The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance was founded in spring 2017 by a group of chamber executives from the Southside and Peninsula, creating a platform for chamber leaders to come together on business. The Alliance offers access to products, services, information, and support provided by each member. Comprising the Alliance are Presidents, CEOs, and Executive Directors from the Hampton Roads Chamber, Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Franklin-Southampton Area Chamber of Commerce, Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance, Isle of Wight-Smithfield-Windsor Chamber of Commerce, and Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce.

Mission Statement: The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance facilitates regional economic prosperity, growth, vitality, and greater strength in shaping public policy related to regional business issues and quality of life.

During the 2021 legislative session, the Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance's efforts at the state level will reflect the following core values: Right-to-Work, Dillon Rule, Transportation, and Climate Initiative, Liability Protection, GO Virginia, International Trade/Port of Virginia, Economic Development-Job Growth, Passenger Rail, Mega Sites, Military Support, Recurrent Flooding, Workforce Development, Education, Tourism Economy, Capability & Capacity of Private-Sector Ship Repair, Certificate of Public Need (COPN) and Airbnb. This document outlines our positions on critical issues affecting the business community throughout the region.

We recognize the importance of providing a favorable business climate and how it affects our future. We look forward to working with our stakeholders, the General Assembly, and the Northam Administration to help bring prosperity to the region and the Commonwealth.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The following outlines areas for the Hampton Roads Chamber Alliance’s 2021 state policy priorities:

- Right-to-Work .................................................................................................................. 3
- Dillon Rule ....................................................................................................................... 4
- Transportation and Climate Initiative ............................................................................. 5
- Liability Protection ......................................................................................................... 6
- GO Virginia ....................................................................................................................... 7
- International Trade/Port of Virginia ................................................................................ 8
- Economic Development-Job Growth ............................................................................... 9
- Passenger Rail ................................................................................................................. 10
- Mega Sites ....................................................................................................................... 11
- Military support ............................................................................................................. 12
- Recurrent Flooding ........................................................................................................ 13
- Workforce Development ............................................................................................... 14
- Education ......................................................................................................................... 15
- Tourism Economy ......................................................................................................... 16
- Capability & Capacity of Private-Sector Ship Repair ..................................................... 17
- Certificate of Public Need (COPN) ................................................................................. 18
- Airbnb ............................................................................................................................. 19
**Right-to-Work Law**

**Issue Summary:**

Virginia’s Right-to-work law was established on January 12, 1947, and is the 5th oldest RTW statute in the United States (§ 40.1-58 Code of Virginia). The Virginia RTW law guarantees that no person can be compelled, as a condition of employment, to join or not to join, nor to pay dues to a labor union. Virginia's RTW also assures that no person or organization may use intimidation, use of force, the threat of use of force, reprisal or threat of reprisal, or interrupt any employee's work. Virginia’s economic competitiveness rests upon this statute remaining unabridged.

**Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support**

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance should take all measures to support maintaining the right-to-work lawfully. It is crucial to maintain Virginia's competitiveness.
The Dillon Rule

Issue Summary:

Virginia is a "Dillon Rule" state, not a "Home Rule" state. Local governments have limited authority. The Dillon Rule says a municipality may only engage in an activity if the state government sanctions it. City and county governments have clear authority to act in many areas, such as planning, zoning, taxation, and other statutes. But it has required an act of the General Assembly in Richmond before a Virginia county or city wishes to expand its powers; it must first gain approval from state legislators.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance must protect the Dillon Rule to ensure local governments may only act in those areas authorized by the General Assembly, safeguarding businesses from a patchwork of inconsistent policies and regulations from one jurisdiction to another.
Transportation and Climate Initiative

Issue Summary:

The Transportation and Climate Initiative is a 12-state regional compact that would impose a cap on the sale of gasoline and diesel fuel within the region. It sets a carbon tax by requiring fuel wholesalers to buy allowances for their Virginia sales, with the added costs passed on to retailers and consumers. TCI proponents seek to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere from fuels by 25 percent, accomplished by decreasing gasoline and diesel sales by 25 percent. The Beacon Hill Institute of Medway, Massachusetts, asserts that the total impact (direct and indirect) on a family would average more than $700 per year. That would include the higher cost of gasoline or diesel fuel they buy and the impact of those costs on the goods and services. The TCI cap and tax regime would reduce future State Gross Product in Virginia by more than $1 billion per year and impede growth in employment, capital investment, and disposable income. The heaviest impact would come if Virginia and the other states involved set the most aggressive target for fuel use restrictions.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Oppose

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance is in opposition to the TCI, which would raise taxes on Virginians, cost Virginians jobs, reduce disposable income, and lead to reductions in road funding.
Liability Protection

Issue Summary:
The establishment of liability protections for businesses that shield employers from frivolous lawsuits related to COVID-19 is crucial to protect, grow, and diversify the region.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance supports legislation incorporating Liability Protection Principles. These are intended to protect businesses from the threat of unfounded lawsuits as long as the company takes good faith efforts to limit exposure by following government guidelines. They must encourage social distancing and use heightened sanitation standards as suggested by OSHA, CDC, Virginia Department of Health, and Virginia Department of Labor and Industry.

- Businesses should be protected from liability to customers and other third parties unless those customers or parties prove the business knowingly failed to develop and implement a reasonable plan for reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19, and that failure caused the injury.

- The Chamber recommends the General Assembly grant businesses immunity from coronavirus-related litigation except in gross negligence cases that cause the plaintiff serious physical injury resulting in hospitalization or death. Claims for emotional injury due to contracting the virus should not be permitted.

- The Chamber recommends the General Assembly legislatively encourage courts’ to impose the sanctions available on attorneys who file frivolous COVID-19 related claims. In addition to sanctions, the plaintiffs’ attorney should be required to pay the defendant’s attorneys’ fees and other costs relating to the litigation.
**GO Virginia**

**Issue Summary:**
Go Virginia's purpose is to create more and higher-paying jobs through incentivized collaboration, which diversifies and strengthens regional economies.

**Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position:**  **Support**

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance is in full support of GO Virginia and funding initiatives that promote policies to improve the region's business climate and economic competitiveness.

International Trade / Port of Virginia

Issue Summary:

The Nation’s economy is driven by globalization. Presently, we are operating in an unfavorable trade balance environment where we import more than we export. The Port of Virginia is a business hub with 50-foot inbound/outbound shipping channels that serve as a global gateway. With nearly 30 international shipping lines that connect 200+ countries, the Port is a major economic driver for Hampton Roads and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Over 95 percent of the world’s shipping lines utilize The Port of Virginia.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance supports International Trade in the Commonwealth and infrastructure investments to grow the capacity of the Port of Virginia. We favor policies that bring increased cargo into the Port to create jobs in the region and provide an increased flow of revenue into Virginia. We support the continual growth of this asset, including investment in Port infrastructure and funding to increase channel depth, width, and safety. (Deeper, Wider, Safer)
Economic Development - Job Growth

Issue Summary:

Hampton Roads’ job growth rate is lagging behind other regions. Hampton Roads can no longer rely on jobs coming mostly from federal defense spending; we must explore other avenues; we must diversify. Job growth and sustainability are achieved through attraction, retention, and expansion of our business base. In a "healthy" region, 86%-90% of job growth comes from existing company expansion. Small businesses make up 99% of the companies in Virginia. Changes in the Commonwealth’s economy disproportionately affect small businesses. Chambers play a vital role in setting job growth conditions while securing and growing existing industries that serve as our region's backbone.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance fully supports programs and initiatives designed to set the conditions which foster the startup of new businesses, sustain time-tested enterprises while providing an environment that promotes business growth, as appropriate, including coordinated regional marketing efforts.
Passenger Rail

Issue Summary:
Passenger rail can provide the Commonwealth with fast, frequent, and reliable connections to 45 other states, the District of Columbia, and three Canadian provinces. Amtrak ridership in the Hampton Roads region has grown 108 percent over the last decade, and there is a need for Hampton Roads to be better connected via passenger rail to Richmond and the rest of the east coast corridor. The Tier I federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on possible routes between Richmond and Hampton Roads was completed in 2012. Currently, there has been no progress on the advancement of the federal Tier II EIS study. During the 2020 Virginia legislative session, 7.5 percent of Virginia's Transportation Trust Fund was dedicated to the Commonwealth Rail Fund to support and improve the state's passenger rail network.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support
The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance strongly supports funding expanding rail service to the Hampton Roads region. It connects directly to Richmond and the entire East Coast rail system and protects the state's dedicated passenger rail funding.
Mega Sites

Issue Summary:
A mega-site is land prepared for constructing a business hub, usually near pre-existing transportation infrastructure and public utilities. Several areas in the Hampton Roads region would be suitable /favorable for a mega-site. Williams Farm in Chesapeake is one example. If developed, the Chesapeake site will have the necessary access to the ports and essential transportation methods. Funding for this site’s infrastructure and others will be partially dependent on the state.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support
The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance believes Hampton Roads needs to be predominant and relevant in the national site selection process to prosper as a regional economy. Therefore, the Hampton Roads Chamber Alliance supports state funding of mega-sites and other sites located throughout the region, consistent with and supporting regional economic development strategies.
Military Support

Issue Summary:

Hampton Roads is home to all five military services and the only NATO command on U.S. soil. Also, Hampton Roads has the world's largest Naval Base providing a steady flow of jobs to the community. Virginia's strategic coastal position and proximity to federal assets provide opportunities to grow our maritime industry and defense supply chain.

Historically changes in the defense budget have disproportionately impacted the Hampton Roads economy compared to other regions. Any appreciable decreases in Department of Defense expenditures could be detrimental to the economic vitality of Hampton Roads.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance supports a proactive approach to protecting our existing military assets by advocating for a robust federal defense budget and creating the conditions locally that support the military and their families. We also support the further exploration of contract-related activities to support the existing core competencies, such as cyber, ISR, etc., and infrastructure development initiatives, as appropriate, in support of our military and federal facilities. We also support the Navy’s Public-Public / Public-Private (P4) Partnership Opportunities.
Recurrent Flooding

Issue Summary:

Recurrent Flooding is flooding that repeatedly happens in the same areas, typically leading to economic loss to the surrounding area. Recurrent flooding is a significant issue in Hampton Roads (2nd in the Nation to New Orleans) and is predicted to worsen over the next twenty to thirty years.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance fully supports efforts to elevate recurrent flooding as a regional issue. Such efforts MAY (dependent upon programmatic and cost details) include the authorization of a Cabinet Secretary and support staff for the Commonwealth and the promotion of locally driven strategies to mitigate recurrent flooding.
Workforce Development

Issue Summary:

Hampton Roads is experiencing a shortage of skilled labor. In a market with a rising unemployment rate among college graduates, jobs that do not require four-year degrees struggle to be filled by qualified applicants. This shortage represents a significant opportunity for employment growth in the region. Still, a workforce development "system" must be developed to fill the gap, and vocational training perceptions must change.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance strongly favors efforts to increase student awareness and exposure to vocational and apprenticeship training to develop a strong and reliable skilled workforce. Additionally, the Regional Chamber Alliance fully supports veteran transition programs and veteran training programs focused on reducing the Hampton Roads workforce's skill gaps.
Education

Issue Summary:

Since workforce training and development is vital to our future success, we also must support early education programs and other educational initiatives to ensure that our students are prepared for employment in the 21st century.

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

- Early childhood education programs
- Amendments to the Standards of Quality to expand funding
- Initiatives at the state level to create a more comprehensive, unified system of publicly funded universal employment and training services
- Increased state funding for K-12 and sustained funding for higher education
- Investment in programs and tools to encourage and improve interactive virtual learning opportunities
- Support career and technical training designed to prepare students for careers in high-demand fields, including STEM-H
Tourism Economy

Issue Summary:

Hampton Roads is the largest tourism economy in the Commonwealth, with Virginia Beach and Greater Williamsburg being the top two tourism destinations, generating over 2.4 billion dollars annually in tourism revenues. We need to protect, grow, and diversify our tourism economy in Hampton Roads by generating new tourism product development, including attractions, hotels, restaurants, and other vacation experiences that bring visitors to Hampton Roads.

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance strongly favors increased state funding to the Virginia Tourism Corporation, increased investment in tourism innovation and expansion, including major attractions and other entrepreneurial initiatives, and international marketing for tourism business relocation and expansion.
Capability & Capacity of Private-Sector Ship Repair

Issue Summary:

Over the last several years, through decommissioning and other means of attrition, Hampton Roads has lost roughly 20 conventional non-nuclear surface ships that called our region home. With all newly-commissioned fossil-fueled ships being homeported in other locations, the risk of reduction to the capacity of the private-sector Ship Repair Industry in Hampton Roads, and its effect as a significant driver to Virginia's economy, would be catastrophic for the Navy and Virginia's economy.

Although Hampton Roads remains home to the World's largest Naval Base, the effects of the loss of these ships will be devastating in terms of atrophy to an enormous economic and national security asset. This reduction of capacity would impact the Navy and the no-fewer-than 260 Hampton Roads companies supporting and performing ship repair and building.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance fully supports all efforts to promote the replacement of displaced and lost conventional fossil-fuel surface ships in Hampton Roads to avoid any possible loss of economic vitality in the region. The Regional Chamber Alliance recognizes the enormous economic and national security impact of this loss of ships. We will use all necessary means to bring to the attention of state and federal legislators and Navy leaders the urgent need for Hampton Roads to maintain its strong Naval presence and the economic vitality that it provides to our region.
Certificate of Public Need (COPN)

Issue Summary:
The Commonwealth of Virginia requires health care providers (hospitals, doctors, etc.) to receive a Certificate of Public Need (COPN) to operate in the state. Congress developed the COPN in 1974 to prevent costly duplicative health care services in the U.S. Presently, all hospitals in the Commonwealth are required to provide services to anyone that requires health care regardless of their ability to pay. Such mandate is not required of independent physician offices, for-profit lab/testing facilities, and professional medical specialists. These health care businesses can deny services to patients without insurance or the ability to pay.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support
The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance supports efforts to preserve the Certificate of Need Program to protect hospitals' ability to provide medical services to all, promote quality care, and offer a full range of essential health services.
Airbnb

Issue Summary:

Airbnb and other short-term rental platforms present unique complications to traditional zoning laws. They offer the ability to convert any house into a bed-and-breakfast without approval by the surrounding municipality. This provides an unfair advantage against traditional hospitality industries like hotels because short-term rentals are not required to pay the licensing and registration fees typically required of such businesses. With the passage of Senate Bill 1578 in 2017, the Virginia General Assembly recognized the need to establish regulations for short-term rentals by granting municipalities the power to require the registration of such platforms.

Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance Position: Support

The Hampton Roads Regional Chamber Alliance strongly encourages the General Assembly to maintain policies that enable local regulation of short-term rental platforms like Airbnb.
757 CHAMBER ALLIANCE

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2021

The Hampton Roads Chamber
101 West Main Street Suite 800
Norfolk, VA 23510

Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce
19056 Parkway
Melfa, VA 23410

Franklin Southampton Area Chamber of Commerce
108 W 3rd Avenue
Franklin, VA 23851

Greater Williamsburg Business Council
421 N Boundary Street
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce
100 Main Street
Smithfield, VA 23430

Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
21 Enterprise Parkway Suite 100
Hampton, VA 23666

6 Chambers 1 Voice
757 CHAMBER Alliance
Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce
Franklin-Southampton Area Chamber of Commerce
Greater Williamsburg Business Council
Hampton Roads Chamber
Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce
Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce