolled roadways going forward. These maintenance funds should be the responsibility of the Commonwealth and any offsetting amounts should be used to reduced toll rates on present and future tolled projects.
The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance have long supported improved transportation infrastructure. Hampton Roads is a unique national asset, containing the largest concentration of federal activities anywhere in the country outside of Washington, D.C. The region houses operations of 16 departments and agencies of the Executive Branch of the federal government including all five military services. It is home to the nation’s largest naval facility, provides primary air defense to our nation’s Capitol, and homeland security to our port and seacoast. Dependable, efficient, and cost-effective travel to and from the D.C. area is vital to operations.

Hampton Roads is home to major tourist destinations, including the Virginia Beach oceanfront and historic Williamsburg area. Passenger rail, coupled with a connection to an intercity light rail system with first phase complete, will provide a much needed transportation alternative to visitors and will help mitigate growing congestion during the peak tourist season.

In addition, the Chambers believe that Hampton Roads has insufficient emergency evacuation routes to handle its population. This region is also hindered to a great extent by bridge and tunnel crossings on every major corridor.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

- Virginia’s six regional trains serve *74.78 percent* of Virginians;
- They connect *80.85 percent* of Virginia’s jobs and economy (or *$309 billion* of Virginia’s GDP) with a transportation alternative;
- They reach *46* institutions of higher education; *450,000+* college students; over *20* military installations; and *60,000+* active military members;
- Virginia’s businesses save about *52 percent* sending an employee to DC or NYC by train compared to paying them to drive;
- Investments in high(er) speed passenger rail are anticipated to generate *$30 billion* in economic development over a 20 year period, and create more than *50,000* new jobs;
Higher speed rail improvements will reduce trip times of our regional trains. Richmond: 33%; Norfolk: 35%; and Newport News: 34%;
Virginia’s regional trains use 32 percent less fuel per passenger mile than driving and 20 percent less than flying;
The Commonwealth’s Piedmont and Urban Crescent corridors rank as two of Amtrak’s Top 3 Best Performing Regional Routes;
Ridership on Virginia’s regionals has increased 76.7% since 2008. Ridership has grown 11.39% year-over-year between FY 2012 and FY 2013

Passenger rail service will provide a high volume transportation option for moving people more quickly from the area without future congestion limiting highway evacuation routes. Passenger and high speed rail will reduce fuel consumption, improve air quality, enhance freight service, significantly increase capacity and reliability, enhance visitor traffic, and foster the revitalization of urban areas.

In order to keep Virginia competitive in the global economy and provide adequate public safety in the case of a natural disaster, it is necessary to develop a 21st century transportation system.

**Support** continued and increased investment in tourism at the local and state level and innovation and expansion by the tourism economic driver of our area including both our major attractions and other entrepreneurial initiatives. We believe that the best way to achieve that investment is through additional offerings at our current attractions, particularly those that extend the tourism season and through the creation of a business climate that welcomes new and different tourism options.

**Support** marketing of area attributes that provide additional reasons for visitors to come to the Historic Triangle and enjoy Civil War reenactments, artisans, ecotourism, biking, golf, and other forms of sports and recreation.

**Support** continued increased state funding to the Virginia Tourism Corporation for out of town marketing and encourage our localities to set the pace with funding increases.

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance believe that tourism is critical to the well-being of the economy of the Historic Triangle and the Hampton Roads region.

The tourism sector of the Commonwealth’s economy is comprised primarily of small businesses spread across the state which depend on collective efforts to market the broad array of attractions and destinations.

Tourism is an instant revenue generator for the Commonwealth, creating jobs, generating economic impact, and benefiting businesses and communities across the state. The U.S. Travel Association’s research department conducted the study for Virginia Tourism Corporation and found that Virginia Beach, received almost $1.3 billion in travel and tourism spending.
The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance support initiatives promoting tourism in the Commonwealth. We also support efforts to create a fund for use in developing new tourism products and support infrastructure as a means of maintaining the vitality of Virginia as a destination relative to its competitors.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

The Chambers view tourism funding as a wise and prudent investment and is one of the state’s leading industries that will pay dividends in the form of revenue generated by travelers, vacationers and guests visiting the Commonwealth. According to the U.S. Travel Association, 40 of Virginia’s localities received more than $100 million in travel spending in 2012 and 42 counties and cities had 1,000 or more jobs supported by travelers. The continued economic vitality and health of the tourism industry is essential to the long-term fiscal condition of both the Commonwealth and this region.

**SUPPORT**

Continuation of current law beginning the school year for public schools after Labor Day.

Community interests often collide when it comes to school start dates. Stakeholders interested in educational outcomes, family leisure time, and economic development each make cases about the effects of school start dates.

While past studies have asked hypothetical questions about travel, the University of Minnesota Tourism Center study examined actual travel behavior of families in five states and Virginia. The study examined differences in family travel patterns from 2005 to 2010. Data for the study was drawn from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS), a national study sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The results of the study found that: (a) The post-Labor Day school start increases the likelihood that families report at least one trip of two or more nights away from home in the month of August or September by 50%. (b) The likelihood of reporting such a trip in any month between (and including) May and September is 30% higher as a result of schools starting after Labor Day. This may reflect families planning ahead when they know that they won’t have the opportunity to travel in late summer. The overall effect on the number of trips still remains substantial. (c) This effect is completely absent in families without children that have statistically identical demographic (e.g. race, ethnicity, age, overall household size, urban status, etc.) and economic (e.g. income, education, home ownership, etc.) characteristics and live in the same states in the same calendar year.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

Governor Bob McDonnell reported that visitors to Virginia generated $21.2 billion in revenue from tourism in 2012, a four percent increase over 2011 and a new record high for the Commonwealth. Tourism in Virginia supported 210,000 jobs over the year, an increase of one percent in employment, and provided more than $1.36 billion in state and local taxes. Tourism revenues have continued to increase each year, with a total revenue increase of 12.3 percent since 2010. In addition, state and local tax revenues from tourism support K-12 public education budgets.
The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance believe the vibrancy of the business environment is directly proportionate to the quality of the local educational system. It is a driver of economic development. Therefore, the Chambers support programs and efforts at the local, state and national level that will improve the quality of the local educational system. By striving to create a workforce that has the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of the business community, education will become the dynamic force behind business in the Commonwealth. We support appropriate funding necessary to improve all levels of education PreK-12 through the university levels as well as initiatives to provide quality education and training that enable businesses to achieve their goals via a more skilled, flexible and productive workforce.

We strongly support public school initiatives to expand educational experiences and student success in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subject areas. We also support full funding of early childhood education programs so that no student is at risk of falling behind their peers when he/she enters kindergarten.

Investment in our education system must be of the highest quality for students to compete in today’s global economy. Ensuring that Virginia has a competitive K-12 education system will enable Virginia to meet the workforce needs of the future.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

The Chambers recognize that public education is essential to business. A well-educated, well-trained, and readily available workforce is vital to the region’s business community. Legislation that focuses on the creation of workforce programs, initiatives that place emphasis on STEM subject areas, as well as initiatives that address the mismatch in labor supply and demand, contribute to greater productivity and competitiveness, leading to greater economic growth within the Commonwealth.

**SUPPORT** world-class standards of excellence in Virginia’s education system by maintaining the current Standards of Quality funding formula requiring the Commonwealth to pay 55 percent of the prevailing cost of education.

**SUPPORT** education reform efforts that improve graduation rates and academic achievement.

**SUPPORT** the efforts of the school divisions and continue to work with them to develop partnerships that will benefit students in our public education system.

**SUPPORT** efforts to expand secondary education in trades and other non-academic pursuits.

**SUPPORT** initiatives at the state level to create a more comprehensive, unified system of publically funded universal employment and training services.

**SUPPORT** STEM and STEAM initiatives.

**SUPPORT** full funding of early childhood education programs.
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Old Dominion University recognizes the important role that public institutions play in contributing to the economic vitality of the Commonwealth and the well-being of its citizens. ODU’s mission as a major research metropolitan university presents a clear mandate to understand and respond to critical public policy imperatives, among the most important of which is access to a top-quality and affordable higher education experience.

To that end, approximately 88 percent of ODU’s fall 2013 enrollment is comprised of in-state students, a full 10 points better than the statewide average. Further, since 2004, ODU has added more in-state students than any other public university in the Commonwealth and has added the third largest number of in-state students over the past decade. We are also always mindful of remaining affordable (in fact, the most affordable of all the doctoral institutions), and our tuition increases have been the lowest in the Commonwealth year after year – of critical importance to the 30% of our student population who are Pell-eligible.

We are graduating the 3rd highest number of STEM degrees in the state, many of them in critical shortage areas. And we accept more transfer students from the community college system than any other institution in Virginia. In short, ODU continues to solidify its place as a major contributor to the economic vitality of not only the Hampton Roads region, but of the entire Commonwealth. In fact, the Weldon Cooper Center has recently estimated that Old Dominion’s economic impact is $2.1 billion in GDP.

As we consider our legislative requests for the 2014 General Assembly session, it is important to note that we are enormously grateful that the Governor and General Assembly have recognized ODU’s significant contributions over the past several years by investing substantial resources into the University. These additional resources have translated directly into more faculty and services for our students, allowing us to hire over 25 new full-time faculty this year, focusing primarily in the STEM-H areas. However our faculty-student ratio remains at 21:1, the highest in the state and well-above the 17:1 average ratio of our peers. We believe our students deserve the same personal attention and engagement in the classroom as students at our sister institutions. Therefore, our top priority for the 2014 General Assembly session is a request for $20 million, which will allow the university to hire almost 170 additional faculty, with an emphasis on STEM and other critical shortage areas, and which will bring our ratio to 17 to 1, on par with our peer institutions. These funds ensure that ODU’s 88% Virginia population has the same opportunity as those afforded to others across the Commonwealth.

Our 2nd highest priority for the 2014 General Assembly session is a request for $14.9 million to elevate our Base Adequacy percentage to 90%. Currently at 85%, ODU remains at the lowest percentage of funding to the guidelines. These funds will greatly strengthen the services we provide to our students, as well as significantly improve our infrastructure.
Other legislative requests for 2014 include:

- Increase faculty salaries to the 60th percentile of our peer institutions by 2016 - $11.9M
- Establish an Interdisciplinary Entrepreneurial Studies Program - $1M
- Expand the Commonwealth Graduate Nursing Program - $1M
- Create the "Back on Track" Program for Student Stop Out - $875K
- Expand our Program in Cyber-Security - $1.5M
- Expand our Center for Bioelectrics - $975K

CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

**Faculty Expansion:** The addition of full-time instructional faculty positions has long been the highest priority and will have the greatest impact on the quality of instruction and the educational experience for our students. It will reduce class size, reduce the use of adjuncts, enhance academic advising, and provide greater opportunity for student mentoring. It will allow faculty to actively engage in curriculum development, invest in scholarly activity including greatly enhanced support for undergraduate research, and engage students in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Funding request: $977,000.

**Construct Library, Phase II:** The project supports the construction of an 80,015 square foot addition and expansion to the Trible Library. The expansion provides additional resources for instruction, reading, group and individual study, technology, and lectures. It will increase the number of seats from 250 to 1,100, add a technology center and information commons to support excellence in learning, provide a special collections center, add two (2) classrooms, and create a 100-seat lecture hall for library programming and special lectures. Funding request for construction: $47 million.

**Construct and Renovate Fine Arts and Rehearsal Space:** The project supports an addition to the Ferguson Center for the relocation of the fine arts galleries and expansion of exhibition spaces to larger public venues. The instructional studio spaces for the fine arts programs will be renovated to meet growing academic and artistic needs of CNU students while addressing the technical demands of the rapidly evolving area(s) of digital arts. The addition will also provide a larger, acoustically balanced environment suitable for a wide variety of musical rehearsals both vocal and instrumental. Necessary climate-controlled storage space will be designed for musical instruments and related music equipment. Funding request for project planning: $2 million.

COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY

**Additional general fund support**
The College seeks additional general fund support as it continues its effort to become more efficient while addressing the goals of TJ21 including more in-state enrollment, additional STEM degrees, and additional financial aid.

**Lewis Puller Veterans Benefits Clinic**
The Lewis Puller Veterans Benefits Clinic located at the School of Law offers students the opportunity to assist veterans with filing claims for disability compensation with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The College seeks funds to expand its important efforts in this area.

**E-Learning Platform**
The College is seeking state funds to add to reallocated institutional funds to establish a College-wide eLearning platform to support blended and on-line instruction. A common eLearning platform allows for the most efficient method to support on-line instruction both on, and off, campus.
Fine Arts Facilities, Phase 1
The College seeks support to begin the next phase of major capital construction on campus with a focus on its arts-related facilities. Phase 1 of this effort will include new and renovated space for Music, Theater and Dance. Ultimately, the three phase project over the next several years will address facility needs in Music, Theater, Speech, Dance, and Art and Art History.

Maintenance Reserve
Critical on any campus is the care and maintenance of existing facilities. The College seeks funds to support major repair & replacement projects. Typical projects include replacement of mechanical systems (HVAC, plumbing, electrical, etc.); built-in equipment and components; foundations, roofs, walls, and windows; and interior finishes, including floors and handicapped accessibility.

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY
Operating Budget Requests (Base-budget Adjustments):

(1). Request for additional staffing in Finance and Administration - The University is requesting 8 additional accountant positions for the Financial Services operation. This request will increase the staffing in the area from 4 positions to 12 positions. Budget Request: $441,650

(2). Request for additional Academic counselors and advisors - The University is requesting funds for academic counselors/advisors. Included in the Six-Year Plan, is the initiative to provide support services and technology-based learning methods designed to yield enhanced learning experiences for first and second year students to improve retention, time to degree, and graduation rates. The funds and positions requested in this initiative will support the University’s strategy to reduce the impact of SAP and improve retention and graduation rates. Additional 7 professional academic counselors/advisors positions are requested to support this initiative. Budget Request: $490,000

Capital Outlay Projects in priority order for FY 2014-2016 Biennium Budget:

1. Construct New Science Building: $59,400,000
   a. New Science Building Pre-Planning: $2,600,000
2. Replacement of the Hamm Fine Arts Building: $50,200,000
   a. Hamm Fine Arts Building Pre-Planning: $2,500,000

THOMAS NELSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Thomas Nelson Community College is the largest provider of higher education and workforce training on the Virginia Peninsula enrolling more than 16,000 college students and 12,000 workforce students annually. Thomas Nelson supports the legislative agenda adopted by the State Board of Community Colleges including seeking additional funding for student services aimed at increasing degree attainment and the Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund to support access to high quality customized open enrollment training on equipment and technology utilized by employers in high demand occupations. Thomas Nelson also supports the State Board’s proposal to create a Workforce Incentive Training Fund to train and credential Virginians in high-skilled, high paying positions required by Commonwealth employers. Endorsed by the Virginia Business Higher Education Council as part of the “Grow by Degrees Campaign”, Thomas Nelson supports the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia's (SCHEV) exploration of the possibility of converting the current Two-Year Transfer Grant program into a partnership program between
community colleges and four-year institutions that would hold constant mandatory tuition and fees at the community college rate for the student’s third and fourth years at a four-year college or university. This approach would save Virginia families thousands of dollars a year, and expand educational opportunities for individual students by allowing them to earn a four-year degree at a lower tuition rate.

Thomas Nelson’s top legislative priority for 2014 is full funding for design and construction to replace the original three 1960s era buildings (Diggs, Moore and Harrison Halls) on its Hampton Campus. The existing buildings periodically flood and the mechanical/utility systems are failing. Thomas Nelson’s capital replacement project ranks #5 as a priority in the six-year capital outlay plan for Virginia’s Community Colleges.

In addition, the College endorses continuation of a planning grant for an Advanced Integrated Manufacturing Center. Following up on the successful results of an initial planning grant for such a center at Thomas Nelson, the College supports gubernatorial introduction and subsequent General Assembly approval of $600,000 per fiscal year, (or $1.2 million for the biennium) for detailed work for programmatic and facility design. The proposed Center is intended to annually generate at least 200 multi-skilled technicians and technologists who have the competencies and adaptability to function effectively in today’s highly automated and digitally controlled production environment. The Center is being planned in close consultation with the regional stakeholders in business and industry, with area economic development agencies, and with the National Coalition for Advanced Technology Centers.

TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Tidewater Community College’s new five-year strategic plan, dubbed One College, One Voice, One Future, lays out ambitious goals to more effectively serve South Hampton Roads students, including increased access and appeal for high school graduates and dual enrollments, and also meet the needs of local industry. In August, TCC held the first-ever Jobs Summit in partnership with Inside Business magazine, assembling area job creators to tackle the critical questions: where are the jobs over the next five years, and how do we prepare the workforce for those jobs? Now, more than ever, TCC is primed to play a central role – through relevant academic programming and keen understanding/partnership with employers – in enhancing South Hampton Roads’ workforce readiness and economic vitality.

TCC’s physical growth continues. By the end of 2013, five new impressive facilities will have been constructed and opened across the college: a new Academic Building in Chesapeake and a new Joint-Use Library in Virginia Beach opened in time for fall classes; new student centers come on line in Chesapeake, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach, joining the existing Norfolk Student Center which has breathed life into the student experience on campus. Construction of a 1200-space parking garage for the Chesapeake Campus – the first parking garage in the city – will begin in late 2013. Consistent with TCC’s campus master plans:

**TCC’s top legislative priority for 2014 is full funding for construction of a Science and Engineering Building on the Chesapeake Campus**, also the #1 capital priority of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) in the Six-Year Plan, as well as support for the remaining VCCS priority capital projects, including renovation and expansion of the Princess Anne Building on the Virginia Beach Campus.

Ambitions and ribbon-cuttings aside, TCC continues to educate 46,000 students annually and is the largest provider of workforce training, with more than 1,100 partner employers, in Hampton Roads. We’re proud that TCC’s student body reflects the communities we serve. TCC has the largest undergraduate African American enrollment in Virginia higher education and is the 8th largest associate degree producer in the nation among two-year colleges for African American students. One third (over 14,000) of every TCC student is military-related, and TCC ranks first among community colleges nationwide for the number of veterans using the Post-911 GI Bill. That’s why last year we opened the Center for Military and Veterans Education, a one-stop shop for active duty military, veterans, and their families.
The Small Business Development Center of Hampton Roads, Inc. (SBDC) is part of a statewide network of 29 centers under the direction of the state office at George Mason University. The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Thomas Nelson Community College, operates the SBDC in Hampton Roads. Funding support for the network’s operations originally came from the Small Business Administration and was matched by both state and local funding. In 2003, the state eliminated all funding for the SBDC network as part of a budget reduction program. The loss of $1 million in state funding resulted in a 30% reduction in funding support for operations. While the SBDC has been able to locate some additional funding partners to help minimize this loss, there has been a reduction in services provided due to this funding cut.

In the past two years, the SBDC was a recipient of two nationally competed portable assistance grants which established the Hampton Roads Retail Academy and the Hampton Roads Government Contracting Institute. Additionally, it received national recognition for its work with early childhood education programs.
IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY
The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance recognize that our immigration system is broken. America, by most measures, has the world’s most dynamic economy, but that status is not guaranteed. Hard choices must be made to shape our immigration system for the 21st century.

The Chambers support efforts towards achieving a resolution in addressing the challenges of illegal immigration. We support the development of a uniform approach. In addition, the Chambers strongly support immigration laws that are balanced and fair. Foreign workers are essential to the growth of the economy and it is imperative that comprehensive reform take into account the enormous contribution that all immigrants have made and continue to make to sustain and further our American way of life.

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance recognize that immigration is a complex issue confronting business. The industry faces, and will continue to face, a growing shortage of both highly-skilled professionals and laborers in many sectors of our economy. Failure to address these shortages will result in the relocation of businesses to other nations where there is an abundance of skill-appropriate workers.

Virginia is known for its business-friendly climate and it is the goal of the Chambers to ensure that we remain competitive. Every business needs qualified and talented employees to grow as well as every advantage they can obtain to compete among foreign rivals. We applaud the efforts of our elected representatives to maintain our strong business climate while dealing with an issue that impacts many of our citizens. We will continue to actively work with the General Assembly to define an acceptable state role in a federal problem while working to ensure that the solutions do not negatively impact economic growth and jobs creation.

The services the Small Business Development Center provide are critical to the health and survival of local small businesses that are the fastest-growing employment sector. Restoration of the funding for the state network will result in the local SBDC receiving $190,000 which will go to restoring services that had been reduced or eliminated, as well as enable it to meet the increasing demand for its services.

**SUPPORT** immigration laws that are fair and balanced.

**OPPOSE** any legislation that creates undue hardships on employers for verifying worker eligibility.

**OPPOSE** any legislation that creates overly punitive sanctions on employers who unknowingly hire ineligible workers.

**OPPOSE** state efforts to further regulate immigration in the workplace, favoring instead a workable federal approach.
uniform taxation

SUPPORT uniform taxation.

SUPPORT the promotion of tax policies that balance the need to provide for essential services and the need to minimize the relative tax burden on business.

OPPOSE any measure that taxes commercial real estate at a different rate than residential real estate.

OPPOSE the accelerated sales tax.

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance recognize the effects of business costs and tax burdens on businesses as well as the region’s challenges in job creation. To encourage economic growth and investment, the Chambers support fiscal tax policies and business cost reforms designed to increase competitiveness and create jobs.

The Chambers also support efforts to adopt a simple and uniform state and local taxing system. We believe that fair and reasonable real property taxation is necessary to ensure that a level playing field is maintained for businesses throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Chambers support uniform taxation as outlined in Article X of the Virginia Constitution. The Chambers oppose any measure that taxes business at a different level than residential property owners.

IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY

Hiring decisions made by Virginia employers are dependent upon the costs of conducting business. When these costs are burdensome or unpredictable, businesses become cautious and less likely to invest in new employees and projects.

Tax policies that respect the proper balance between the need to sustain necessary government programs and the need to maintain and grow a strong economy is critical to the sustainability of the region’s competitiveness locally and globally.

workforce development

SUPPORT initiatives to create a more comprehensive, unified system of publicly funded universal employment and training services.

SUPPORT initiatives to provide quality education and training that enable businesses to achieve their goals via a more skilled, flexible and productive workforce.

SUPPORT efforts to expand employment opportunities consistent with the quality of life expectations.
As of July 2009, the federal government mandates a nationwide minimum wage level of $7.25 per hour, while some states and municipalities have set minimum wage levels higher than the federal level.

Although many advocates of this increase and those favoring an additional increase at the state and/or local levels have valid concerns for those living below, at or near the poverty level, we remain firm in our belief that raising the rate above the federal level would place Virginia's businesses at a greater disadvantage. First, mandated increases in wages will result in increased prices for goods and services, placing Virginia's businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the national and international marketplaces and adding costs for Virginia families. Second, with today's mobile workforce, a substantially higher basic wage in Virginia would send jobs to other states or even overseas. Lastly, in a competitive marketplace, market driven wage rates encourage productivity and provide empowerment for advancement of the workforce. The General Assembly and Hampton Roads local governments should also reject proposals to establish local minimum wages, sometimes packaged as living wage requirements.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

Jobs are essential to support the quality of life of any community. Good jobs within our community strengthen our collective ability to survive grow and prosper. In today's globally integrated, innovation-driven, knowledge-based economy, access to a highly educated, skilled, and trained workforce is vital to a region's competitiveness. Aligning our educational and publicly funded workforce development systems with business and industry demand is critical to our success.

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Although many advocates of this increase and those favoring an additional increase at the state and/or local levels have valid concerns for those living below, at or near the poverty level, we remain firm in our belief that raising the rate above the federal level would place Virginia’s businesses at a greater disadvantage. First, mandated increases in wages will result in increased prices for goods and services, placing Virginia’s businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the national and international marketplaces and adding costs for Virginia families. Second, with today’s mobile workforce, a substantially higher basic wage in Virginia would send jobs to other states or even overseas. Lastly, in a competitive marketplace, market driven wage rates encourage productivity and provide empowerment for advancement of the workforce. The General Assembly and Hampton Roads local governments should also reject proposals to establish local minimum wages, sometimes packaged as living wage requirements.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

Wages set by legislation discourage workers’ competition for higher earnings, development and advancement that would normally be accomplished through continuing or completing education, or seeking additional training and personal investment. In addition, when a local government demands that its suppliers or local businesses pay wages higher than the market would otherwise dictate, or higher than are paid in the next locality, it is picking the pockets of its own citizens to provide the difference.
SUPPORT the rights of Virginians to choose where they live, work, and play, consistent with the principles of a market driven economy.

SUPPORT regional cooperation among adjourning localities in order to allow for economic development and shared economies of scale in service delivery.

SUPPORT the provision of the needed infrastructure to allow communities to plan for anticipated growth in economic activity.

SUPPORT planning, construction, and maintenance of an improved statewide multi-modal transportation system that is need-based, cohesive, integrated, and interconnected.

SUPPORT the revitalization of older suburban and core city areas through in-fill development and redevelopment.

SUPPORT a comprehensive review of Virginia’s tax structure to ensure that it is equitable, broad based, fosters a favorable business climate, and encourages economic development.

SUPPORT a process that does not impede or restrict the important agricultural and forest economies of Virginia as necessary components of sensible growth.

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance believe that economic growth is both a natural and necessary aspect of a healthy economy. However, growth must be measured against its implications. We believe “balanced growth” involves not only the quantity of growth, but the type and location of growth. To that end, we support public policy initiatives at all levels of government focused on fostering the expansion of the economic strength of Virginia without adversely affecting the quality of life and prosperity of its citizens. These Chambers, representing more than 2,500 businesses, support the creation of jobs through the expansion of existing companies and the attraction of new business activity to the Commonwealth.

We believe Virginia has the will and the tools necessary to ensure sensible growth throughout. These resources must work to create a climate attractive for business and conducive to expand business activity by both new and existing companies. The continued growth and development of Virginia is crucial to the success of our region and business communities.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

Economic development initiatives are an essential component of a healthy business environment. Without business and job growth, our celebrated quality of life will not last. Legislative policies and actions that provide businesses of all sizes with the tools and talent they need will help to increase their competitiveness, and additionally, stimulate growth while continuing to attract new industries to our region.
THE CHAMBERS’ ONGOING LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS REGARDING:

• BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL & OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE
• CERTIFICATE OF NEED
• HEALTH CARE
• COLLECTIVE BARGAINING / PUBLIC SECTOR
• DILLON RULE
• EMPLOYMENT LAW
• ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION
• GUBERNATORIAL SUCCESSION
The BPOL tax was first enacted to fund the War of 1812. The BPOL tax is levied on the gross receipts of a business. Regardless of whether companies make a profit, they must pay this gross receipts tax each year. Virginia businesses have been burdened by this unfair and antiquated tax especially on smaller companies and those in the first few years of existence as they struggle to get their sea-legs and begin to make a profit. All businesses object to this tax which is due regardless of whether the business is profitable.

We recognize that these taxes are significant revenue sources to local governments, however, economic development is dynamic and ever-changing and the competition between regions, states and countries for new jobs and investment is intense. As a result, Virginia must continuously examine government policies, particularly our tax policies, to ensure that Virginia maintains its competitive standing.

The only way to improve our regional economy is the creation of jobs, but regressive taxes like BPOL hinder firms from hiring. Therefore, the Chambers recommend that the General Assembly provide an alternative and broad-based funding source(s) to hold the localities harmless from revenue losses from BPOL reform.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

The present BPOL tax is patently unfair because it targets business’ gross receipts regardless of profitability. Gross receipt taxation is a significant impact upon small to medium businesses and it ignores the taxpayer’s fundamental ability to pay such taxes. By focusing on gross revenues, BPOL disproportionately impacts new, small and struggling businesses, stifling economic growth and innovation.

The Certificate of Public Need (COPN) program was mandated in all states by the U.S. Congress under the Health Resources Development Act of 1974. The idea was that regulation was necessary to prevent the costly duplication of health care services in the United States. A number of states have repealed or modified their COPN statutes since the federal government no longer mandates the program. The record is mixed both as to whether COPN effectively held down health care costs but also whether those states that eliminated the program have realized any benefit.
The Chambers recognize that health insurance access and affordability continues to be an issue for businesses throughout the state, particularly small businesses. The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance support reasonable market-based efforts to make health care more affordable and manageable for citizens of Virginia as well as the business community that currently provides health insurance for employees.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

Hospitals are required to provide care to every individual who seeks care in the emergency room, regardless of ability to pay. Government programs, such as Medicaid and Medicare, reimburse hospitals and physicians at rates far below the costs of treating their beneficiaries. Hospitals absorb many of those costs themselves, but a substantial portion is passed on to large and small businesses in the form of increased health insurance premiums for employees.

The Certificate of Need program is one of the single best ways to help keep rising health care costs in check, making sure there is a real, true need for a new hospital or expensive equipment before any money is spent. This simple concept protects Virginia businesses and consumers from runaway health care costs.

Certificate of Need continues to be a sensible and responsible method of increasing and expanding health care facilities and services. The Chambers believe that the COPN program in Virginia should not be eliminated or substantially modified until the General Assembly can guarantee that doing so will not adversely impact access, quality, public safety or the cost of health care to Virginia’s businesses.

**SUPPORT** legislation and programs that assist businesses, particularly small businesses, facilitate the health care needs of their employees.

**SUPPORT** reasonable market-based efforts to make health care more affordable and available to citizens.

**SUPPORT** the efforts of the Medicaid Reform Commission to find a path towards coverage extension (Medicaid Reform) that will allow Medicaid enrollment for newly eligible to begin by July 2014.

The Chambers believe that great caution should be taken before Virginia considers the elimination or modification of the COPN. We believe there is enough evidence that COPN has restricted increases in health care costs in Virginia and that it has protected our safety net and critical access hospitals thereby assuring that medical care is available to all of our citizens.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

To maintain a healthy and productive workforce and to preserve the quality of life in the Commonwealth, it is imperative to address the well-being and human service needs throughout the region.
The Chambers oppose public sector collective bargaining. The need for collective bargaining by public sector employees does not exist because sufficient safeguards in the law exist to protect public employees from discriminatory or abusive employment practices. Collective bargaining agreements in the public sector place the taxpayer at the mercy of such agreements, without consideration of the fiscal condition of the local government or the will of its citizens.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**
Allowing collective bargaining by public employees places an unfunded state mandate on local governments, and such measures interfere with the responsibility to balance revenues with expenditures, including wages and benefits for public sector employees.

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**dillion rule**

**SUPPORT** the Dillion Rule.

The Dillion Rule as a concept is found in all states – meaning that apart from the power ceded to the federal government in the U.S Constitution, state governments have all the remaining governmental authority. However, most states have adopted various types of “home rule” provisions that permit some or all of their local governments to undertake those governmental functions that are not specifically precluded by the laws of those home rule states. Virginia has not provided such home rule authority to its local governments.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**
Virginia has been a Dillion Rule state for more than 100 years. Retaining it is important to business because it promotes uniformity in tax administration, land use regulation, criminal and civil enforcement, environmental permitting and regulation, employment law as well as many other issues. Without it, this uniformity would not exist among Virginia’s localities.
In many countries, laws have been passed to establish standards that employers must follow in providing benefits, such as health insurance, to their employees; this may include additional coverage for health problems that arise due to conditions of the job or workplace. Employment law may also include protection against discrimination in the workplace based on race, gender, religion, disability, or veteran status, and may make provisions for the employment of foreigners.

Employment laws are becoming increasingly complex and ever-changing. Businesses today are at a greater risk of huge financial penalties as a result of non-compliance.

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance support Virginia’s unemployment compensation system of providing adequate and temporary assistance to workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own; however, the Chambers oppose legislation to change current workers’ compensation policy and efforts to extend benefits to workers who through their own actions or inactions become unemployed, including those unemployed as a result of an employer lockout or a strike.

**IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY**

Compared to national averages, Virginia enjoys low workers’ compensation insurance rates. While this makes the state attractive to new business and industry, continued rising costs threaten to jeopardize our competitive edge and places undue hardship on businesses particularly in harsh economic conditions.

**environmental regulation**

**SUPPORT** broad based federal and state funding sources to meet the expensive cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.
Chesapeake Bay Restoration
On December 29, 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), a "pollution diet" to initiate actions to restore water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Despite extensive restoration efforts throughout the last 25 years, the Bay TMDL program was established in order to attempt to meet the federal Clean Water Act.

The Bay itself is about 200 miles long, home to more than 3,700 species of plants, fish, and other animals. The Bay watershed totals about 64,000 square miles, stretching from Cooperstown, New York to Hampton Roads. Nearly 17 million people live in the Watershed. The TMDL program mandates that Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) be developed by each of the seven states. Subsequently, such regulations will be passed down to local governments and property owners.

Uranium Mining Ban
(These are the positions of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce only)

SUPPORT maintaining the Commonwealth’s moratorium on Uranium Mining.

OPPOSE the process of drafting and promulgating regulations governing Uranium mining under the Administrative Process Act (APA).

The release of mining wastes can contaminate the watershed leading to Lake Gaston to levels exceeding State and Federal regulations. The impact may be long-lasting requiring a shut-down of the reservoir/pipeline system for several years. Drastic water restrictions would subsequently be imposed in the region which would negatively impact the region’s economy, quality of life, tourism, health providers, military installations, property values and water dependent businesses.

gubernatorial succession

SUPPORT amending the Virginia Constitution so as to allow the Virginia Governor to serve consecutive terms.

The Hampton Road Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance support legislation that will allow for a Virginia Governor to serve in office for a total of two consecutive terms.

IMPACT OF THE PRIORITY
The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance believe that allowing Virginia Governors to serve consecutive terms will improve government operations to have more stability in agency management.
Mission
The HRBizPAC works to advance the economy of Hampton Roads metropolitan statistical area. The HRBizPAC is an independent organization supporting incumbents and candidates whose positions are consistent with those of the HRBizPAC and the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce. The HRBizPAC educates the general public and elected officials on issues that will enhance the economic interest of the business community.

About the HRBizPAC
• HRBizPAC is a non-partisan committee that presses for action on issues impacting business, by supporting candidates who share those views.
• HRBizPAC provides an avenue for Chamber members and others sharing the Chamber’s views on issues to pool their resources and efforts to impact public policy decisions.

Initiatives
• Help to maintain Virginia's high ranking for business.
• Strengthen the Chamber’s position as the “voice of business” in legislative issues for Hampton Roads.
• Assist to create a pro-business climate for all companies.
• Identify and develop issues that significantly impact businesses and the community, then educate the public, elected officials and the business community on those issues, and finally, influence the actions taken by them in dealing with those issues.

Activities of the HRBizPAC
• Trustees will interview candidates, have the authority to make HRBizPAC distribution decisions, organize HRBizPAC special events and participate in "insider" activities.
• Participate in "get out the vote" initiatives.
• Participate in and conduct referendum campaigns and other activities as necessary.
• Endorse candidates and provide direct and indirect financial support.
• Conduct research on issues which impact businesses in the region.

Contribution Information
• To join as a Trustee, contribution of $1,000 annually is required.
  Trustee appointments are subject to approval by the Chamber’s Executive Committee.
• There are also some Trustee positions reserved for small business members (employing 20 or less) at $500 annually.
• Individuals can contribute through their company or as an individual.
• If you are unable to contribute at the Trustee level, please give what you can (i.e. $100, $50, and $25).
• Make checks payable to the HRBizPAC. Mail to 500 East Main Street, Suite 700, Norfolk, VA 23510, Attn: Governmental Affairs
• Contributions made to the HRBizPAC are not tax deductible.

For more information about the HRBizPAC, contact the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce at 757-664-2572.
Thanks to our legislators for their dedication and hard work representing our citizens throughout the Commonwealth.

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