



Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce

*"... dedicated to representing private enterprise, promoting business
and enhancing the quality of life in our Greater Charlottesville communities."*

cvillechamber.com

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CODE OF CHAMBER PUBLIC POLICIES

2009

Developed by the
Government Affairs Committee and
Approved by the Board of Directors

Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce
Charlottesville, Virginia

(Codified by GAC; updated annually pursuant to Board of Directors action)

Our Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce encourages all of our diverse member businesses and civic organizations, their representatives and citizens to participate actively in public policy debate, dialogue and decision-making. Our Chamber also encourages and invites all of our diverse member businesses and civic organizations, their representatives and citizens to participate actively in our own Chamber public policy development.

Our Chamber, through an extensive, on-going process involving our Chamber's structure of governance, developed this Code of Chamber Public Policies. The Chamber Public Policies contained in the Code were developed and approved by the Chamber Government Affairs Committee upon consideration of standing Chamber public policy positions, additional inquiry and information and after extensive discussion. These guiding principles were recommended to both the Executive Committee of the Chamber Board of Directors and the Board of Directors. Both bodies, upon additional discussion and modification at various junctures approved the policies as part of an original Chamber Statement of Public Policy Principles or by separate Chamber Resolution. The Chamber Government Affairs Committee subsequently codified these policies into this document. The Code is updated annually pursuant to Chamber Board of Directors action.

The Code of Chamber Public Policies reflects the public policy perspective of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce at this time. Over time it may be further revised and modified. This Code does not represent the individual views of any Chamber member business or civic organization, Chamber Director, Chamber affiliated organization or partner, Chamber sponsor or underwriter or Chamber employee. The Code of Chamber Public Policies is meant to inform our members and public officials, stimulate civic thought and debate and aid in the development of sound public policy.

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Our Chamber welcomes your thoughts, interest and participation.

Thank you.

I. GOVERNMENT

Government is the people's business.

Citizens, businesses and organizations are encouraged to participate in government, the political process and in public policy discussions. Matters of public policy and finance, with appropriate protection for individual, proprietary and confidential information, should be discussed in forums that encourage wide public participation, with action taken only after such a public process.

Our Chamber believes the basic structure of local and state government within the Commonwealth and our Charlottesville region is sound.

Our Chamber strongly supports the "Dillon Rule" structure of state-local governance. We also believe that intergovernmental cooperation is imperative and can be accomplished within the fundamental framework that has served Virginia well for decades.

Our Chamber believes that governmental regulation serves citizens best when the regulation is clearly essential, limited in purpose, reasonable in application and compliance, flexible to respond to changing conditions and subject to regular review, modification and elimination.

Our Chamber generally supports the public policy advocacy of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Chamber Alliance, the Virginia West Chamber & Business Coalition and the member Chambers of Commerce of these business advocacy alliances.

I. GOVERNMENT

I.1 The “Dillon Rule”

Our Chamber supports the present state and local system of governance established in Virginia wherein the elected General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia is the determinant authority of matters of state and local jurisdiction. As a “Dillon Rule” state, only the General Assembly can approve any increase in the governing powers of local governments. Our Chamber believes that the present system provides a desirable balance between local autonomy and uniformity of state law.

I.2 Excessive Legislation

Excessive legislation is wasteful both in the public sector and private enterprise. Legislators at state and local levels should address this concern by: (1) limiting the introduction of bills; (2) including the use of sunset provisions in laws as appropriate; (3) reviewing and simplifying laws and regulations to minimize their effect on private enterprise; and (4) requiring an economic and fiscal analysis of the impact of the costs and benefits of proposed legislation where appropriate.

I.3 City of Charlottesville Elections

Our Chamber supports the City of Charlottesville’s “Council-Manager” form of government. We also believe, based upon the 2004 City Elections Task Force Findings, that three key modifications to the “Council-Manager” form of government – direct election of a “presiding Mayor;” some election of City Councilors by wards (mixed with at large or all by wards) and non-partisan election of City public officials – offer significant opportunity to enhance citizen participation and overall improved governmental access, responsiveness and effectiveness. Our Chamber supports these changes to the City Charter and encourages City Council and our state representatives to take the appropriate actions to bring these important improvements to fruition.

II. ECONOMICS, ENTERPRISE AND EDUCATION

The American system of private enterprise is the most ingenious and equitable economic system in human history. Private enterprise produces both economic freedom and economic opportunity for the greatest number of American citizens. Private enterprise gives birth to and sustains the economic vitality and quality of life in our nation, our Commonwealth and in our community.

While our system of private enterprise is the world's best economic system, it is not perfect. Poverty continues to exist in our nation and within our own community. We support reasonable initiatives and activities aimed at reducing poverty.

Businesses support the foundation of a strong educational system needed to allow people to make the most of their jobs and life opportunities. Existing and new businesses provide the jobs and economic base from which our fellow citizens in our community can and do improve their lives. The combined power of private enterprise and education can enhance the quality of life of the greatest number of our fellow citizens, including those striving to overcome poverty.

It is essential that governments and schools work cooperatively with employers, particularly businesses, to provide programs that support workforce development and better prepare students for career-ladder employment, impart a greater understanding of basic economics and encourage good citizenship.

Growth is inevitable in any vital and attractive community. Our Chamber embraces economic growth to enhance the human, economic, cultural and natural characteristics of our Greater Charlottesville communities. It is a core responsibility of government to provide the public infrastructure – particularly transportation and water resources – essential to sustain and enhance economic vitality.

One very important aspect of the Commonwealth's attractiveness to businesses has been the limited control by state and local government of business. Right to work and limiting government requirements regarding the employment relationship and benefits provide a positive environment, which is attractive to businesses and beneficial to the Commonwealth and our Greater Charlottesville communities.

In an increasingly competitive global economy government plays a role in supporting some areas that add to overall economic vitality. Our Chamber supports measured governmental assistance for business development in technology, tourism and cultural heritage, agribusiness and other identified strategic business enterprises in the Commonwealth and our Greater Charlottesville Region.

II. ECONOMICS, ENTERPRISE AND EDUCATION

II.1 Education and Workforce Development

Our Chamber understands that education is essential for success in our society, in our economic system and in our civic life. We support quality education – from the earliest stages of childhood learning through higher education. A strong education system and the availability of technically skilled people are vital to our region’s future prosperity and quality of life. We recognize that business and industry must continue to play a critical role in ensuring that schools and workforce development programs are of the highest quality.

We support the establishment of programs and policies that will achieve a technically skilled, trainable workforce throughout our region. Further, we encourage the Commonwealth to appropriate adequate funds to support continued professional education, industry certification programs and technical training programs at our existing workforce training centers.

Our Chamber was among the first organizations in Virginia to support the Chartered Public University concept for the University of Virginia, the nation’s leading public university, as well as for other public universities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The enactment of the Virginia Restructured Higher Education Financial & Administrative Operations Act in 2005 represents a significant evolutionary educational opportunity that can enhance the University’s preeminence, reduce its dependence upon unreliable state resources, provide the flexibility necessary to remain internationally competitive and improve overall educational excellence. This innovative statute and the subsequent management agreement with the universities (2006) can effectively raise standards of higher education throughout Virginia. Our Chamber supports the full implementation of the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act.

The RHEFAO Act provides a framework for improved long-term planning and increased operational flexibility, enabling institutions to address more effectively strategic priorities and further streamline processes to save time and money. Under the additional RHEFAO authority, the institutions commit to fulfilling specific state goals of access, affordability, academic breadth, academic standards, student retention and graduation, articulation agreements, economic development, research, and elementary and secondary education.

II.2 Economic Growth

We support the creation of jobs through expansion of existing companies and attraction of new business activity, while ensuring sustainable growth. Accordingly, we support the right of citizens to choose where to live, work, and play consistent with the principles of a market-driven economy; regional cooperation among adjoining localities in economic development; the provision of needed infrastructures to allow communities

to plan for anticipated growth and economic activity; the revitalization and redevelopment of core city areas; and appropriate efforts to maintain and enhance the important agricultural, tourist and related economies in Virginia.

Our Chamber believes that the use of a citizen's, business' or organization's land to be a private matter subject to reasonable, limited local regulation. Thus, we expect the Commonwealth not to increase its involvement in these local issues through further legislation. We also believe that the Commonwealth has provided adequate means for localities to address such issues, and that additional enabling legislation should be approached with great caution.

II.3 Transportation

Our Chamber supports – and is an active advocate for – a modern, safe, efficient, comprehensive, integrated, adequately funded transportation system that serves and is responsive to the transportation needs of our Commonwealth of Virginia and our Greater Charlottesville region.

Solving the Commonwealth's transportation problems, that continue to diminish the quality of life of our citizens and impede our economic vitality, requires more state funding.

Local transportation infrastructure improvements are essential to the continued vitality of the Greater Charlottesville Region. The area's transportation system, especially in Charlottesville and Albemarle County, does not adequately provide for the safe and efficient movement of traffic and people. Our Chamber observes that local government's response is limited to seemingly constant study. As a result limited construction of any significant public-funded roadway improvements within our region has occurred. Local, state and federal officials must commit to repairing this failure. Real action – advancing construction of real transportation improvements that enhance a safer, vehicular mobility for citizens and commerce – is paramount.

Our Chamber reaffirms support for an improved comprehensive transportation system. Our support – and active advocacy – for a number of vital transportation projects in such an improved system, includes:

- expeditious construction of the Meadowcreek Parkway;
- development & construction of a limited-access US Route 29 Western Bypass;
- expeditious development and implementation of a comprehensive, integrated signal and traffic management system within the region's urban center;
- expeditious development and construction of a number of key regional roadways such as: an expanded US29/S-US250/W Bypass ramp, a "Hillsdale Drive Extension," an "Eastern Connector" roadway and a "Southern Connector" roadway around the City of Charlottesville, a commercial traffic bypass in Gordonsville and other key emerging projects;

- continued enhancement of the Charlottesville Albemarle Airport as a premier regional airport and key national transportation gateway into our region; and,
- continued enhancement of appropriate public transit options, including a regional transit system.

Our Chamber supports these projects, and other public and private projects, in the context that they must and can meet all applicable federal and state environmental, health, safety and transportation requirements.

Our Chamber also believes that sound governmental financial stewardship demands improvement in the financial management of the transportation system. Approaches to be considered should include statutory protection of transportation trust funds dedicated solely to the public purpose and not available for other fiscal exigencies.

II.4 Water Resources

Comprehensive and sustained management of our regional water supply to provide for the citizens, businesses, civic institutions and visitors, and, timely and decisive action are essential to sustain and enhance the current and future health and vitality of our Greater Charlottesville region.

Our Chamber supports – and is an active advocate for – comprehensive and sustained management of our regional water supply that includes:

- Regional water supply and use management principles and policies that provide for sustained economic vitality and future economic growth;
- Actions which result in additional “long-term” regional water supply and capacity and “short-term” measures to increase existing regional water supply efficiencies;
- Promotion of on-going voluntary and equitable water conservation and efficiency measures including a range of voluntary residential and commercial measures; and,
- Attainment of all applicable federal and state environmental, health and safety regulations and reasonable watershed protection in a context of continued regional population growth.

Our Chamber supports the Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority’s preferred and selected 50-year water supply option and its component stream and wetlands environmental mitigation plan. The RWSA project plans to upgrade capacity of the Ragged Mountain Reservoir and construct a pipeline linking it and the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir, at a reasonable estimated cost which RWSA projects can provide the estimated supply of clean, consumable water forecasted to be necessary for the current and anticipated demand of RWSA Albemarle and Charlottesville consumers from

within the Rivanna River Watershed area throughout the required 50-year planning period, while attaining all applicable federal and state environmental, health and safety regulations.

Our Chamber also supports a regional water supply option to construct a Water Intake at the James River and a pipeline linking that intake to the integrated established municipal water system, at a reasonable estimated cost, to provide an estimated supply of clean, consumable water from within the larger Rivanna River – James River – Chesapeake Watershed throughout the required 50-year planning period while attaining all applicable federal and state environmental, health and safety regulations and provide for collaborative prospective regional water supply and use options throughout and beyond the 50-year horizon for our neighboring, interdependent communities.

II.5 Management

II.5.1 Virginia Right to Work

Our Chamber firmly supports the Virginia Right to Work law, which has fostered a vibrant state economy, constructive labor-management environment and has been instrumental in the creation of new business enterprise, jobs and income in Virginia.

II.5.2 Mandated Benefits and Employment Legislation

The Federal government has enacted much significant legislation concerning employees and employers. Virginia has from time to time supplemented some of this legislation, but has generally been reticent to enact sweeping controls upon the employment relationship. However, legislation is introduced regularly which would mandate that certain benefits be provided by an employer or included in certain types of benefits. Employers, not government, are best suited to know the benefits preferences of their employees and the resources available to provide such benefits. We discourage any legislation that would expand Virginia's regulation of employment.

II.5.3 Local Governmental Wage Regulation

Wage regulatory authority is within the domain of the federal and state governments. Local governmental wage regulations on private enterprise (so-called "living-wage" ordinances) fundamentally violate Virginia's well-established state and local governmental structure ("Dillon Rule"). We oppose such ordinances locally as inappropriate and any state legislation that would permit enactment of such policies. Such policies lack merit and are counterproductive to their stated goals. Lower levels of employment, injury to small business and reduction of competition among municipal contractors are examples of several potential consequences of such wage regulatory policies if enacted.

II.5.4 Contributory Negligence

Our Chamber supports the common law doctrine of contributory negligence, an established legal principle in the Commonwealth of Virginia and opposes attempts to substitute the doctrine of “comparative negligence.”

II.6 Economic Vitality

II.6.1 Support for Strategic, Innovative Enterprises

“Strategic,” “innovative” enterprises are those leading-edge businesses well crafted and able to compete and thrive in the global information and knowledge economy, providing career-ladder employment; offering full civic engagement. While Virginia and Greater Charlottesville present a favorable platform for business success, our area can and must be more agile as a location for enhanced entrepreneurial attainment. Our Chamber welcomes and encourages growth and vitality of strategic, innovative technology-driven enterprises – within the Commonwealth and our Greater Charlottesville region. We support a range of public and private initiatives – particularly at the local level – to sustain, develop, attract and retain these prized, emerging, entrepreneurial, private enterprise employers.

II.6.2 Telecommunications

Knowledge and information are the currency of today’s and tomorrow’s highly competitive, rapidly changing, instantaneous global economy. The American telecommunications system and infrastructure, the best in the world, has been built and maintained by a successful partnership of ingenuity and investment of private enterprise with a limited governmental role.

Our Chamber believes that private enterprise should continue its leadership in telecommunications and that the governmental role – local, state and federal – should be limited to ensuring full, fair competition and citizen access only in those circumstances where private enterprise cannot perform.

II.6.3 Virginia Tourism / Regional Tourism Growth / Arts, Culture & Heritage

Tourism is an essential industry within the Commonwealth and our Charlottesville region. In our Charlottesville region tourism accounts for more than \$315 million in annual economic activity, yielding more than \$10 million annually in local tax revenues. Our Chamber supports the investment in tourism, both locally and statewide because of its proven return on the investment.

Our Chamber welcomes and encourages sustainable tourism growth -- within the Commonwealth and our Charlottesville region -- and supports a range of public and private initiatives to develop this key industry. Our Chamber supports the Virginia Tourism Corporation and its Cooperative Marketing Programs, as well as the local and regional Destination Management Organizations working throughout the Commonwealth. Our Chamber also recognizes the significant segment of our Charlottesville and Virginia economy represented by the arts, cultural and heritage enterprises, creative agri-tourism and supports this industry as a significant partner in the economic development of our region and Commonwealth.

II.6.4 Agribusiness in Virginia and our Charlottesville Region

Our Chamber embraces and supports Virginia's long tradition of commitment to agri-business. Over half of our rural area is in privately owned forests, the balance in various forms of agribusiness. In our Greater Charlottesville region, these rural businesses - mostly small, family enterprises - are estimated to produce each year, more than \$60 million in products including: apples, peaches, and corn, purebred and commercial cattle, outstanding show and race horses, high quality timber logs and sawn lumber, and some of the finest wines in America.

As a strong advocate of private enterprise, our Chamber acclaims the private landowner stewardship of the private rural landscape that surrounds and graces our urban areas. Sustainable management by private landowners has resulted in the exceptional open vistas of active farms and forested mountains, which we as residents and business people - and the tourists visiting here - all enjoy.

Our Chamber believes that governments, particularly our local governments, should be flexible and encouraging towards creative and emerging agribusiness endeavors such as agri-tourism.

Our Chamber supports the continued growth and further development of the wine industry in the Commonwealth of Virginia and Greater Charlottesville region. Viticulture and winemaking are shining examples of success in agribusiness and agri-tourism.

Our Commonwealth and region benefit greatly from the steady, sustained growth of Virginia vineyards and wines. Nearly 40% (680) of Virginia's 1,800 grape "bearing acres" are farmed in our region, producing more than 40% (1,894) of Virginia's annual grape tonnage (4,600). Vineyards and wineries - and other rapidly emerging agri-tourism businesses here - provide productive commercial use of agricultural land, add employment and tax revenues and enhance our tourism attractiveness. We support equitable, open markets in which Virginia's vintners can continue to grow and flourish.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services should be adequately funded and staffed to promote effectively the economic growth and development of Virginia agriculture, encourage environmental stewardship and provide reasonable consumer protection. We also believe that "agricultural education" should be better incorporated into the Commonwealth's educational curriculum.

II.6.5 Virginia's Economic Development Program

We support continuation of a state economic development effort which is professionally directed, adequately funded, and staffed to carry out programs which will result in encouraging the health and expansion of existing Virginia business as well as attracting vibrant new business to Virginia.

Our Chamber supports efforts by the Commonwealth to promote and enhance an environment for nurturing our existing business base and supporting small business development through such mechanisms as adequately funded enterprise funds, SCORE and small business assistance programs and other proven, innovative programs.

III. SOUND FISCAL PRACTICE AND TAXATION

Our Chamber believes that a guiding principle of sound governmental fiscal practice must be to structure governmental services to available resources. Sound fiscal practice also requires that fiscal balance be achieved, first and foremost, by control of the spending side before increasing tax rates or adding additional taxes and sources of revenue.

Limited public financing programs are appropriate mechanisms for government to achieve specific capital projects and goals in the context of a budget balanced within available resources. All policy options, their utility and impacts must be explored and considered, and must be available to decision-makers.

III. SOUND FISCAL PRACTICE AND TAXATION

III.1 Stewardship in Sound Governmental Financial Practice

Our Chamber, its member enterprises and all Virginians enjoy the benefits of a long tradition of a resolute bipartisan stewardship to sound governmental financial practice. The Commonwealth of Virginia was the first state to receive the highest AAA financial rating by *The Wall Street Journal* – in 1938, a 69-year standard of excellence maintained and unequalled by any other state.

The University of Virginia – the nation’s leading public university – also maintains the highest financial rating. Locally, the City of Charlottesville has maintained its AAA financial rating since 1964, a 43-year standard and today is one of only 70 cities nationwide to hold such a rating. In 2003, Albemarle County issued its first public bonds in more than a generation. In doing so, Albemarle County also achieved the highest financial rating, the smallest county in the nation to do so.

Our Chamber applauds these generations of stewardship in public finance, during good and difficult financial times, and strongly encourages continued commitment by our public servants in maintaining this high standard.

III.2 Tax Reform

Our Chamber supports a comprehensive reform of Virginia’s tax structure to ensure that it is equitable and broad-based, fosters a favorable business climate, encourages economic development and addresses local governmental abilities and resources to meet their obligations. Our Chamber opposes authorizing localities to enact their own income tax.

Beyond exemptions already authorized under the Commonwealth’s Constitution, our Chamber opposes further expansion of governmental authority to create differential or multi-tiered local property tax classifications or assessment ratios.

Effective tax reform should strive for simplicity, clarity and reduced cost of compliance to individual and business taxpayers. Tax reform, by definition, also must strive for “revenue neutrality” – neither raising or reducing the level of revenues. Once “revenue neutral reform” is achieved, the Commonwealth can then best determine whether the level of revenues can be adjusted higher or lower and by what equitable mechanisms such adjustments should be made.

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