

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

The Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce is committed to serving as the advocate and “voice of business” on behalf of its more than 1,200 members on issues that impact businesses in the County. The Chamber’s positions are based on the following principles that we believe are critical to continue Loudoun County’s economic success and the quality of life our residents enjoy and businesses demand:

- *It is imperative that federal, state and local laws, regulations and tax policy be considered in a way that recognizes the importance of maintaining a strong, pro-business environment that enhances the economic competitiveness for all businesses, cultivates growth in all segments of our economy, and protects the ability of businesses to create jobs and economic opportunity.*
- *It is our view that the County’s commercial tax base should be grown through expanded economic development, not through increasing taxes on existing businesses.*
- *Critical infrastructure investment must be maintained and expanded to meet our growing needs, particularly in the areas of K-12 education, higher education, workforce development, transportation, technology and energy.*
- *A greater percentage of the revenue generated by Loudoun County should remain in Loudoun County. It is important that federal, state and local government be responsive to the needs of the citizens and businesses, and accountable for the funds entrusted to their stewardship.*
- *Through the power of partnerships and collaboration with other business organizations and like-minded groups, the Loudoun County Chamber will advocate for the issues and policies that will protect the interests of America’s businesses against unnecessary government-imposed costs, regulations and interference.*
- *While the Chamber recognizes the importance of large- and mid-sized businesses, the Chamber believes that small businesses and sole proprietors are essential to Loudoun County’s continued prosperity and must have access to the resources that are necessary for their success, including affordable healthcare and insurance, and technology infrastructure.*
- *Loudoun County’s businesses contribute significantly to the tax base and to the quality of life of our community, while possessing renowned organizational and business acumen. For these reasons, the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce believes strongly that local business leaders should have the opportunity to work with government officials at the federal, state and local levels to help develop and implement legislative and regulatory policies that will impact the economic environment of our community.*

The following outlines the Chamber’s specific public policy positions on the priority issues of its members.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Loudoun County Chamber supports making Loudoun County highly competitive in the global marketplace through aggressively promoting the retention and expansion of existing businesses, and by creating an environment that is conducive to the formation and attraction of new ones, thus assuring the County’s continued prosperity. The Chamber supports increased public and private economic development efforts focused on encouraging the growth of appropriate, quality businesses in the County in order to increase the current ratio of the County’s commercial tax base relative to the residential tax base.

To foster successful economic development, the Chamber strongly recommends that adequate land areas be designated and carefully reserved to meet the long-term needs of future business development, including developing the full potential of transit station areas. Further, the Chamber encourages the County to ensure that its land use categories and the land areas so designated are responsive to the full complement of current and future market demands, such as for vertically mixed-use environments. To this end, the Chamber supports the County’s efforts to conduct outreach leading to strong visions and plans for its premier business corridors. These plans should be used to implement and achieve the highest and best business growth.

The Chamber also believes that top priority should continue to be given to reviewing and revising, as appropriate, the processes by which development plans, building permit applications, and other related government processes impacting businesses are considered and evaluated, as well as the associated fees that are assessed. Existing codes and procedural requirements that do not contribute to meaningful improvement of the application or proposal under consideration must be streamlined or completely eliminated where appropriate, and fees assessed should be consistent with the actual cost to the County to facilitate the process. The Chamber also supports the County’s efforts to work with developers to encourage and incentivize green or sustainable development without adding additional time and expense to the development process. The Chamber specifically supports efforts to encourage business growth through streamlining the development review process, annual updates to the zoning ordinance, regular updates to the community’s

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

Comprehensive Plan and incentives for energy efficiency It is among our highest priorities that changes be made to the sign ordinance to ensure it is competitive and business-friendly.

The Chamber believes Loudoun County should invest additional financial and personnel resources to fund a more aggressive and comprehensive national and international marketing program that leverages the County's strongest economic assets, including industry sectors where Loudoun possesses a clear competitive advantage. To promote and properly evaluate the effectiveness of the County's economic development program, the Loudoun County Chamber supports the development and implementation of measurable performance goals and metrics that ensure the appropriate level of accountability for the County's elected leaders and professional staff.

Because of the unique and invaluable contributions that small businesses offer Loudoun's economic prosperity, the Chamber strongly supports increased state and federal funding for the Loudoun Small Business Development Center, while maintaining the financial support currently offered by Loudoun County and the Town of Leesburg.

Further, recent changes in the national and world economies are creating new opportunities for businesses to locate or expand in Loudoun County, as well as for the County to benefit from sizable corporate relocations. The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to invest fully in the various business incentive programs, thus encouraging dynamic and growing businesses to invest in Loudoun County. To help create an environment in which Loudoun County can attract and retain top-quality companies, priority should be given to reviewing the qualification criteria for Virginia's business incentive programs. Furthermore, the Chamber supports the continued funding of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) incentive programs and encourages the VEDP to develop state incentive programs that focus on company retention and recruitment. The Chamber pledges to work with and support the VEDP on incentive programs that encourage higher paying jobs.

To ensure that Loudoun County's tremendous potential is not diminished, the Chamber opposes arbitrary efforts to limit or suspend growth. The Chamber believes that elected officials must be mindful that excessive and inconsistent restrictions placed on new business development or expansion that do not contribute materially to improving the quality and effectiveness of that development send a negative signal to prospective businesses considering our County as a place to locate and grow. The Chamber believes it is critical that commitments made in the course of any economic development negotiations always be fully honored by both government and the business.

TOURISM AND BUSINESS TRAVEL

The Loudoun County Chamber recognizes the quality of life and economic benefits that a thriving tourism destination contributes to Loudoun County. The Chamber also strongly believes that visitors of all types – business, leisure and groups – should be encouraged to visit Loudoun and be greeted warmly by businesses and residents alike.

Because of the economic advantages offered by a robust visitor and conference industry, from both business and leisure travel, the Chamber supports an integrated, well funded approach to marketing Loudoun as a visitor destination. We believe the County's destination marketing and funding strategy must place high priority on those activities that generate the most tax revenue, while creating economic opportunities for County businesses in the visitor and conference industry.

In addition, the Chamber supports inclusion of high value business sectors and corridors beyond those traditionally associated with tourism in the County's destination marketing strategy. These would include, but not be limited to, educational facilities like universities or training centers that attract large meetings and groups. In addition, the Chamber recommends that the County's strategy target corporate travel decision makers in order to generate more room nights from the County's high value business sectors.

Given the opportunities to leverage Loudoun's unique tourism assets to benefit business expansion, while generating more leisure trips from the business travel market, the Chamber advocates that the County adopt a more integrated approach to economic development and its visitor/conference marketing that is also driven by measurable performance goals and metrics that ensure the appropriate level of accountability.

The Chamber also supports efforts to ensure regulations, taxes and zoning ordinances enable tourism to prosper and to distinguish Loudoun County as a preferred destination.

REGULATORY REFORM

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

The Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce supports a regulatory regime at the federal, state and local government levels that emphasizes the importance of strong economic growth while ensuring rules are cost-effective and based on valid scientific and technical data. The Chamber supports a level playing field from a regulatory standpoint that does not advantage one industry over another. The Chamber asserts that all levels of government should conduct reliable cost-benefit analyses of all proposed regulations and provide a detailed annual accounting of the costs and benefits of those regulations.

The Chamber believes that government laws, regulations and policies should not unnecessarily restrict private property rights, and believes that private property owners should be justly compensated for any reductions in the value of their property caused by government actions.

Unfunded Mandates and Policies: The Loudoun County Chamber opposes the imposition of unfunded mandates or policy positions, particularly those that would require Virginia's or Loudoun County's businesses and other taxpayers to fund the long-term costs of these mandates.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR ISSUES

The Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce supports legislative and regulatory policies that stimulate economic growth and create jobs by allowing businesses to fairly manage their personnel resources without undue government or outside intervention. The Chamber strongly favors allowing free market conditions to determine important labor issues such as compensation and conditions of employment, while strongly advocating that all employers meet their legal and ethical obligations to their employees and the government. The Chamber opposes expanded government regulation of the workplace, including legislation that would limit an employer's right to operate during a strike.

Unionization and Right To Work Laws: The Loudoun County Chamber opposes any local, state or federal laws or regulations that undermine Virginia's Right To Work laws, which have played a historically significant role in the state's nationally recognized economic and employment growth.

The Chamber opposes all federal legislative or regulatory proposals that undermine the rights of Virginia's workers to secret ballot elections to decide whether to form a union. The Chamber also opposes legislative or regulatory proposals to authorize federal government officials to impose workplace rules, such as wage levels and work hours, in the absence of an agreement between management and employees. The Chamber also opposes the imposition of additional sanctions, such as fines against businesses for violations during the union recognition process.

Minimum Wage: Because increases in the minimum wage fall disproportionately on small businesses, which are often the least able to absorb dramatic increases in labor costs, the Loudoun County Chamber opposes increases in the minimum wage and believes that any increase must include provisions that lessen the cost and regulatory burden on Virginia's small businesses.

Unemployment Compensation: The Loudoun County Chamber supports Virginia's unemployment compensation laws, which provide adequate and temporary financial assistance to employees who become unemployed through no fault of their own. The Chamber opposes the extension of benefits to workers who, through their own actions or inactions, become unemployed, including as a result of an employer-initiated lockout or an employee strike.

Wage and Benefit Mandates: The Loudoun County Chamber opposes Living Wage proposals and other government mandates that establish wage and benefits levels as a condition for obtaining contracts with that government.

Workers' Compensation: The Loudoun County Chamber opposes any changes to Virginia's workers' compensation law that would increase costs and regulatory burdens on businesses, or otherwise undermine the laws existing sound principles and purpose.

Repeal Davis-Bacon Act and Project Labor Agreements: The Loudoun County Chamber supports the outright repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act and the imposition of "prevailing wage," including through Project Labor Agreements, on any construction contract over \$2,000, funded in whole or in part by the federal government.

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

The benefits of the "prevailing wage" go to a very few at the expense of taxpayers and the Act is a prime example of an unfunded mandate and government waste. Davis-Bacon inflates the cost of federally funded construction projects by as much as 15%, discourages economic growth, and benefits the select few at the expense of all taxpayers – at a cost of more than \$1 billion annually. Davis-Bacon unfairly disadvantages non-union construction companies while forcing state and local governments to pick up the cost of artificially high wages.

TAX AND REVENUE POLICY

The Loudoun County Chamber strongly urges elected leaders to actively engage the Chamber and other business leaders in every stage of consideration and development of new tax and revenue policies that impact the business climate in Loudoun County.

At the local level, the Loudoun County Chamber supports sound taxation policies that effectively balance the County's ability to finance the vital government services and operations that businesses and residents require, with the need to maintain a strong, pro-business environment that enhances the County's economic competitiveness.

To serve this goal, the Chamber strongly supports a comprehensive taxation strategy that carefully considers all available revenue options, and then implements the appropriate options, at the appropriate levels, to meet the County's resource needs. This comprehensive taxation strategy must also be accompanied by a stringent, business-like analysis of all County programs and service levels, to effectively align the investment of limited business and residential taxpayer resources with those government operations that serve the most vital interests of the County.

In addition, we urge that all tax policies be assessed against the potential impact on Loudoun's economic competitiveness and quality of life, not just on the revenues that are anticipated. The Chamber opposes those tax policies, both existing and proposed, that will have a demonstrably adverse impact on net business and job growth. Further, the Chamber is opposed to any capital facilities fee increases that will inflate the cost of housing to the point of creating a disincentive for businesses to locate in Loudoun County. The Chamber urges the County to regularly and closely analyze the capital needs assessment to ensure that the programmed capital improvements (which are utilized in calculating capital facilities fees) bear a clear relationship to Loudoun County's goals to be business friendly.

At the state level, the Loudoun County Chamber supports the substantive reform of the Virginia's tax and revenue system to more closely align the source of the Commonwealth's tax revenues with the spending priorities of state and local government. For the past decade, northern Virginia has experienced unparalleled economic prosperity, which has generated increasingly higher income tax revenues for the state government. Meanwhile, northern Virginia's local governments have become increasingly dependent upon local property tax revenues to fund schools, public safety, human services and even transportation improvements. The Chamber believes high growth areas, like Loudoun County, should have greater access to the income tax revenue generated by its citizens to support the increased costs associated with that growth, such as building new schools and roads, and paying the salaries of teachers and public safety personnel.

The Chamber believes the state must invest in essential infrastructure that is critical to the economic health of the revenue-producing regions in Virginia in order to continue the success in these regions that benefits the entire Commonwealth. We specifically support rebate of a percentage of the state individual income tax back to the locality from which it was collected to help address this issue. The Chamber encourages business-friendly tax policy that considers policies in other states, to ensure Virginia businesses can remain competitive in national and international markets. The Chamber encourages full consideration of the overall economic impact of a business or industry's presence in Virginia prior to awarding or removing any business sales tax exemption, as well as before considering any other significant change to business tax policy.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

The Loudoun County Chamber supports managed, thoughtful growth in the County. This includes support for well planned commercial growth and development that will bring additional resources to the County to help address the infrastructure challenges we face. The Chamber supports use of public-private partnerships and other creative initiatives to encourage the availability of resources to invest in critical infrastructure, including schools, transportation, technology, parks and recreational facilities, and public safety, to meet the needs of today's Loudoun County businesses and residents. The

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

Chamber also supports a consistent dialogue and improved coordination between the County and Loudoun's towns on development and infrastructure issues.

Transportation: The Loudoun County Chamber assigns top priority to securing new, sustainable regional and statewide transportation funding. To that end, restoring regional funding (without prejudice) and addressing the Commonwealth's growing statewide maintenance deficit should be a major priority of the 2010 General Assembly session. Responsibility for enacting new regional funding rests with the General Assembly, not local governments.

To better direct transportation allocations, the Chamber supports development of a performance-based statewide transportation plan focused on existing and new corridors of statewide and regional significance. Such a plan should include a short list of strategic priorities deemed most essential to the Commonwealth's long-term prosperity, safety, security and quality of life.

The Chamber supports continued reforms within the Virginia Department of Transportation and use of public private partnerships, but believes that such initiatives are no substitute for the new funding required to address the growing backlog of unfunded priorities.

At the local/regional level, the Loudoun County Chamber supports construction of a comprehensive transportation grid. The Chamber urges the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority to be regional in its approach above all else, to establish regional priorities based upon performance-based criteria and to select Technical Advisory Committee members with strong professional credentials and regional perspectives. The Chamber further urges the Authority to leverage and invest new local, regional and state revenues in regional solutions that move the most people in the most cost-effective manner. The Chamber supports use of debt financing at the state, regional and local levels, accompanied by a dedicated revenue source for debt service, as an important tool to invest in transportation infrastructure.

The Chamber also supports more efficient use of current transportation dollars, including a re-examination of the state transportation allocation formula to provide for more emphasis on population, vehicle miles of travel and other congestion standards that would net a more equitable distribution of money for our region. The Chamber opposes using revenue from the Transportation Trust Fund for non-transportation purposes. The Chamber also endorses requiring the Highway Maintenance and Operating Fund to be self-sustaining and supports efforts to prohibit transfer of construction funds from the Transportation Trust Fund to disguise maintenance funding deficiencies.

In terms of specific projects, the Loudoun County Chamber supports:

- Completion of the conversion of Route 28 into an eight-lane limited access freeway between I-66 and Route 7;
- Restoration of the Western Transportation Corridor to the County's Comprehensive Plan and completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Study;
- Connection of the re-located Route 659 with the extension of the Route 234 Bypass (Prince William County Parkway) north of I-66;
- Upgrading the Route 606 and Route 50 corridors around Dulles Airport, completing a high capacity "Dulles Loop;"
- Expansion of Route 50, and improvements to the collector road network and interchanges in Dulles South area;
- Improving the road network around the Town of Leesburg, including completion of the Battlefield Parkway;
- Improving and re-locating portions of U.S. Route 15 between Leesburg and Point of Rocks and establishing a new location for the future replacement of the Point of Rocks Bridge;
- Improving and re-locating portions of Route 9 to enhance connectivity with Route 7 and divert interstate traffic from the Town of Hillsboro;
- Upgrading Route 7 to a limited access roadway between Leesburg and Tysons Corner, with an emphasis on the Route 7/Route 659 interchange;
- Identification of rights of way for and construction of additional Potomac River crossings;
- Acceleration, including identification of additional funding, for the completion of the Loudoun County Parkway and Tri-County Parkway along the County's Comprehensive Plan alignment;
- Acceleration of the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project to Washington Dulles International Airport and eastern Loudoun County and efforts to secure additional federal, state and private-sector funding for the project; and
- Multi-modal access to all the new Dulles Rail stations.

The Loudoun County Chamber also supports consideration of graduated tolling and other options along the Dulles Greenway in order to determine if there can be increased utilization of that existing transportation corridor and reduced use of alternative, congested routes.

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

The Loudoun County Chamber has long supported a sustainable revenue source for transit construction, operation and maintenance needs and urges that a portion of new regional revenues be dedicated for such purpose. We also support local transit to serve the major businesses and job centers in the County and the use of advanced technology and integrated communications, as well as teleworking, to help alleviate traffic congestion.

The Chamber acknowledges the importance of efforts to conserve and ensure the efficient use of energy and fuels. In addition, with regard to the environment, the Chamber believes the greatest reductions in greenhouse gases in the transportation sector will be achieved through the development of higher mileage and alternative fuel vehicles, and supports greater investments in these and other carbon dioxide reducing technologies. The Chamber also supports more intense use of the land to leverage the value of transportation investments to the best extent possible and encourage walkable communities.

The Loudoun County Chamber recognizes the economic and tourism value of both Washington Dulles International Airport and Leesburg Executive Airport.

Therefore, the Chamber supports continued infrastructure investment at Washington Dulles International Airport, including the automated airport train system and new security area, construction of one additional runway, and expansion of concourses to provide additional aircraft gates and amenities. Further, the Chamber strongly supports maintaining compatible land uses in the areas surrounding the airport.

With regard to Leesburg Executive Airport, which is the second busiest General Aviation airport in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Chamber supports maintaining compatible land uses near the airport, within the Town of Leesburg and the County, in order to maximize the airport's value. The Chamber also supports efforts by the Town of Leesburg to attract more compatible businesses to and around the airport and supports Loudoun's efforts to work cooperatively with the Town to attract more business travel and activity at Leesburg Executive Airport.

Technology: The Loudoun County Chamber recognizes the expanded role of technology as a critical enabler for economic development in northern Virginia. Loudoun County is home to unique resources that distinguish this area from other locations in a variety of technology fields, including biomedical research, satellite, information technology, broadband providers, and others. Further, because of these unique characteristics and the rich resources already present here, the County stands poised to become the preferred location for firms focused on the development and implementation of technologies which support and enhance business and residential green applications. Therefore, the Chamber supports public policy initiatives that attract and sustain businesses that offer these services in Loudoun County. We also support policy that encourages the adoption of technologies that improve the management of our natural resources.

In recognition of the importance of universal availability of broadband for creating jobs, growing our economy, attracting investment, facilitating telework opportunities, establishing communications infrastructure for public safety, and providing access to educational and training resources, the Loudoun County Chamber supports policy that encourages continued growth of Loudoun's broadband infrastructure. The Chamber encourages investment in the necessary infrastructure to enable cutting-edge wireless and other Internet infrastructure in Loudoun, and supports cooperation between government and commercial interests to maximize broadband access throughout the County.

To encourage a vibrant information technology industry and the use of technology in all businesses in Loudoun, the Chamber supports the following specific public policy initiatives:

- Adoption of public policies that encourage continued expansion of private-sector broadband services throughout the County, including strategic location of towers to support wireless access (broadband and voice) in the western part of the County;
- State initiatives to develop strategies to enable deployment of broadband in underserved areas of the County;
- Policies that encourage and sustain development and deployment of very high speed connectivity between business parks and Loudoun's core data centers as a strategy for future growth;
- Appropriate consideration of broadband deployment as an integral part of the County's transportation strategy;
- Creation of measures to enhance capital formation and investment opportunities in Loudoun County;
- Adoption of state legislation to enhance e-commerce;

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

- Adoption of state legislation to provide adequate deterrents and commensurate punishment for computer and Internet-related crimes in recognition of their detrimental impact on the use of technology in business;
- Development of technology programs at our colleges and universities to support our region as a global technology center and develop the talent pool necessary to sustain this vital economic engine here in Loudoun; and
- Full integration of technology in our community, including increased technology in the schools, and broader use of e-government to increase efficiencies and lower costs for services.

Energy:

Loudoun County has established itself as the global leader for cyberspace and has an economic engine built around communications firms and large-scale data centers, all intensive energy consumers. The County's economic well being is intrinsically tied to affordable and abundant energy, particularly electricity. In addition to insisting upon compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations, the Loudoun County Chamber supports maintaining open channels of communication with government agencies, public officials, the media and the public to meet their needs with regard to energy and environmental issues. Additionally, the Chamber supports participation with government agencies and others in framing responsible laws, regulations and standards affecting the community, the workplace and the environment to continually improve energy diversity, conservation and environmental programs.

The Loudoun County Chamber recognizes that as the County grows, its energy requirements will increase as well. These additional needs cannot be met by the current sources of energy. The Chamber acknowledges the solution must include a diverse mix of options, including increased conservation and energy efficiency, new sources of conventional and renewable energy, and new transmission and distribution infrastructure. Reliable, affordable energy is required to support the needs of business and to sustain the community's high quality of life.

The Chamber supports the development of statewide goals for energy conservation and renewable energy sources, consistent with the goals outlined in the Virginia Energy Plan. However, a responsible energy plan for the Commonwealth should emphasize the importance of a reliable energy supply to support the continued development of technology and information-based commerce in Loudoun County.

At the local level, the Chamber supports the goal of making Loudoun one of the top green counties nationwide. The Chamber strongly supports the development of a long-term, County-wide energy plan which focuses on energy generation, transmission and conservation. The Chamber also supports "green" initiatives throughout Loudoun County that are based on incentives and voluntary compliance. The Chamber specifically supports the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Green Business Challenge, the Virginia Municipal League's Green Government Challenge and other market-based voluntary initiatives supporting conservation, efficiency, and other economically viable green practices.

While the Chamber supports increased use of economically viable energy efficiency and conservation programming, it also believes every effort should be made to minimize any additional financial burden that these programs may impose on both businesses and consumers. The Chamber also believes that every effort should be made to minimize additional financial burdens imposed on businesses and consumers by climate change regulation or legislation. Improperly crafted climate change regulation could have a significant detrimental impact on businesses and consumers alike. The Chamber supports a holistic approach, including incentives and proven market-based methodologies, to accomplish environmental goals whenever possible.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

K-12 Education: The Loudoun County Chamber believes state and federal education funding should more appropriately reflect the full costs of all state and federal education mandates in addition to basic education costs. The Chamber has long advocated the reformulation of the state Education Funding Composite Index because it currently places Loudoun County Public Schools at a disadvantage and does not account for our County's special needs caused by continued enrollment growth, increasing numbers of students for whom English is not spoken in the home, and the added financial burden of operating in the high cost metropolitan Washington, D.C., area, nor does it accurately reflect revenues local governments' can access to pay for education. The Loudoun County Chamber also supports legislation that requires an increase in state funding for the Standards of Quality by 3 percent per year until the local share of education costs does not exceed 65 percent and the state share is equal to 35 percent of total costs. In addition, the Chamber supports offering competitive compensation to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, as now required by federal law.

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

The Chamber recognizes the current economic uncertainty will likely result in less revenue being available for education from all levels of government. With this in mind, the Chamber believes Loudoun County Public Schools and the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors must continue to work to implement cost reduction and operational efficiencies within our school system. The Chamber continues its offer to assist the school system and Loudoun County government in full implementation of the efficiency review recommendations released by MGT of American in 2007. Full implementation was projected to save the school system \$2.2 million over five years. Beyond this, the Chamber supports continued consideration of increased efficiencies and willingness to review local education spending from top to bottom, particularly given the funding constraints and economic outlook.

The Chamber also calls on the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors and Loudoun County Public Schools to continue their efforts to work together to outline a new framework for school site selection and land use permitting that streamlines the process, as called for by the 2007 MGT efficiency review, and locates new schools in a manner that supports both the education and economic development mission of our community. The Chamber opposes the use of commercially planned or zoned land for school sites, given the importance of preserving this land for future economic development opportunities.

In addition to supporting efficient use of current resources by Loudoun County Public Schools, the Chamber also supports creative approaches to maximize and supplement traditional education funding. The Chamber encourages continued and even greater use of school-business partnerships as a way for businesses to provide valuable resources of time, energy and funding to support the schools.

Accordingly, the Chamber supports the recent establishment of The Governor's Career and Technical Academy in Loudoun. This new institution, housed within the C.S. Monroe Technology Center, represents a significant partnership with Northern Virginia Community College and a number of regional industries and businesses. The Chamber supports development of innovative efforts like these which help raise Loudoun's K-12 efforts to K-14, providing a pathway for Loudoun students to further education or immediate employment in the region's high skill, high demand, and high wage employment sectors.

In recognition of the vital link between schools and the region's potential skilled workforce, the Chamber further supports:

- Strong business-education partnerships to develop training programs for specific industries;
- Educational assistance for current workers facing career advancement and/or transitions;
- Expanded skills development education in areas such as English-as-a-second-language, business and management;
- Further emphasis on development of students' Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills in those areas which are the foundation of so many of today's businesses and jobs and of those that will be created in the future; and
- Strong partnerships between the business community and all area institutions of higher education to support workforce needs.

Higher Education and Workforce Development: The Loudoun County Chamber recognizes the importance of and supports all of the colleges and universities, both public and private, which provide high quality undergraduate, graduate and professional education to Loudoun's residents. The existing need for life-long education and training demands a higher education infrastructure that is accessible, both online and on campus, that is dynamically changing to meet the demands of the times and the diverse workforce, and that is supported by adequate state funding, loan guarantee programs and other financial means. The Chamber supports positioning the Commonwealth's public and private higher education institutions to play a full role in shaping job creation in a global knowledge-based economy. The Chamber calls on the Commonwealth's elected leaders to reverse a decade of reduction in state funding for higher education that has shifted the burden of funding needed to students and families.

Any new state investment, however, must be targeted toward specific goals that will provide the best return on investment for every dollar spent, including:

- *Awarding 70,000 more high quality degrees to Virginia residents over the next 10 years.* Virginia's economy needs more of its citizens prepared to take jobs in the diverse knowledge-based economy. Increasing the number of degrees awarded by 70,000 would mean that 50% of Virginia's citizens would have an associate, bachelors or graduate degree.

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

- *Targeting new degrees in high income, high demand job sectors.* Virginia's economy will depend on increasing the number of workers able to take on jobs in high demand fields of technology, engineering, science and math and in areas experiencing shortages like healthcare which is particularly important in Loudoun County.
- *Expanding job-specific training at community colleges.* The Chamber has long supported NVCC's efforts in job-specific training and believes this unique resource should be expanded and enhanced via more consistent state funding.
- *Increasing public-private collaboration for university-based research.* Innovation drives the northern Virginia economy. Loudoun businesses need an expanded way to interact with the area's higher education institutions to produce and commercialize original research. The Commonwealth remains one of the few states that do not have dedicated funding for technology transfer. University-based research can only be brought to market quickly if the Commonwealth supports it.
- *Making colleges affordable for low- and middle-income students and families.* Loudoun County enjoys a diverse citizen base. The Commonwealth and our higher education institutions must do more to encourage a greater number of students to seek education beyond high school. The cost of education should not be a barrier to getting a degree. Financial aid is a key ingredient in this affordability challenge. Without increases in state-funded financial aid, access and affordability remain a problem.

With regard to our publicly funded institutions, the Chamber is very concerned that the current economic downturn will result in budget balancing action that would undermine the Commonwealth's ability to provide adequate per pupil state funding for George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College. For the last decade, we have already seen the Commonwealth's real dollar investment in higher education decline. This long-standing funding inequity limits the ability of both institutions to meet the education and workforce development needs of the Commonwealth and our region. Should the Governor and the General Assembly reduce operational funding for either institution, the Chamber opposes any action to cap tuition increases as that will only exacerbate the reduction in funding. In addition, it could also force the institutions to take actions such as limiting class offerings and relying more on tuition from out-of-state-students, which would result in less space for in-state students at our Virginia schools. The Chamber believes that each institution must be provided the flexibility to address any fiscal shortages by balancing the needs of mission-critical activities against student affordability. The Chamber continues to support an increase in Tuition Assistance Grants to \$3,500 for both undergraduate and graduate students, and notes that the need for a Cost of Living (COLA) adjustment for college and university employees has not been fully addressed.

The Chamber supported the creation of the 21st Century Capital Improvement Program to systemically address the programming and financing of capital projects for higher education and state agencies. The current economic downturn has seen a significant loss of jobs in the Commonwealth's construction sector. The Chamber asks the Governor and General Assembly to carefully consider maintaining funding for scheduled capital improvements at our higher education institutions. Private-sector firms are providing very competitive pricing which allows funding to stretch further, creating an environment that can advance needed capital projects and reduce the loss of jobs in an important job sector. The Chamber believes this competitive pricing can help advance new, and much-needed, facilities for George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College. With more and more local students opting to stay close to home for financial reasons and with increasing numbers of displaced workers seeking retraining for second careers, both institutions must be able to keep pace with the steady increase in local demand for their services. Over time, this will also necessitate a gradual ramping-up of local capital commitments which significantly leverage Commonwealth construction dollars.

The Loudoun County Chamber specifically supports the establishment a full-service, four-year university campus in Loudoun County, along with an expanded presence for Northern Virginia Community College in the County.

Workforce Housing: The Loudoun County Chamber supports state and local policies, as well as private-sector initiatives, directed at increasing the availability of a wide range of housing options to meet the needs of Loudoun's growing population and workforce. The Chamber believes the lack of housing options for all ranges of household income is an impediment to sustaining a sound economy. The Chamber supports regional programs to ensure that all localities adopt inclusionary housing policies and programs, and provide housing opportunities near centers of employment and commercial services. The Chamber believes federal, state and local programs supporting workforce housing should be utilized and leveraged to the maximum extent practical. These programs should afford housing-related opportunities to a broad range of businesses, occupations and sectors of employment.

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

At the local level, the Chamber supports the investigation and potential implementation of creative solutions that will increase the availability of affordable housing alternatives for our workforce, especially for professionals in the healthcare, public safety, government and service industries. Examples of potential solutions include:

- Continuing support for the conclusions and recommendations of the Housing Advisory Board, including efforts to secure a single housing trust fund and leverage this fund to provide the highest possible impact;
- Promoting the use of County-owned land and/or assets to be used or exchanged for the creation of affordable housing units;
- Improvements to the County Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance that would provide a higher number of overall units available for sale;
- Reselling revitalized foreclosed properties through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program to the workforce;
-
- Use of property tax credits, down payment programs, low interest loans, an expedited approval process, and other programs by the County to increase home ownership to low-income households;
- Use of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to investigate alternative project solutions, attract nonprofit developers, provide financing alternatives for potential projects, and potentially act as a housing authority;
- Alignment of local County policies as incentives to landlords to keep rental housing available to the workforce;
- Encouragement of our major employers to adopt housing assistance programs; and
- Support of market-driven green building incentives in response to growing demand for green homes and building practices.

Immigration: Immigrants have played a key 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. Businesses increasingly depend on foreign workers to fill jobs to remain competitive and to grow to meet future demands for products and services.

The Chamber supports efforts by the federal government to strengthen national security by providing thorough screening of foreign workers and creating strong disincentives for illegal immigration. The Chamber also advocates that all businesses strictly comply with state and federal labor laws regarding the screening of citizenship documentation provided by employees, to avoid the hiring of individuals who are not lawfully residing in the U.S.

The Chamber, however, opposes increased penalties on employers who unknowingly hire undocumented aliens until a consistent, reliable process for worker verification systems 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.

The Chamber supports comprehensive immigration reform that, along with border security measures, 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 H-1B, L-1, and EB visas for professionals and highly skilled workers, and H-2B temporary visas that support seasonal industries and small businesses;
- Consider policies to require undocumented workers already contributing to the economy, provided that they are law-abiding and prepared to embrace the obligations and values of our society, to meet specific conditions and obligations in order to earn the legal right to remain in the U.S.; and
- Address delays, backlogs, and disruptions in our immigration and border management systems that impede the movement of legitimate cargo and travelers across U.S. borders.

HEALTHCARE

The Loudoun County Chamber supports the continued introduction and expansion of healthcare facilities in Loudoun County to increase the availability of quality healthcare services for business owners, employees and their families.

The Chamber supports collaborative efforts between healthcare stakeholders, including providers, purchasers, insurers and consumers, to ensure continued innovation and creativity in the private marketplace. The goals of these efforts should include the following:

- Expand healthcare infrastructure (both inpatient and outpatient);
- Manage healthcare costs impacting businesses;

LOUDOUN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 Public Policy Positions

- Increase accessibility of healthcare and insurance;
- Diminish complexity in healthcare;
- Enhance choice;
- Plan appropriately for emergency preparedness and foster public-private partnerships to address pandemic preparedness; and
- Expand services offered by safety net healthcare providers, such as the Loudoun Community Health Center and Loudoun Free Clinic, so all Loudoun's residents have access to healthcare.

On the federal level, the Chamber agrees that healthcare reform is needed; however, urges careful consideration of the impact of any policy change in this arena on the business community. We support initiatives to improve quality and lower costs, fair regulation of the insurance market, efforts to build a robust marketplace for consumers, expansion of coverage for the uninsured, healthcare IT, an emphasis on prevention and wellness, and pay-for-performance.

The Chamber specifically supports legislation that ensures access to group health insurance for all businesses, including sole proprietors and businesses with few employees. The Chamber supports legislation that reduces state burdens and provides tax incentives to help small businesses offset the staggering increases in health insurance costs, including incentives that encourage participation in "consumer-driven" healthcare plans. These plans not only can increase the number of catastrophically insured, but also put the individual end-users back in control of economic decisions between themselves and their service providers.

The Chamber opposes any legislation that threatens consumer access to healthcare coverage or contributes to increased health insurance costs for employers and their employees. In our community, the Chamber supports exploration of opportunities to provide affordable healthcare to members of the business community, including those without health insurance, through the Loudoun County Health Department, the Loudoun Free Clinic, and the Loudoun Community Health Center, as well as any other health-related service provider and/or clinic that the market will bear.

For more information about the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce's advocacy efforts, please call 703-777-2176 or visit the Chamber web site www.loudounchamber.org.