



2010 Public Policy Positions

The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of businesses in the Dulles Business Corridor which is home to the second largest concentration of technology companies outside of Silicon Valley in California. Members of the Chamber represent the full spectrum of local, regional, national and international businesses from all industry segments and in all stages of growth. The goal of this Public Policy Position is to provide a unified voice on issues that are most important to Chamber members. A committee comprised of Chamber members meets monthly to review issues of importance to our constituency and updates this policy statement at least annually. All Public Policy Position statements are approved by the Chamber Board of Directors prior to publication.

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General Business Issues

Dillon Rule

GRCC supports maintaining the integrity of Virginia's Dillon Rule.

Right to Work

GRCC supports the right to employment without the requirement that employees join or support a labor union. Specifically, the Chamber opposes the "Employee Free Choice Act," which proposes to eliminate the secret ballot currently required to conduct an organizing vote. The Chamber also supports current "right to work" statutes and opposes any effort to repeal or modify those statutes.

Workers' Compensation

GRCC supports maintaining a regulatory and legislative climate conducive to the continuation of affordable and available workers' compensation coverage for businesses. The Chamber further supports current laws for the compensation of employees for injuries incurred on the job and supports the current definition of a work-related injury.

Equal Opportunity

The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce is committed to equal employment opportunity in all employment practices including hiring, training, compensation, benefits, promotion, transfer, termination, and reduction in force, for all individuals without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age disability, or veteran status. The Chamber encourages employers to take positive steps to ensure that their work forces make full utilization of the human resources available to them. The Chamber, therefore, supports legislative efforts, which assist employers to adhere to these principles and opposes efforts which place intolerable administrative burdens on employers and which encourage litigation.

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TAXATION AND BUDGET

GRCC supports the creation of a finance system for local and state government that properly aligns revenue sources with expenditure requirements. To achieve this objective, GRCC supports the following:

- Using unbudgeted and nonrecurring surplus tax revenues to fund nonrecurring capital expenditures in the areas of transportation and education or to supplement the Commonwealth's rainy day fund, rather than for new or recurring programmatic expenses;
- Consideration of tax simplification strategies at the state and local level;
- Revenue sharing with localities to ensure that local governments can share in the growth of revenues created by increased economic activity;
- Providing counties with the same taxing authority as cities and towns;
- Continued exemption of internet sales from state and local sales tax until a uniform structure of taxation of such transactions is adopted nationally;
- Increasing the tax on tobacco up to or above the national average and dedicating the increased revenue to fund medical costs currently borne by the Commonwealth;
- An equitable system for the resolution of tax disputes, including a streamlined adjudication process with no requirement to pay the disputed amount of the assessment prior to a decision on the merits;
- Re-enactment by the General Assembly of taxes authorized in 2007 to fund transportation projects in Northern Virginia;
- Continued exclusion of sales taxes on the provision of services; and
- Maintaining Virginia's tradition of uniform taxation of residential and commercial property for General Fund matters;

The Chamber opposes any amendment to the Virginia Constitution permitting the creation of a homestead exemption or similar tax policy that would result in higher commercial real estate taxes through creation of a new class of real property that may be exempted from local taxation.

TRANSPORTATION

GRCC recognizes that the Commonwealth now falls significantly short of funds needed to implement the 2030 Transportation Plan and will soon be unable to provide the 20 percent match for federal funding. GRCC supports efforts to secure additional state funding for state-wide construction and maintenance needs. GRCC supports passage by the General Assembly of legislation that provides significant, dedicated and reliable funding for regional transportation improvements in Northern Virginia.

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The Chamber also supports development of a performance-based statewide transportation plan focused on existing and new corridors of statewide and regional significance to better direct transportation allocations.

Funding:

In addition to state funding, GRCC supports the use of creative transportation financing mechanisms, including new tolls on roads currently not tolled, public/private partnerships, the use of debt financing, provided that it does not threaten Virginia's AAA bond rating, and use of High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes. GRCC supports revisions to the transportation funding formulas so that they better address the needs of heavily congested regions in the Commonwealth, such as northern Virginia. GRCC also supports legislation that would prohibit borrowing from the Transportation Trust Fund. As Congress looks to reauthorize the six-year surface transportation act, GRCC supports increased federal funding for Phase 2 of the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project and for transit and highway programs in the national capital area to improve mobility in light of increased security concerns.

Projects:

With regard to specific projects and initiatives in Northern Virginia, GRCC supports:

- Expedited construction of Metrorail through Tyson's Corner to Washington Dulles International Airport and Loudoun County;
- Approval and construction of the Techway and/or other additional Potomac River crossings;
- Designation of the Western Transportation Corridor (WTC) as a corridor of statewide significance and completion of the WTC Draft Environmental Impact Study;
- Expansion of I-66 inside the Beltway, with an emphasis on adding a third lane to and from Ballston and the Dulles Connector Road;
- Completion of the conversion of Route 28 into an 8-lane limited access freeway between I-66 and Route 7;
- Completion of the I-95/395 HOT Lanes linking Prince William County and Arlington County;
- Completion of the Loudoun County and Tri-County Parkways on the master plan alignments;
- Upgrading the Route 606 western loop around Dulles Airport; and
- Enhancements to the regional bus transit system serving the region's most congested corridors;
- Innovative business solutions that encourage telework and other cutting-edge virtual workplace initiatives, as well as government incentives to encourage greater use of telework and other transportation demand management measures;
- Increasing the efficiency of the existing transportation system through expanded use of technology;

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- Consideration of equitable ways to raise revenue that are dedicated to transportation priorities in the localities where the revenues are raised, including an increase in the gas tax;
- Increased use of special tax districts throughout the Commonwealth to help fund transportation projects;
- Reevaluation of existing and new on/off access ramps on the Dulles Toll Road (DTR) to provide improved access to future Metrorail stations; and
- Undertake a study of the feasibility of providing additional tolls at the westbound Route 7 ramp on the DTR and the Route 123 ramps along the Dulles Connector Road as potential additional funding sources for Dulles Metrorail.

With respect to local projects in the Reston area, the Chamber supports the inclusion of the following items in the Fairfax County Transportation Plan to allow for future funding:

Immediate Improvements For Congestion Relief (*following not listed in priority order*):

- Development of a plan and budget to implement the roadway, transit, pedestrian and bicycle improvements recommended in the Reston Metrorail Station Access Study to enhance ridership and reduce congestion.
- Expedited widening of Route 7 from Rolling Holly Road to Reston Avenue;
- Realignment of Sunset Hills Road to meet Crowell Road;
- Widen Reston Parkway to six lanes between the Toll Road and Lawyers Road;
- Construction of improvements at the intersection of Reston Parkway and Sunrise Valley Drive; and
- Expand the Hunter Mill and Springvale Road bridges.

Future Capacity Improvements (*not listed in priority order*):

- Widen Leesburg Pike (Route 7) to six lanes from Rolling Holly Drive to Tyco Road to include a grade-separated interchange at Route 7 and Baron Cameron Avenue;
- Reconstruct Wiehle Avenue between Sunset Hills Road and Baron Cameron Avenue to modify grades and turning radii to increase driver safety;
- Widen Sunset Hills Road between Reston Parkway and Wiehle Avenue into a six-lane divided road with limited turn movements;
- Widen Hunter Mill Road to four lanes from Baron Cameron Avenue to Lawyers Road with appropriate turn lanes where needed.
- Construction of a diamond or cloverleaf interchange at Fairfax County Parkway and Sunset Hills Road;
- Construction of a new roadway over the Dulles International Airport Access Highway between Soapstone Drive and Isaac Newton Square West to enhance access to the Wiehle Avenue Metrorail Station;
- Construction of a grade-separated interchange at Sunrise Valley Drive and the Fairfax County Parkway; and

GRCC supports efforts to conserve and make more efficient use of fuel, as well as those that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These include incentives to increase

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vehicle mileage and the use of alternative fuels, as well as providing more mode choices for commute and non-commute trips.

ENERGY

GRCC supports a reliable and affordable energy supply that keeps pace with Northern Virginia's growing population and economy. The Chamber encourages the development of new electricity generation and transmission. Renewable energy, as well as increased energy conservation and efficiency, also should be included in the Commonwealth's energy portfolio. The Chamber supports initiatives that can reduce energy use while contributing to the Commonwealth's environmental goals. Such initiatives include alternative energy, green buildings and transit oriented development. Statewide policies can serve as cost-effective incentives for their implementation.

WORKFORCE / AFFORDABLE HOUSING

GRCC supports the following initiatives to address the workforce needs in Northern Virginia:

- Policies to increase the availability of housing options to meet the needs of a growing regional workforce;
- Restoration of the Fairfax County Penny for Affordable Housing Fund as a stable, flexible source of local funds for the preservation and development of workforce/affordable housing; and
- Federal, state and local incentives, such as tax credit programs, to maximize the production of affordable and workforce housing in high-density development and/or transit centers.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GRCC supports continued focus on maintaining and improving the region's quality of life and overall economic climate through strategic economic development efforts. To meet this goal, GRCC recommends:

- Full funding for the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA) and its efforts to serve the existing business community, attract new businesses and generate new jobs in the Dulles Business Corridor;
- Promotion of arts, tourism and cultural opportunities, including support for the Chamber's Business and Visitor's Center;
- Funding support for the Chamber's Incubator Program as a source of job creation and tax revenue from home-grown businesses;
- Increased use of public-private economic development partnerships to facilitate and encourage economic revitalization or redevelopment in older commercial and residential areas of Fairfax County, such as joint development opportunities on public lands; and
- Consideration by the Commonwealth of the full economic impact of a business and/or industry's presence in Virginia prior to creating or removing any business tax exemption.

The Chamber also encourages the continued full funding of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) incentive and retention programs, coupled with significant increases to the Governor's Opportunity Fund (GOF) and the broadening of the eligibility requirements under both programs based on a firm's contributions to increased local tax revenues.

The Chamber opposes arbitrary efforts to limit or suspend economic growth and opposes excessive and inconsistent restrictions placed on new business development or expansion that do not contribute materially to improving the quality of the business environment in Virginia.

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EDUCATION

Elementary and Secondary Education

GRCC supports:

- Increased state funding to meet Fairfax County's growing education needs;
- Revisions to the state's local composite index formula to recognize the growing burden on localities to fund education needs associated with changing demographics, such as those associated with ESL students and students with disabilities;
- Efforts to expand pre-school and school readiness programs in Virginia.
- Increased state and local funding for school construction and renovation in northern Virginia and consideration of other expedited solutions to address the shortage of classrooms and the problems associated with outdated facilities;
- Continued use of local government bonding capacity and public-private partnerships to build and renovate schools, including establishment of federal tax credits to promote private sector investments in education infrastructure;
- Increased efficiency and prioritization within the Fairfax County Public Schools budget, including conducting an independent audit of the system to identify programs that may be merged, expanded and/or eliminated;
- Continued commitment to offering competitive compensation to attract and retain teachers; and
- Increased federal funding to meet the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the "No Child Left Behind" program.

In addition, GRCC opposes independent taxing authority for elected local school boards.

Higher Education

GRCC supports:

- Bond initiatives that offer substantial capital investments in infrastructure at Northern Virginia Community College and George Mason University by taking advantage of historically low construction costs;
- Maintenance of authority granted to the boards of visitors at Virginia's colleges and universities to set appropriate tuition and fees for individual institutions;
- Reducing the need for Virginia's colleges and universities to recruit out-of-state students to overcome tuition funding gaps that limit the educational opportunities for Virginia's students; and
- Implementation of the seven (7) policy goals established by the Virginia Business Council in its Grow by Degrees Initiative.

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TECHNOLOGY

GRCC supports measures that will enhance Virginia's position as a leader in global technology as well as maintaining its competitiveness and status as a great state in which to do business.

With regard to technology infrastructure, GRCC supports:

- A strong Secretary of Technology with budgetary authority and direct oversight of technology policy, operation and infrastructure in the state;
- Sustained investments in technology research to foster innovation, build knowledge capital, and increase long-term commercialization potential;
- Measures to promote the formation of new technology and IP-based companies in the state in order to diversify the technology industry and generate economic growth;
- Incentives to encourage the relocation of existing technology companies to Virginia, i.e., increase funding for the Governor's Opportunity Fund, tax credits for business facilities, etc.);
- Investments in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education at all levels from grade school through higher education programs; and
- Continued support for the Center for Innovative Technology's efforts to encourage economic development and commercialization of technology.

GRCC also supports policies and measures that help to safeguard businesses and consumers from external technology assaults and/or hacking, that can lead to the disruption and loss of technology access and information.

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LAND USE

GRCC supports:

- Retention of the Reston Master Plan as the principal tool for guiding development and redevelopment in Reston, as well as the PRC District regulations that govern much of Reston's development;
- Adoption of amendments to the Reston Master Plan and the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan to facilitate high density, economically-viable redevelopment adjacent to the planned metro transit stations along the Dulles Corridor, with a goal of achieving a mix of employment options and both market-rate and workforce/affordable housing that is easily accessible and pedestrian-friendly;
- Incorporation of the Reston Metrorail Access Group's recommendations for transit station access into Fairfax County's Comprehensive Plan;
- Use of air rights and joint development opportunities at planned rail transit stations, including incorporation of design measures at station platforms to allow stations to be retrofitted with such development in the future;
- Continued use of negotiated proffers, in lieu of standardized impact fees or similar charges, as part of rezoning applications to ensure that local community priorities and impacts are appropriately addressed;
- Adoption of policies and procedures that recognize the unique qualities of urban mixed use employment centers in Fairfax County; and
- Retention of the Fairfax County tax abatement program for the rehabilitation of and reinvestment in older properties.

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IMMIGRATION

Immigrants have played an increasingly important role in the prosperity and growth of Northern Virginia, filling key jobs in every sector of our economy and contributing to the rich cultural and intellectual experience that characterizes our region. The GRCC recognizes that the importance of immigrants to the economy must be balanced by border security concerns and, therefore, supports comprehensive Federal immigration reform that will:

- Ensure an adequate supply of workers to support businesses in this region, including a limited guest worker program to fill gaps in our workforce;
- Continue and expand visas for professionals and highly skilled workers, and programs that support seasonal industries and small businesses;
- Require undocumented workers already contributing to the economy to meet specific conditions and obligations in order to earn the legal right to remain in the US;
- Simplify requirements and processes for worker verification and ask congress to establish a national verification system;
- Urge Congress and the administration to address delays, backlogs, and disruptions in our immigration and border management systems that impede the movement of legitimate cargo and travelers across US borders; and
- Apply a commonsense uniform approach to support enforcement of existing Federal immigration laws.

The Chamber, however, opposes increased penalties on employers who unknowingly hire undocumented aliens until a consistent, reliable process for worker verification system is established. The Chamber advocates that any such worker verification system not unduly burden employers, be properly funded, and have a high data integrity confidence factor.

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ENVIRONMENT

GRCC believes that environmental protection should begin with educational efforts aimed at encouraging environmental stewardship by all citizens and organizations. GRCC opposes implementing unnecessarily burdensome or costly regulations offering only marginal benefits to the environment. GRCC encourages the voluntary efforts of businesses, organizations and individuals to positively impact the environment.

GRCC supports:

- Innovative approaches focused on achieving environmental improvements while maintaining a healthy economic climate;
- The concept that state regulations adopted to implement federally mandated programs should not be more stringent than federal requirements;
- The County's vigorous application of its own regulatory reform policies and procedures in adopting any new environmental regulations;
- Continued efforts to comply with existing federal air quality standards using improved technology and cost-effective measures offering substantial results; and
- Specific educational programs and voluntary efforts that promote the reduction of litter and its impact on the environment;
- A policy to encourage the development of technology and other programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Stormwater management regulations that focus on both agricultural and manmade storm runoff and do not impose disproportionate burdens on economic development and redevelopment projects that contribute substantially to Virginia's tax base.

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HEALTH CARE

GRCC believes that Federal Health Reform is needed to reduce the number of those without insurance, but asserts that the costs of reform should not be borne disproportionately by the business community who has, in general, provided coverage for its workforce. With reform, we support initiatives to improve quality and lower costs, fair regulation of the insurance market, efforts to build a robust marketplace for consumers, healthcare IT, an emphasis on prevention and wellness, and pay-for-performance, and tort reform.

The Chamber specifically supports policies that;

- Support collaborative efforts between healthcare stakeholders, including providers, purchasers, insurers and consumers, to ensure continued innovation and creativity in the private marketplace;
- Expand healthcare infrastructure in the region to meet community needs, including planning for emergency and pandemic preparedness;
- Rely on market forces rather than government mandates to encourage availability of a variety of health insurance plans to businesses of all sizes, including sole proprietors, and the ability for employers to offer a choice of plans to employees, even in small groups;
- Maintain the Commonwealth's Medical Malpractice Cap at the current level;
- Reduce the state's burden and provide tax incentives to help small businesses offset the staggering increases in health insurance and costs;
- Reduce or limit health plan and employer liability in order to allow for more affordable health insurance;
- Create forward-funded, refundable tax credits for the purchase of private health coverage for low- and moderate-income individuals and families;
- Limit legislation that requires employers to cover specific benefits due to the connection between mandated benefits and increased health insurance premiums for businesses; and
- Increase easy access to and availability of verifiable data to enable consumers to make informed and educated healthcare choices.