



Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Opportunity. Leadership. Results.

**Arlington Chamber of Commerce
2016 General Assembly
Public Policy Positions**

2016 General Assembly Priorities

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce annually presents its legislative priorities to the county's legislative delegation, and other lawmakers, prior to the start of each General Assembly session. The 2016 session is slated to run from January 13 to March 12.

The priorities below are developed through the Arlington Chamber's Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee, are refined by the Chamber's Executive Committee and are modified and adopted by the Chamber's Board of Directors.

The Arlington Chamber would like to thank the members of the Arlington delegation to the General Assembly for their time in discussing the upcoming session and their own priorities with the Arlington Chamber's Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee.

In addition to the specific priorities outlined below, the Arlington Chamber also will respond separately to the legislative packages proposed by the County Board and School Board.

Tourism

The Arlington Chamber strongly champions the reinstatement of the 0.25% surcharge to Arlington County's Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) for funding tourism promotion. The reinstatement of the TOT surcharge is the Chamber's foremost priority for the 2016 legislative session. This surcharge had been in place until 2011 when the General Assembly allowed it to lapse. The subsequent lack of a predictable stream of revenue to support the promotion of tourism directly harms Arlington businesses, especially our hospitality and retail members, as they compete for tourists and business travelers with Washington, DC and Maryland.

The reinstatement of the TOT surcharge is estimated to generate nearly one million dollars annually in promotional spending. According to analysis from the Virginia Tourism Corporation, this promotional spending translates into a potential five million dollars in tax revenue alone to the Commonwealth. Thus, the additional surcharge is accretive to the Commonwealth before even taking the significant benefit to our member businesses into consideration.

Assessment & Equalization

The Arlington Chamber also would encourage the General Assembly to consider requiring that members of local Boards of Equalization be appointed by the Circuit Court, as is the case with members of Boards of Zoning Appeals, rather than by elected officials. This would ensure that Boards of Equalization could maintain independence in their deliberations and decision-making.

The Arlington Chamber also asks the General Assembly to clarify the role of the County Attorney in the real estate tax appeal process. The Chamber further supports reforms to level the playing field for taxpayers appealing assessments at the Circuit Court level of appeal.

Economic Development

The Arlington Chamber supports additional funds being appropriated for the Commonwealth Opportunity Fund and the Virginia Economic Development Initiative Grant. Both of these incentives are crucial to Arlington being able to reliably bring businesses looking at the Washington D.C. area into Virginia.

The Arlington Chamber supports efforts by the Commonwealth to provide economic-development assistance and mitigate the impact to localities that continue to lose jobs due to the federal base-closure (BRAC) process and as a result of sequestration.

The Arlington Chamber is open to supporting regional approaches to economic development that would lessen competition between Virginia localities. We think that some collaboration is possible and could be beneficial to everyone involved.

Transportation

The Arlington Chamber supports the development and maintenance of a safe, convenient, efficient, cost-effective multi-modal transportation network – including aviation, port, rail, public transit, and highway facilities – that will promote and enhance domestic and international commerce, encourage tourism and facilitate the movement of Virginians to work, school, recreation and other activities.

The Arlington Chamber applauds the actions of General Assembly during the 2013 session, with modifications in the 2014 and 2015 sessions, to establish significant and sustainable funding streams to expand and maintain Virginia's critical transportation infrastructure. The Chamber urges that those investments be made judiciously and that regional funding sources and project selection be designated in such a manner as to achieve congestion relief, economic development and safety improvements.

The Arlington Chamber encourages V-DOT and Arlington County to come to an amicable solution that alleviates congestion inside the I-66 study area. The Chamber additionally encourages the addition of mass-transit systems in the Crystal City/Potomac Yard and Columbia Pike corridors, and ultimately into Shirlington.

The Arlington Chamber also supports fully funding the Metro system, as it is a crucial component of both Arlington's transportation management and the County's economic development. The Chamber supports the growth and sustainability of Metro as envisioned in WMATA's Momentum plan and in Metro 2025. The Chamber supports a predictable revenue stream for WMATA funding. However, the Chamber does have concerns about the way in which WMATA is currently being managed.

The Arlington Chamber applauds the significant improvements the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) is planning for Reagan National Airport. We ask that the General Assembly work with MWAA as they strengthen both the Reagan National and Dulles International Airports.

Taxation & Regulation

The Arlington Chamber supports a comprehensive examination and modernization of the Commonwealth's tax structure that recognizes changes in Virginia's economy and promotes prosperity and job creation. The Chamber believes this can be accomplished while maintaining the rational balance of the tax burden in Virginia among businesses, residents and users of services that has led Virginia to consistently be ranked as one of the top business-friendly states in the nation.

The Arlington Chamber supports the Commonwealth simplifying the regulatory process by frequently assessing the need for existing regulations, and only imposing new regulations that achieve a specific need or goal for the community without imposing an undue burden.

Housing Affordability and Workforce Housing

The Arlington Chamber supports a regional approach to housing affordability. The stock, price, and type of affordable housing varies greatly within the Commonwealth and it makes sense to acknowledge that reality. The Arlington Chamber asks for the creation of a dedicated funding stream for the Virginia Housing Affordability Trust Fund at a level to provide support to all parts of Virginia, including our higher cost region.

Health Care

The Arlington Chamber supports Medicaid reform efforts and coverage expansion that takes full advantage of available federal funding. Closing the coverage gap is critical to ensuring Arlington residents have access to quality healthcare coverage while protecting Arlington businesses from the burdensome increases in healthcare costs. For the Commonwealth to achieve this in a fiscally sensible way it is important that coverage expansion be paired with some private-sector style reforms.

K-12 Education

The Arlington Chamber supports a comprehensive review of the Local Composite Index formula as it currently places Arlington County at a disadvantage by not taking into account important factors such as the differential between county and city taxing authority, the impact of cost of living on a locality's ability to pay staff, and the increased costs associated with providing services to growing limited English proficiency and special education populations.

The Arlington Chamber supports expanding technical options to third and fourth year World Language requirements for high school graduation with an Advanced Diploma as approved by the Board of Education. This provision would help more students meet Advanced Studies Diploma requirements and increase Virginia students' readiness for a rapidly evolving, global technology workforce. This provision would also foster relationships between schools and the technology business community.

Higher Education & Workforce Development

The Arlington Chamber supports competitive compensation for educators and the continued investment of public dollars into publicly supported regional institutions represented in Arlington. The Chamber also supports the recruitment and retention of other institutions of higher education to Arlington and Northern Virginia.

The Arlington Chamber supports legislative priorities of regional institutions of higher education to accommodate expected growth, and supports focusing state tax support on enrollment growth in high-need academic areas, such as information technology and cybersecurity, health care and health informatics, teacher training and STEM initiatives relevant to initiatives throughout the Commonwealth.

The Arlington Chamber supports continuing, collaborative initiatives to provide opportunities for dual-enrollment college credits for all Arlington students as a part of their high-school program of studies; supports continuing, collaborative initiatives between Northern Virginia Community College and the Commonwealth's four-year institutions of higher learning. The Chamber remains open to supporting other initiatives that would make college more affordable and accessible for Virginia students.

The Arlington Chamber supports the continued presence of a Regional Workforce Council dedicated to Arlington and Alexandria, distinct from other regions of Northern Virginia.

Dillon Rule

The Arlington Chamber supports maintaining the integrity of the Dillon Rule.

Specifically, county governments should not have authority to coerce businesses, of any size, to provide specific wage levels, benefits, or working conditions, outside the framework of applicable federal and state labor law .

Zoning & Planning

The Arlington Chamber urges the General Assembly to study the impact of outdated locality zoning plans on economic development, to determine if rewrites to such plans should be required on a regular basis.

While the Arlington Chamber supports localities working with the building industry to develop and adopt reasonable conditions for a transportation-demand management plan, we ask the General Assembly to keep a careful watch on localities to ensure they do not violate the authority delegated to them on this issue.

The Arlington Chamber also urge the General Assembly to maintain its restrictions on fees associated with zoning appeals to a level that does not adversely impact those who wish to appeal rulings, or dissuade them from doing so based on the cost involved. Virginia property owners should not find themselves unfairly restricted from appealing zoning, building-code, property-maintenance and similar rulings by local governments.

Energy

The Arlington Chamber supports statewide energy-efficiency objectives and policies, but does not support the delegation of that authority to localities, especially as it applies to the adoption of “green” construction codes. The Chamber believes adoption of “green” construction codes should occur at the state level and be applied in a uniform manner in all localities. Additionally, localities should not be delegated the authority to regulate energy consumption and usage, either through local building and zoning codes or through restrictions on the transferability of interests in real estate.

The Arlington Chamber also supports the expansion and diversification of Virginia’s energy portfolio.

Parking

The Arlington Chamber urges the General Assembly to oppose any effort that would impede property owners from safely managing the parking on their property. In a community such as Arlington, where space is at a premium, responsible parking management is a vital component of private-property rights.

Chamber Contacts

President & CEO: Kate Roche

2015 Chair: Kevin Shooshan, The Shooshan Company

2016 Chair: Todd Yeatts, The Boeing Company

Vice Chair - Business Advocacy: David Kinney, Kinco, LC

Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee Co-Chairs:
Brian Gordon, Apartment and Office Building Association, and Tad Lunger, McGuireWoods LLP



2009 14th Street, North, Suite 100
Arlington, Virginia 22201
(703) 525-2400
www.arlingtonchamber.org