Chamber Reports from General Assembly Session

T he 46-day “short” session of the Virginia General Assembly began on January 12, 2011. This is a “non-budget” year, but much of the focus remains on the prioritization of the Commonwealth’s fiscal resources. There are many factors that create the day-to-day “political” environment in the State legislature. The House of Delegates is controlled by a republican majority and the Virginia Senate by a democratic majority. This is also an election year in Virginia, where all members in the House of Delegates and State Senate will be elected in November. Governor Bob McDonnell has introduced a pro-business legislative agenda in areas including transportation, higher education reform, economic and tourism development, state pension reform, and ABC privatization. Governor Bob McDonnell has introduced a pro-business legislative agenda in areas including transportation, higher education reform, economic and tourism development, state pension reform, and ABC privatization.

The Hampton Roads Chamber endorsed the Governor’s $4 billion transportation package. Major transportation funding bills have been amended and were passed by bipartisan votes including HB2527 patroned by Speaker William J. Howell and SB1446 patroned by William C. Wampler, Jr. While these measures do not contain the long-term sustainable funding component that the Chamber sought, this funding will reduce congestion, put people to work, and fund a number of significant projects in Hampton Roads. There is a strong indication that the funds will go further since highway construction costs are in a steep decline.

The Chamber’s 2011 General Assembly session priorities included issues such as Post Labor Day School Opening, Workers Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, Insurance Mandates, Economic Development, Higher Education Reform, and Tourism Development. Chamber members receive weekly electronic “Legislative News and Notes” which provide detailed information during the session. In addition, the Chamber’s electronic “Legislative Call-to-Action Alerts” allow you to take action and send e-mails and/or letters directly to elected officials regarding important time-sensitive business-related issues. To view the Chamber’s latest “Legislative News and Notes,” go to HamptonRoadsChamber.com and click on the “Advocacy” page.

After the 2011 General Assembly Session, the votes taken by our Hampton Roads delegation will be analyzed and endorsements will be made by the Hampton Roads Business Political Action Committee (HRBPAC). A final report of legislative accomplishments will also be completed and shared with our membership.

During the General Assembly session, please contact the Chamber’s governmental affairs team with any business issues or concerns. For Agicenta can be reached at agricenta@hrccva.com, 757-664-2570 and Candace Reid at creed@hrccva.com, 757-684-2572.

Hampton Roads Business Brief Features Congressman Randy Forbes

T he Chamber held its third annual Hampton Roads Business Brief on January 21, attracting 125 members of the business community to the Norfolk Waterside Marriott. This year’s program, featuring Congressman Randy Forbes (R-04), focused on the military sector of the area’s economy. Forbes serves on the House Armed Services Committee and is Chairman of the House Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee which oversees military readiness, training, logistics and maintenance issues and programs, military construction, installations and family housing issues, and the BRAC process.

Forbes explained that there have been $180 billion of military cuts. He said, “We’ve had a change in spending, it’s being controlled by budgetary needs and net defense needs.”

Regarding the disestablishment of U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCS), Forbes said there will be a 50% reduction of civilian employees and a 70-75% reduction of contractors, totaling a loss of 1,945 jobs and a $370 million revenue loss to the region. He wants to change legislation that would require the BRAC process for any JFCS-like proposal. Forbes said, “We’re going to close the loophole that takes disestablishment out of the BRAC process.”

Forbes said that moving a carrier from Norfolk to Mayport, Fla. is a political move, to carry votes in that state. “The Hampton Roads delegation doesn’t believe it’s a national security issue, it’s a political issue.” Hampton Roads is currently home to five carriers, the same number of carriers along the west coast. The locally-based USS Enterprise will decommission in 2012.

While the U.S. is cutting its defense spending, Forbes explained that China, which has announced double digit increases in military spending, is a military threat to the U.S. China has more ships in its Navy, has developed its own stealth fighter, and has two missile systems directed at our carriers.

Following his comments, Congressman Forbes took questions from the audience. The Chamber thanks Presenting Sponsor Bank of America.
Imagine Hampton Roads!

Imagine if everyone everywhere knew the climate is perfect, the water is beautiful, the people are friendly, the seafood is the best and Hampton Roads is a great place to do business! The LEAD Hampton Roads Class of 2011 did imagine that very possibility and designed a project to put our region “on the map.” The project design came in response to recent discussions at the Regional Roundtable regarding the need for new and innovative ways to brand the region in order to assist the growth and development of our economic infrastructure. In November and December, three brainstorming sessions held around the region, engaged nearly 100 people in lively discussions on how to create a public relations campaign that will boost the region’s prosperity and quality of life.

Experience Spain with the Chamber

Barcelona & Madrid
November 13-20, 2011

Experience SPAIN

2010 Annual Meeting Featured Secretary of the Navy

The Chamber held its 26th Annual Meeting of the Membership on December 8 at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. The crowd of nearly 800 heard from keynote speaker Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus who spoke about issues including the Navy’s budget, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and the possible move of a Norfolk-based carrier to Florida.

The Chamber honored its outgoing 2010 volunteer leadership and recognized its incoming 2011 volunteer leaders. Nelson Adcock (GeoEnvironmental Resources, Inc.), who served as the Chamber’s 2010 Chair, will continue in this role in 2011. During the luncheon, Adcock presented the Chamber’s 2010 Volunteer of the Year Award to Marino Santarelli (Wachovia, A Wells Fargo Company) for his hard work and dedication. Santarelli served as Chair of the Chamber’s Sustainable Resources Campaign leading an all volunteer effort which raised 5% more than last year.

Experience and enjoy Spain with other Chamber members and business leaders from the Hampton Roads region. Travel from November 13-20, 2011 on this eight-day trip which includes memorable sites and unforgettable cultural experiences in beautiful Barcelona and Madrid.

The trip includes round trip airfare departing from Norfolk International Airport, hotel transfers, hotel accommodations (three nights in Barcelona & three nights in Madrid), six breakfasts & two dinners, and English-speaking tour guides. The total cost of the trip for Chamber members is $2,588 per person (double occupancy), and $2,259 per person (double occupancy) for non-members.

This trip is open to the public. Space is limited and reservations are made on a first come, first served basis. Make your reservation today! For more information, visit HamptonRoadsChamber.com or call Sharon Dail at 757-664-2501.

VICTORY LAP – THE PEDAL TO THE METAL CAMPAIGN

2011 Sustainable Resources Campaign

We’re reviving our engines for the 12th annual Sustainable Resources Campaign (SRC)! (Our Co-Chairs, Michael Dudley/Optimal Health Partners and John Wilson/WBB Insurance Agency LLC) are leading the pack to the Victory Lap! This year’s goal is $750,000 and we’re ready to roll! The annual campaign assists the Chamber in funding its programs and services to the business community. When the community prospers, your business prospers.

This reward driven campaign is a great way for you to meet local business leaders, work with many of the community’s finest volunteers, earn incentives, and have fun. Campaign volunteers reach out to the community and engage local businesses in the Chamber through sponsorships, advertising and new memberships. We’ll keep on driving toward the goal until the checkered flag is in sight!

If you are ready to climb into the cockpit, contact Sarah Martin Lampert, Vice President, Development, at 757-664-2503 or smartin@hrccva.com. Information about the April Kick-off Event coming soon!
Accepting Applications for Small Business of the Year Awards

Small businesses make up 80% of all business in the Hampton Roads region. Since small businesses are such an essential piece of Hampton Roads’ economic establishment, they are definitely worth celebrating.

Applications are being accepted for the Small Business of the Year Award, the “Top 10 to Watch,” and the Leadership Award.

A Small Business of the Year is recognized in each Southside city (Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, and Suffolk) and then one overall winner is chosen for the regional award. The Leadership Award will be presented to an individual demonstrating leadership, impact on workplace culture, community service and involvement, professional achievement, and perseverance. “Top 10 to Watch” businesses must be a South Hampton Roads for-profit emerging business with fewer than 50 employees, in business for six years or less as of January 1, 2011, but more than one year, or should have introduced a new product or entered a new market in the last five years. Application deadline for all of the awards is March 21, 2011 at 5pm. Go to HamptonRoadsChamber.com to download an application form. For more information, contact Lindsay Sigathos at 757-664-2536.

Mark your calendars for the Small Business of the Year Awards luncheon on May 19 at 12pm at the Holiday Inn Virginia Beach – Norfolk Waterside Marriott (Presenting Sponsor) and Inside Business (Media Sponsor).

Chamber Signs onto Rail Resolution

On January 7, a coalition of business groups from the Richmond, Hampton Roads and Raleigh-Durham, N.C., areas met at Virginia’s Capitol in Richmond to show support for the development of passenger rail service within the three regions. Business leaders, including Hampton Roads Chamber President & CEO Jack Hornbeck, signed and presented a resolution to the Virginia-North Carolina Interstate High-Speed Rail Compact, a group of legislators and government officials that works to advance high-speed rail initiatives in the two states, primarily the Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor planned to link Washington, D.C., and Charlotte, N.C.

In the resolution, the groups pledged to “commit to work together to advance policy solutions and public and private funding alternatives that will accelerate the deployment and enhancement of higher speed rail services in the southern mid-Atlantic region that will join and strengthen the twin urban crescents in North Carolina and Virginia while maintaining or improving the integrity of our freight rail networks.”

State and federal officials, including Director of Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Twaina Drake, also provided updates on the high-speed rail project.

Chamber Day at the Capitol

The Virginia Chamber of Commerce met for its annual “Chamber Day at the Capitol” on January 26 for a briefing from the Commonwealth’s top leadership regarding commerce and economic prosperity. The contingent of 40 from LEAD Hampton Roads, for the fifth straight year, was the largest regional group present. LEAD Hampton Roads is a program of the Hampton Roads Chamber. Top elected officials, including Governor Bob McDonnell, Lt. Governor Bill Bolling, Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, and House Speaker William Howell spoke to the group.

Following the formal program, LEAD participants met with members of our Hampton Roads delegation, including an extensive discussion with Sen. Jeffrey McWaters, who shared his reflections on his first year of building relationships and learning “the ropes” in Richmond. The group toured the newly restored Capitol building with the chief historian and visited with the House Pages in their quarters.

Jeff Ainslie, chair-elect of LEAD and President of The Ainslie Group, the corporate sponsor for the trip, said, “As advocates, this experience was great and provided tremendous insight into the inner workings of State government that otherwise is difficult to obtain.”

We’ve Got an App for That!

As a Chamber member, download MyChamberApp for free to your Phone, iPod, BlackBerry, and Android. MyChamberapp is the only nationwide mobile directory of businesses owned and operated by local Chamber members. MyChamberApp includes your business’s listing, GPS-enabled mapping, details on member-to-member discounts, coupons, and special offers. You can even search by category, sub-category, type of business, business name or location, and find out where and when the nearest Chamber event is happening.

Scan this with your mobile device to download MyChamberApp or go to www.MyChamberApp.com.

Have questions? Email info@mychamberapp.com or call 310-475-0326.

To register, call 757-622-2312 or visit HamptonRoadsChamber.com
Welcome New Members

Join us in welcoming these new Chamber members. For the most current membership directory, visit www.HamptonRoadsChamber.com

CHAMBER CORNER

Patrick Crute joined the Chamber in December as Manager for Municipal Affairs. In this role, Patrick manages the Chamber’s Chesapeake Division. He has lived in Chesapeake for more than 15 years. Previously, he served as Political Director for Congressman J. Randy Forbes’ re-election campaign. In May 2010, Patrick graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with degrees in Political Science and History.

Lisa Jones is now serving as Director of Communications & Marketing. Lisa joined the Chamber in August 2009 as Communications Manager.

AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Paul Arola, who has been named the Chamber’s 2010 Ambassador of the Year. If you’ve attended a Chamber event recently, chances are you’ve seen and met Paul. Since 2003, Paul has been an active volunteer on the Chamber’s Ambassador Committee, attending networking events, reaching out to new members, and assisting at Chamber events. Paul said, “It was humbling to win this award, I was surprised and shocked.” He added, “I volunteer on the committee because I live and work in the area. Any of the ambassadors could have won this award. It’s an amazing group of role models.”

The Ambassador Committee is a diverse group of 15 volunteers who are dedicated to making a difference for the Chamber and within the community. Ambassadors are liaisons between the Chamber and new and existing members. Paul will serve as the 2011 Chair of the Ambassador Committee. If you’d like to join the Chamber’s Ambassador Committee, please contact Membership Coordinator Tasha Golick at 757-664-2524.

Trustee Profile

WorkerChoiceUSA is a new benefit program being offered in which businesses can offer eligible employees low-cost loans from $500 to $5,000 to be paid back through a simple pay-check-deduct process. Funds are delivered directly into an employee’s bank account within two business days and there is no credit check or lengthy application process.

There is no direct cost to employers for offering the WorkerChoiceUSA program. Once a company enrolls, employees are guaranteed loans based on three basic criteria: 1) full-time employment for at least six months; 2) minimum earnings of $10.00/hr or $20,800/yr; and 3) no current garnishments. If an employee has an outstanding loan less than $500, that amount is paid back at the end of the employment relationship between the employee and WorkerChoiceUSA. The employer bears no risk for the loan. By offering WorkerChoiceUSA, companies avoid risky lending practices and employees are not forced to borrow from retirement accounts or resort to other high-cost resources. Employees do not pay for the program unless they use it and employers have the ability to approve or deny any request at any time while still having 24/7 online access to all transactions and statements.

For more information, visit www.workercusa.com.

November 2010

Hoodz of Virginia Beach
Fortis Logic, Inc.
FIGG
Terri Thompson - State Farm Insurance
Tamco Industries
Shepelle Watkins-White Consulting & Prepaid Legal Services - DeAndre Coke
The Practice Set Fee Clinic
OMG Office Business Centers
Maid Brigade of Virginia Beach
Link Staffing Services
LifeSavers of Hampton Roads - I & O Medical Center
Harrington Insurance
Cetan Corp

December 2010

Infinite Solutions
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757-664-2504

Thanks to our Strategic Partners

For more information about being a Strategic Partner, contact the membership department at 757-664-2504.

The Hampton Roads Chamber released its 2010 Membership Directory in a new online flip-book format, produced by Showcase Communications. To view the Flip Book and Directory Update, visit HamptonRoadsChamber.com and go to the “Membership” page.

Did you Know?

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Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit membership organization.