

# **VAWEST**

## **BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE COALITION**

### ***LEGISLATIVE POLICIES***

### ***FOR***

### ***YEAR 2010***

### ***GENERAL ASSEMBLY***

#### **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERS**

Bedford Area, Charlottesville Regional, Danville/Pittsylvania County, Franklin County, Greater Bluefield, Lexington-Rockbridge County, Lynchburg Regional, Martinsville-Henry County, Roanoke Regional, Salem-Roanoke County, Smith Mountain Lake, Twin County Regional, and Wytheville-Wythe-Bland

*A UNITED VOICE FOR WESTERN VIRGINIA ON ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.*

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## KEY PRINCIPLES

The VA WEST Business & Legislative Coalition works as a unified voice on issues that affect the business community. As a guiding principle, VA WEST generally supports the public policies of VA WEST members and the Virginia Chamber.

VA WEST:

- Supports financially sound principles for all aspects of budget planning and long-term strategic planning.
- Supports the retention of Virginia's Aaa financial bond rating.
- Believes that any state mandate on localities must be fully funded.
- Supports continued state tax restructuring to find permanent, long-term solutions to meet our region's and the Commonwealth's growing transportation and education needs.
- Supports two-term governorship as a step toward improving long-term strategic planning efforts.
- Supports Virginia's Right-to-Work Laws

## TRANSPORTATION: *Virginia continues to face a Transportation Crisis*

Funding for Virginia's transportation needs remains inadequate.

VA West supports:

- Development of a 20-year strategic plan in coordination with the existing six-year-plan.
- A dedicated, statewide revenue stream to meet critical transportation needs.
- Retention of existing Transportation Trust Fund allocation formula.
- A constitutional amendment requiring Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) be used solely for their intended use.
- Immediate re-opening of 19 rest area facilities closed in 2009.

VA WEST supports appropriate investment in all modes of transportation, including highways and bridges, air, transit, passenger and freight rail, roads, and intelligent transportation systems, with an emphasis on:

- Highways/Bridges
  - Widening/improvements for I-81, with short & long-term improvements.
  - I-77/I-81 seven mile overlay upgrade.
  - Building I-73 and upgrading 220 from I-64 to the North Carolina line.
  - Fast-tracking U.S. 501 improvements.
  - Completion of the U.S. 58 corridor.
  - Completion of all work on U.S. 29 limited access bypasses at Lynchburg (southern portion) and Charlottesville.
  - Improvements to U.S. 460.
  - Completion of the Meadowcreek Parkway.
  - Completion of the Southeast Connector Road.
  - Improvements to Route 37 Eastern Loop Road in Harrisonburg.
  - Funding for the Smart Road Demonstration Project.

- Rail
  - Crescent Corridor, Heartland Corridor and related Intermodal systems as they support freight and passenger rail.
  - Capacity and Modeling analysis of the 1-81/Route 29 Intercity Passenger Rail Projects for Phases II, III, and IV.
- Air:
  - State leadership initiatives on air service to maintain current levels of service at regional airports in Charlottesville, Danville, Lynchburg, Roanoke, and the Shenandoah Valley.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGIONAL COOPERATION**

The VA WEST Coalition is strongly committed to programs that encourage investment in technology infrastructure, regional economic development planning, regional workforce training, or otherwise promote cooperative city and county efforts to maintain or attract businesses to the Piedmont, Southside, Southwestern, and Western Virginia.

VA WEST supports:

- Programmatic restructuring to provide for more meaningful and effective enterprise zones.
- The statewide efforts of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and regional economic development groups, including: Roanoke Regional Partnership, Region 2000 Economic Development Partnership, Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation, Shenandoah Valley Partnership, Thomas Jefferson Partnership, Mount Rogers Partnership, and Virginia's @Corridor.
- Increased funding for the Governor's Opportunity Fund.

## **WORKFORCE**

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

VA WEST supports:

- Adequate funding for adult education.
- The concept of middle college.
- Continued funding of Workforce Services through the Department of Business Assistance, and flexibility to use funds for training of new workers and re-training of existing workers.
- Sustained funding for: Bedford Science and Technology Center, Botetourt Center at Greenfield Workforce Training Center, Dabney S. Lancaster Workforce Training Center, Danville Community College, Roanoke Higher Education Authority, Franklin County Workforce Consortium, Central Virginia Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, Patrick Henry County Community College, Roanoke County/Bedford Regional Alternative Education Center, Piedmont Virginia Community College, "Piedmont Works," Blue Ridge Plecker Workforce, Virginia Western Community College and all community college satellite facilities, and the Wytheville Community College Workforce Training Center.
- Flexibility in the use and leveraging of the federal Workforce Investment Act funds to ensure services are focused on skills development responsive to the current needs of business.

## ***TOURISM: Drivers of Economic Vitality***

VA WEST recognizes that tourism represents a \$19.2 billion industry and generates more than 210,000 jobs in Virginia. Museums and attractions, including “heritage tourism”, “agri-” and “eco-tourism” throughout the Piedmont, Western, Southwest, and Southside Virginia, provide unique cultural and educational opportunities that spur for economic development and help attract young business professionals.

VA WEST:

- Supports equitable funding for quality of life entities, including state and non-state agencies, museums, and cultural and historical attractions, specifically Ashlawn-Highland, the Danville Science Center, Heritage Preservation Center, Nat'l D-Day Memorial, VA Museum of Natural History, Monticello, Montpelier, Piedmont Arts Association, VA Horse Center, VA Museum of Transportation, Art Museum of Western Virginia, The Arts Council, Blue Ridge Zoological Society of Virginia, Inc., Harrison Museum of African American Culture, History Museum & History Society of Western Virginia, and Science Museum of Western Virginia.
- Believes that non-state entities fulfill the role of state museums while not requiring the state to pay full fare. These facilities are widely utilized by school districts to fulfill SOL standards.
- Supports state funding of the Virginia Commission for the Arts.
- Supports funding for the Virginia Tourism Corporation's Cooperative Marketing Program.
- Supports continued growth and further development of the wine industry throughout central and Western Virginia. Viticulture and winemaking are successful examples of agribusiness and agri-tourism.

## ***EDUCATION: Foundation for the Commonwealth's Future***

The VA WEST Coalition clearly recognizes the importance of sustained funding for educational programs (K-12) and higher education programs as the foundation of the Commonwealth's future knowledge workforce.

The VA WEST Coalition supports:

- Increasing state investment and support for university research programs including public-private partnerships in areas such as “green” technology, alternative energy, bio-technology, engineering, and advanced healthcare.
- Increasing state support for community colleges to deal with greater enrollment.
- Expanding opportunities for access to pre-K education.
- Allowing localities to determine how to spend state allocations for education with proviso that no local reductions in expenditures can occur so that state funds are a net gain to the funding pool.
- Continued full funding of the Standards of Quality, support for and review of the Standards of Learning, and verified credit for nationally credited programs.
- Maintained support for teacher professional development and training in workplace technology applications and character principles instruction for K-12.
- Proposed guiding principles for state education funding as recommended by Virginia CARES.

# **SOUND FISCAL PRACTICE**

The VA WEST Coalition believes that governmental services must be structured to available resources.

VA WEST supports:

- Comprehensive tax reform that is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic development, and promotes prosperity for all Virginians.
- Reform and repeal local business and professional occupancy tax authority.
- A single factor sales tax.

VA West opposes:

- Homestead Exemption or any other legislation that would establish different tax rates for residential and commercial real estate.

# **HEALTHCARE**

Creative measures are essential to making healthcare coverage more affordable for Virginia's businesses.

VA WEST supports:

- Efforts to lower costs through pooling, medical savings accounts, or other affordable means.
- Caps on medical malpractice liability awards.

VA WEST opposes:

- Additional healthcare mandates that dictate that insurance products include certain benefits.
- Mandated percentage of healthcare costs to be paid by businesses for their employees.

# **ENERGY**

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

# **WESTERN, SOUTHWESTERN, AND SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA CAUCUS:**

The VA WEST Coalition advocates a bi-partisan legislative caucus to represent the Western and more rural portions of the state. This cooperative effort can be effective in dealing with common issues such as transportation, workforce, education, and economic development.

# NOTES

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# VAWEST

## BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE COALITION

*Virginia West Business & Legislative Coalition members work together to help the western region speak with a unified voice for business. Virginia West represents over 7,000 businesses in over 10,000 square miles.*

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### LEGISLATORS

Senator R. Creigh Deeds  
Senator John S. Edwards  
Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.  
Senator R. Edward Houck  
Senator Robert Hurt  
Senator Stephen D. Newman  
Senator Mark Obenshain  
Senator Phillip P. Puckett  
Senator W. Roscoe Reynolds  
Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr.  
Senator Ralph Smith  
Delegate Watkins M. Abbitt, Jr.  
Delegate Ward L. Armstrong  
Delegate Robert B. Bell  
Delegate Dickie Bell  
Delegate Kathy J. Byron  
Delegate Charles W. Carrico, Sr.  
Delegate Bill Cleavaland

Delegate Ben Cline  
Delegate Scott Garrett  
Delegate C. Todd Gilbert  
Delegate H. Morgan Griffith  
Delegate W.R. Bill Janis  
Delegate R. Steven Landes  
Delegate Matthew J. Lohr  
Delegate Danny Marshall  
Delegate Joe T. May  
Delegate Donald Merricks  
Delegate David Nutter  
Delegate Charles Poindexter  
Delegate Lacey E. Putney  
Delegate Edward Scott  
Delegate Jim Shuler  
Delegate Anne B. Crockett-Stark  
Delegate David Toscano  
Delegate Onzlee Ware

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