

**NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAMBER PARTNERSHIP  
2015 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION  
Final Lobbying Report  
March 2015**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report provides an overview of the results of the Northern Virginia Chamber Partnership's lobbying efforts during the 2015 General Assembly session. The Northern Virginia Chamber Partnership's campaign focused on five broad priority areas: Economic Development, Workforce Development, Energy, Healthcare and Transportation. Within those areas, the Partnership actively engaged to support or oppose approximately 20 specific pieces of legislation.

## **SUCSESSES**

### **Economic Development**

- ***Defeated Minimum Wage mandate legislation*** – A number of bills were introduced this session to increase the minimum wage. The Partnership opposed all of them for having a significantly negative impact on businesses, particularly smaller employers.
- ***Passed Enhanced Economic Impact Analysis Reporting*** – The Partnership supported legislation to enhance reporting to the General Assembly and Administration on proposed state regulations that have an adverse economic impact on either the broad-based business community or a locality, business, or entity particularly affected by the regulation(s). This legislation ensures the Governor and legislature are fully aware of the economic consequences of regulations being imposed and can act appropriately.
- ***Defeated Meals Tax Referendum repeal*** – The Partnership worked to defeat legislation that would have eliminated the referendum requirement for imposing new local food and beverage (or meals) taxes.
- ***Passed Pro-Business Procurement Policies*** – The Partnership supported legislation to change the limits on Term and Job Order contracts. The changes made through this legislation will allow for much more efficient procurement of these services, which saves time and taxpayer money, and enables work to be completed more expeditiously and cost-effectively by businesses.
- ***Passed Innovation and Entrepreneurism Investment Authority reform***– In an effort to promote business growth and development, the Partnership actively supported legislation related to the Innovation and Entrepreneurism Investment Authority (IEIA) that addresses two primary goals:
  - Clarifies IEIA's ability to accept private sector funding and hold equity positions in startup companies; and
  - Makes it easier for the Authority to achieve a quorum and therefore conduct business.
- ***Passed High-Growth Company Retention Study*** – In recognition of the tremendous value of Virginia's existing businesses, the Partnership supported a study that requires the Virginia Economic Development Partnership

Authority to examine the feasibility of incorporating programs to support existing high-growth companies into the state's current economic development programs and activities.

- ***Passed Funding for Economic Development Incentives*** – The Partnership aggressively supported funding for economic development incentives at the state level. The final budget that passed included \$27 million for the Governor's Opportunity Fund.

## Energy

- ***Passed PACE Program reforms*** – The Partnership strongly supported legislation to strengthen Virginia's PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) loan Program. Property owners can use PACE loans to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy measures for their properties such as: chillers, boilers, controls, solar, lighting and efficient windows. The reform legislation:
  - Enables localities to create PACE loan programs and hire third-party administrators to operate PACE programs and charge fees to PACE borrowers to cover administrative costs;
  - Enables commercial and multifamily buildings (except condos) to be eligible for PACE loans;
  - Enables PACE loans to have tax lien status subject to subordination from the existing mortgage holder; and
  - Enables a PACE loan to be repaid as a special assessment.

The PACE reforms present a significant energy efficiency and economic development opportunity for Virginia businesses.

## Workforce Development

- ***Passed Alignment of Career & Technical Education (CTE) with National Credentials*** – The Partnership supported legislation to ensure that all CTE courses for which there is a national certification will actually be aligned with that national certification. This will enable students to graduate from high school ready to immediately enter the workforce.
- ***Passed Awarding of Academic Credit for Military Training*** – The Partnership supported the award of credit for specific military training to enable veterans to enter the workforce more quickly, meeting needs in high demand fields.
- ***Passed Credential Training Grants*** – The Partnership supported legislation and budget language establishing a grant program for individuals for non-credit workforce training programs and earning related credentials in high-demand fields. The grant, up to a total of \$1,000, would be limited to payment of tuition charged for the training program, the cost of any required textbooks, and the cost of any examination required to earn the credential.
- ***Passed Workforce Development Reforms*** – The Commonwealth's workforce development system is large, disjointed, and in need of reform and increased collaboration, both internally and with the business community. To that end, the Partnership supported a number of bills that improve Virginia's workforce development system by developing consistent metrics by which programs will be evaluated, increasing accountability and transparency, and ensuring that programs are working toward shared goals.

- **Passed Increased Higher Education Investment** – The Partnership supported the additional \$42 million invested in higher education in the final budget, included \$19.8 million to incentivize enrollment, \$10.1 million in financial aid and \$5 million for research.

### Transportation

- **Passed enhanced Transportation Investment Prioritization** – The Partnership supported legislation requiring that 70 percent of the revenues received by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority be used solely to fund transportation projects from the regional transportation plan, that have been rated. Furthermore, the legislation requires transit projects also be rated. Previously transit projects were exempt from rating.
- **Defeated Anti-Public-Private Transportation Act (PPTA) Legislation** – The Partnership actively opposed a series of bills that would have harmed Virginia’s valuable Public-Private Transportation Act (PPTA). This is a critical tool in our transportation tool box that enables the private sector to partner with the public sector to advance significant “megaprojects” that otherwise be impossible to finance.
- **Defeated Efforts to Use Transportation Funds for Sidewalks/Trails** – The Partnership actively opposed several bills that would have enabled transportation funding to be allocated to sidewalks and trails, diverting limited transportation dollars away from much-needed construction and maintenance projects.

### Healthcare

- **Passed a Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) Medicaid Study** – The Partnership supported a Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study of Virginia’s Medicaid program to ensure it is managed as efficiently as possible. While the Partnership supports a specific approach to Medicaid expansion concurrent with reform, no legislation was proposed that met the standards set for Medicaid expansion. This study is, however, consistent with the Partnership’s support for Medicaid reform in terms of identifying further areas for potential reform.

### **SHORT OF GOAL**

Regrettably, the Partnership fell short in our efforts to advance two initiatives:

#### Economic Development

- **Online Travel Company Tax Remittance** – Legislation to ensure that online travel companies remit travel occupancy taxes in the same manner in which bricks and mortar hotels do failed to advance in the General Assembly. Moving forward, this is an area where a more targeted effort in the off-session to build a more diverse coalition and strategy may yield a more successful result.

#### Transportation

- **Transportation Trust Fund Lock Box** – As in previous years, the Partnership supported efforts to ensure that funding designated for transportation purposes through the Transportation Trust Fund not be used for non-transportation purposes. Despite our continued efforts, there is still a reluctance among policymakers to take this step, so all the measures introduced this session that supported this goal failed to advance.



## **MOVING FORWARD**

The Partnership will remain diligent in advocating on behalf of the Partnership's priorities as the Governor considers amending or vetoing legislation approved by the General Assembly. Any activity by the Governor impacting the outcomes represented in this report will be reported back to the Partnership for consideration.

In addition, in an effort to recognize those members of the Loudoun/Fairfax delegation who supported the Partnership's 2015 priorities, the Partnership will, once again, create a scorecard based on votes taken during the session.