

Prince William County-  
Greater Manassas  
Chamber of Commerce

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Prince William Regional  
Chamber of Commerce

2008

## Legislative Priorities



The Prince William County-Greater Manassas Chamber of Commerce and the Prince William Regional Chamber of Commerce challenge the Prince William delegation to the Virginia General Assembly to look to the future, planning and taking actions that will lead to the long-term economic strength and stability of the Commonwealth. We furthermore challenge the delegation to work together and with fellow Northern Virginia legislators to take a leadership role in the General Assembly to ensure continued economic growth in our region.

## Transportation

The Chambers applaud state legislators' first steps to address transportation through HB 3202 and request that any changes to HB 3202 be revenue neutral.

The Chambers believe, however, that important transportation needs continue to be unmet and support modification of the state budget to incorporate dependable, sustainable funding for new transportation needs. We believe that transportation funding must be recognized as a core function of the state government and that funding responsibility for transportation should not be passed on to local governments or property owners.

The Chambers support these additional transportation measures:

- New increased allocations or changes to the state funding formula to appropriately fund high-need areas, including Northern Virginia.
- Re-allocation of transportation districts so that all users of high-need areas are included in taxing districts and in decision-making. The Northern Virginia district might be expanded to include Stafford, Fauquier, Spotsylvania and Culpeper counties as well as nearby cities.

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## Education

The Chambers recognize that high-quality public schools and higher education institutions are essential to provide an educated workforce and attract quality businesses.

- A dedicated funding source for higher education must be established, while maintaining and, when possible, increasing state funding for Northern Virginia higher education institutions including George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College to support regional business growth.
- The state must fully fund its mandates for K-12 public schools, particularly the Standards of Quality (SOQs) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) programs including re-benchmarking. Additionally, the state must provide full funding for the state's share of actual average teacher salaries, including full-contract-year funding for salary increases approved by the legislature. We also request that the state provide new and expanded funding for school construction, renovation and land acquisition.

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## Health

The Chambers urge legislators to explore health care cost containment measures; rising health insurance premiums adversely impact business, which is the majority health care insurance provider in the state, and have forced some firms

to stop providing this benefit to employees. The Chambers support:

- Government initiatives to allow and promote private industry solutions;
- A review of state regulations to ensure they do not unnecessarily add to health insurance costs or prohibit cost-saving initiatives;
- Changes in state insurance regulations to allow one-person group health insurance plans.
- The Chambers also support additional financial resources for a stronger community mental health system in the Commonwealth.

## Workforce

The Chambers believe employers must take responsibility for hiring only those workers who are legally in this country. We also recognize that there is confusion over documents, a breakdown in federal enforcement measures, and a shortage of workers in many industries. In this regard we:

- Oppose additional regulations or onerous new penalties to require employers to enforce immigration laws that are the jurisdiction of the state or federal government.
- Support our elected officials at the state level advocating to federal lawmakers for:
- The creation of an easy-to-use national verification system that will validate for employers that they are making legal hires.
- Strengthened enforcement measures to remove illegal aliens from our Commonwealth.
- An increase in the quotas for the guest worker visa program.

## Efficient and Effective Government

The Chambers urge fiscally responsible state budgeting and spending practices. This must include strategic planning that identifies spending priorities and then develops measurable objectives and benchmarking techniques. To that end:

All information must be presented in a format so that the reader can determine the way in which money will be allocated and results achieved.

- Agencies must report outcomes and their ability to meet defined program objectives.
- Consequences must be established for agency non-compliance with strategic planning, benchmarking and measurement.
- Cost saving efforts should include contracting out government services wherever feasible.

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### Tax and Regulatory Policy

The Chambers support policies that will preserve business competitiveness.

- Tax measures must allow businesses to build capital and encourage its investment. Importantly, the BPOL tax must be reformed or eliminated.
- Current state policies that require uniform real estate tax rates for residential and commercial properties must be maintained. The Chambers oppose measures that would grant exemptions or deferrals to a segment of taxpayers at the expense of others.
- Regulations must not place an undue responsibility on business and must be practical in their implementation. Business must be consulted in the development of any new regulation.

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*The Chambers support the specific initiatives described on this 2008 Legislative Priorities insert.*

## Transportation Initiatives

### *Interstate Projects*

- Continue to fund and expedite the construction of the I-66/Route 29 interchange in Gainesville
- Widen I-66 from the Gainesville Interchange (Route 29) to Route 15
- Reconstruct the I-66/Route 15 interchange
- Build additional river crossings over the Potomac River
- Proceed with the Environmental Impact Study for the Western and Eastern Transportation Corridors

### *Primary Highways*

- Extend the Route 234 By-Pass from I-66 to Route 50 in the vicinity of Dulles Airport including acquiring the right-of-way for future mass transit
- Continue to fund the interchange at Route 1 and Route 123
- Construct the comprehensive plan alternative of the Tri-County Parkway (Route 28 Bypass), including acquiring the right-of-way for future mass transit
- Widen Route 28 from Manassas south to Route 29 in Fauquier County
- Fund the unfunded portions of the Route 1 widening and re-construction project, including the bridge over the Occoquan

### *Mass Transit*

- Extend VRE from Manassas to Gainesville, Haymarket and into Fauquier County
- Funding for 20 locomotives for VRE
- Study the feasibility of VRE Express Trains for the region
- Conduct a full study of enhanced mass transit improvements for the I-66 and I-95 corridors
- improvements for the I-66 and I-95 corridors.

## Education Initiatives

### *Higher Education Initiatives*

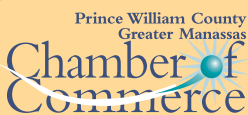
- Funding George Mason University's request for \$19 million over the next three years to provide Cost of Living increases for faculty and staff to keep salaries competitive with schools in the Mason peer group that include the University of Maryland and George Washington University.

- Funding George Mason University's request for \$43 million to expand Bull Run Hall to its originally planned size and provide more lab space, research facilities and classrooms.
- Funding Northern Virginia Community College's request for \$110.3 million in general fund and non-general fund support to construct Phase III of the Woodbridge Campus, construction of the Workforce Development Center, construction of the Support Services Building, and post-construction renovations and improvements from Phase III.
- Funding Northern Virginia Community College's request for \$28.1 million in general fund and non-general fund support for post-construction renovations and improvements to Phase III of the Manassas Campus and \$6 million for equipment in the Phase III academic building.
- The renewal of the funding of \$1.5 million to expand the number of nursing students and other health-care workforce training at Northern Virginia Community College during the 2008-2010 biennium
- Providing 100% of Base Budget Adequacy for George Mason University and Northern Virginia

### Other Miscellaneous Initiatives

- The Chambers oppose any new mandates that are not fully funded by the Commonwealth.
- The Chambers oppose impact fees, adequate public facility ordinances or levels of service legislation.
- The Chambers oppose any changes to the Dillon rule.
- The Chambers support a Constitutional amendment to allow a Governor to serve two consecutive terms.

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