



BLUEPRINT **VIRGINIA** 2035

A BUSINESS PLAN
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

DEAR BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY LEADERS:

Over the past four years, Virginia has achieved remarkable economic success and continued to demonstrate why it is consistently recognized as one of the best states in which to live, work, and do business.

Virginia earned the top ranking in Education in CNBC's 2025 "America's Top States for Business" report for the third consecutive year, placed second in Infrastructure—an impressive rise across the past decade—and broke into the top 10 for both Quality of Life and Technology and Innovation. Virginia also regularly ranks in the top 10 in rankings by *Business Facilities*, *Site Selection*, *Chief Executive*, and others. All of these achievements highlight the strength of our workforce and the commitment of leaders across the Commonwealth. Yet, even with these accomplishments, we face new challenges and emerging opportunities that require bold action, collaboration, and a clear roadmap for the future in order to sustain—and improve upon—our successes.

For more than a decade, *Blueprint Virginia* has served as the Commonwealth's comprehensive business-led strategic plan, delivered to each incoming Governor to help shape policies that foster economic growth and competitiveness. Now, as we look toward the next decade, *Blueprint Virginia 2035* builds on this tradition by offering recommendations developed through extensive engagement with business leaders, industry experts, regional partners, and community stakeholders.

The priorities outlined in this *Blueprint* are not theoretical; they reflect the voices, concerns, and aspirations of more than 10,000 Virginians who participated in our regional tour, industry council discussions, statewide survey, and signature events. These recommendations are designed to equip policymakers with a clear understanding of the steps needed to strengthen Virginia's position as a top state for business and to create an environment where every community can thrive.

The team at the Virginia Chamber of Commerce would like to thank the business and community leaders, partners, and stakeholders who contributed their insights to this process. Your commitment and expertise have shaped a vision that reflects the opportunities before us and the resolve required to meet them.

The Virginia Chamber of Commerce looks forward to working in close partnership with the next administration, the General Assembly, and leaders across the Commonwealth to implement *Blueprint Virginia 2035*. Together, we can ensure that Virginia not only remains a top state for business but also a model for economic resilience, innovation, and shared prosperity.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica L. Schmuide".

MONICA L. SCHMUDE

President
Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Virginia

Co-Chair
Blueprint Virginia 2035



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edmond E. Hughes".

EDMOND HUGHES

Executive Vice President and CHRO
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Co-Chair
Blueprint Virginia 2035

OUR GOAL: KEEPING VIRGINIA THE BEST STATE FOR BUSINESS

The recommendations outlined in *Blueprint Virginia 2035* serve as an action plan to foster long-term economic growth and resiliency. They will help ensure Virginia remains a leader in the global economy, continues to develop a strong and diverse workforce that businesses need, and maintains its position as a top state for business.

HOW WERE THEY CREATED?

Throughout 2025, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce hosted the *Blueprint Virginia 2035* Regional Tour. These meetings were hosted in each of the nine GO Virginia regions, in partnership with over 100 stakeholder groups, including local and regional chambers of commerce.

In addition, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce organized *Blueprint* Industry Council meetings, held signature events, and conducted a series of statewide, regional, and industry-specific surveys. These efforts engaged more than 10,000 Virginians and offered a broad range of recommendations to develop *Blueprint Virginia 2035*.



HOW WILL THEY BE IMPLEMENTED?

The Virginia Chamber of Commerce is prepared to work collaboratively with strategic partners and public policy leaders to implement these recommendations. The Virginia Chamber Foundation's *Blueprint* Industry Councils will develop action plans to support implementation and monitor progress on activities related to these recommendations.

BY THE NUMBERS:

2,200+

VIRGINIANS ENGAGED
VIA REGIONAL TOUR

20

INDUSTRY COUNCIL
MEETINGS

11

SIGNATURE EVENTS
ACROSS VIRGINIA

10,000+

VIRGINIANS ENGAGED
VIA EVENTS AND SURVEYS

171

RECOMMENDATIONS

BUILDING THE BEST STATE FOR BUSINESS

Virginia's success as a top state for business is built on a strong foundation of shared principles that guide growth, innovation, and opportunity. These seven building blocks reflect the values that sustain a competitive economy and support prosperity across every region of the Commonwealth.

Workforce Alignment

All public policy should support the Commonwealth's ability to attract, train, and retain talent at all skill levels and ages. The business community, academia, and government must work in partnership to ensure that programs are developing the skills businesses and workers require to succeed.

The Voice of Business

Businesses must be active participants in shaping local and state decisions on land use, infrastructure, and development, not merely passive observers or occasional participants. Civic engagement from the business community can counter obstructionism and ensure economic growth is part of public dialogue.

Forward-Looking Innovation

Virginia should endeavor to be a global leader in the adoption of new and emerging technologies.

Free Enterprise and Fair Competition

Be the voice for policies which reinforce market-driven prosperity and individual freedom of choice. As Virginia seeks to compete with other states, so too should Virginia promote competition in free and open markets. Fair competition drives progress.

Predictability and Stability in Governance

Business stability and government stability go hand in hand. The timelines under which businesses operate are longer than most political terms, and in order to support continued economic growth, policymakers should focus on ensuring the consistency needed for long-term planning and solutions.

Infrastructure Preparedness

Functional, safe, high-quality infrastructure is foundational to the success and prosperity of Virginia's businesses and residents alike.

Prosperity for All

Economic and business development should be promoted in all regions of the Commonwealth.

KEY PRIORITIES

In addition to the focused recommendations in *Blueprint Virginia 2035*, the following priorities cut across every industry sector and regional economy in Virginia.

To achieve these priorities, Virginia must:

- **Champion and protect Virginia’s right-to-work statute as the foundation of workforce flexibility, employee choice, and the embodiment of the freedom of association**
- **Champion an affordable, reliable, resilient, and balanced approach to energy that recognizes the value and importance of a secure and diverse energy mix capable of meeting Virginia’s growing needs with continuous, uninterrupted, always available energy**
- **Consolidate reviews and reduce duplication in permitting processes, including through coordination with federal agencies, and where possible, establish One Decision models and adopt permitting “shot-clocks” with clear and enforceable timelines for infrastructure approvals while maintaining rigorous environmental protections**
- **Expand work-based learning opportunities, including internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, and project-based learning, by incentivizing employer participation and reducing barriers to student access, such as scheduling flexibility, transportation, and housing, to help students connect classroom instruction with real-world experience**
- **Prioritize state funding for expanding access to quality, affordable childcare in order to provide a dedicated, predictable, and permanent revenue source**
- **Address housing affordability challenges across all income levels and all housing types by expanding and preserving the existing housing supply**
- **Expand access to affordable preventive and primary healthcare services by supporting initiatives that increase access to screenings, pharmacy services, vaccinations, wellness visits, and chronic disease management—especially in rural and underserved communities**
- **Advocate for the establishment of a specialized business court docket to handle complex business litigation within the Commonwealth’s circuit courts, in collaboration with the Virginia Supreme Court, consistent with models in 30 other states**

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BUSINESS CLIMATE

Virginia has long been recognized as one of the best states for doing business. This success reflects the Commonwealth's commitment to a diverse economy, a skilled workforce, a strong infrastructure, and a predictable and stable regulatory environment.

To continue the trajectory of success, Virginia must remain proactive. Demographic changes, technological advancements, and evolving workforce needs present opportunities and challenges alike. Continued investments in economic development, including business-ready sites, out-of-state marketing, and incentive programs, are needed to remain competitive with other states. Virginia must also continue proven policies, such as right-to-work, which have long enabled economic growth while avoiding measures that could undermine its strong business climate.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to ensure a successful business climate through 2035 and beyond.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

- Champion and protect Virginia's right-to-work statute as the foundation of workforce flexibility, employee choice, and the embodiment of the freedom of association
- Ensure predictable and stable wage policies, recognizing that higher labor costs substantially impact an employer's ability to hire and retain unskilled workers new to the labor force
- Control workers' compensation costs by supporting fair, evidence-based reforms and opposing measures that unnecessarily expand employer liability
- Identify cost-effective ways for employers to provide expanded employee benefit programs
- Reduce barriers to occupational licensure, including through the increase of practice mobility and reciprocal licensure

TAXATION AND FISCAL COMPETITIVENESS

- Improve overall tax competitiveness to move Virginia into the top 20 states nationally by reducing barriers to capital investment and modernizing aspects of corporate income tax practices
- Clarify and address outdated provisions of Virginia's business tax code, including statutory updates to the Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) tax to prevent double taxation for businesses with multistate activity

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Continue to support and advocate for increased and sustained funding for site development, public infrastructure, utility access, and placemaking, recognizing the importance of investment in business-ready sites and preservation-based economic and community development across the Commonwealth, including through the Virginia Business Ready Sites, Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund, and Virginia Main Street programs
- Streamline and simplify business formation and establish integrated, one-stop portals for licensing and compliance issues
- Support efforts at the local level to digitize and streamline review and permitting processes related to commercial, industrial, and residential development
- Continue development of incentive and business assistance programs tailored to the size, location, and industrial trends of diverse jurisdictions throughout Virginia, informed by and in support of regional collaboration models such as GO Virginia and the Blue Ridge Innovation Corridor
- Continue to support and advocate for increased marketing funding to better promote Virginia in the global marketplace and to aid in the recruitment of domestic and foreign investment in the Commonwealth
- Proactively market and promote Virginia's unique and leading advantages as a destination for quantum computing, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, aerospace, defense, autonomous systems, biotechnology, pharmaceutical, and agribusiness firms and technologies
- Study potential dedicated funding sources to supplement and/or offset existing state appropriations for statewide economic development incentive programs, business recruitment/expansion/retention efforts, and job creation initiatives for eligible projects
- Foster vibrant tourism, hospitality, and travel industries to attract visitors and new Virginians

TRADE AND MARKETS

- Promote supply chain diversification, readiness, and resilience to best ensure that businesses in all regions and industries can withstand potential shocks and trade disruptions
- Invest in programs and promotional activities to develop overseas markets for Virginia-made goods and services and assist Virginia companies in accessing international opportunities, including for small businesses and underserved communities
- Work with Virginia's colleges, universities, and other institutions to establish world-class programs for supply chain management
- Monitor and improve supply chain-dependent infrastructure such as airports, seaports and terminals, navigation channels, freight rail, interstate and U.S. highway systems, and spaceports

ECONOMIC FREEDOM AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Defend the principles of free enterprise, including transparency in government, private property rights, personal freedom, and the operation of free markets unfettered by unnecessary government intrusion
- Encourage business participation in local and state decision-making, especially in areas such as land use where opposition to reasonable and sensible economic development is rampant and stifles the growth of communities and opportunities

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

The ability to attract and retain talent is essential for business stability and expansion. A skilled and educated workforce remains a critical priority for the business community in every region of the Commonwealth and in every industry.

As demographics continue to shift, it becomes increasingly important to maximize workforce participation and avoid underemployment. However, the lack of cost-effective childcare options presents a barrier to workforce participation, hindering immediate employment and long-term economic growth. Addressing workforce participation also requires programs and outreach to special populations to ensure those individuals' ability to contribute to personal and overall economic growth.

Programs must also adapt to the changing landscape to stay competitive. Direct engagement with employers to identify high-demand jobs, provide work-based learning opportunities, and integrate new technologies into instructional materials and techniques will ensure workers at every stage—new entrants, returners, and career changers—are matched to the most productive opportunities. Improved data collection across the entire education and workforce continuum will ensure the best return on investments and provide accountability for student outcomes.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to position Virginia as the top state for talent through 2035 and beyond.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

- Prioritize state funding for expanding access to quality, affordable childcare in order to provide a dedicated, predictable, and permanent revenue source
- Increase and benchmark program payment rates to reflect childcare providers' full cost of delivering quality services to keep classrooms open and retain a talented, adequately compensated childcare workforce
- Ensure that all eligible families have access to childcare through increased investments in and improved coordination of subsidized services (e.g., Child Care Subsidy Program, Mixed Delivery Program, Virginia Preschool Initiative) and through tax credit strategies
- Increase speed to market for new childcare operators and expansion of existing operators by reducing regulatory burden and zoning barriers and seeding entrepreneurial ventures in areas of high demand
- Bolster the workforce that supports early learning and childcare by ensuring access to development and retention programs including the Virginia Recognize B5 program, G3 tuition assistance, and Child Care Assistance Payments for early educators



K-12 EDUCATION

- Expand work-based learning opportunities, including internships, youth or pre-apprenticeships, job shadowing, and project-based learning, by incentivizing employer participation and reducing barriers to student access, such as scheduling flexibility and transportation, to help students connect classroom instruction with real-world experience
- Support students by enhancing student safety and providing wraparound services, including mental health care, especially through the promotion of proven community-based programs, by encouraging public-private partnerships that offer mentorship and college and career guidance to help students transition beyond high school
- Support initiatives which enable students to graduate from high school with an industry-recognized credential or associate's degree by expanding access to dual enrollment opportunities and career and technical education (CTE), such as Great Opportunities in Technical and Engineering Careers (GO TEC), and increasing the supply of CTE teachers
- Increase sustainable state and local funding for the renovation or replacement of aging school infrastructure, ensuring safe and modern, technology-enabled learning environments, and to close gaps in state support for students in underserved communities, especially those with disabilities and English learners
- Address teacher staffing concerns through solutions such as licensure reciprocity, recruitment of retired and part-time teachers and transitioning military personnel, affordable professional pathways and tuition assistance, mentorship programs, teacher apprenticeship programs and residencies, high-quality alternative methods to licensure, and higher compensation
- Expand partnerships with technology companies offering free STEM education resources and teacher training programs and integrate digital literacy with an emphasis on artificial intelligence, infrastructure, aerospace, defense, and emerging technologies
- Prepare students for success in life through mastery of fundamental knowledge in reading, writing, and math

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Rapidly scale up the Virginia Innovative Internship Program to increase the supply of paid internships and to facilitate student-employer connections across the Commonwealth, establishing a one-stop shop for internships and work-based learning opportunities, to ensure that businesses and students alike have a centralized location for finding such opportunities, with a clear baseline, scale-up goals, and metrics for measuring progress
- Significantly increase state funding of student financial assistance, including Tuition Assistance Grants (TAG) for students at nonprofit independent colleges and universities, financial aid to Pell-eligible students and others with demonstrated need attending higher education institutions, state support for access and completion at community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other institutions that enroll high percentages of low-income, first-generation, and under-represented students, and workforce credential grants through the Virginia Community College System (VCCS)
- Address college cost transparency and perception issues across the Commonwealth, including promotion of institutional participation in the College Cost Transparency Initiative, and support implementation of tools that provide clear, personalized pricing information to families starting early in high school
- Work with Commonwealth and system-level partners (e.g., VDOE, SCHEV, VCCS) to develop a scalable action plan to implement quality coaching models for personalized career navigation
- Increase retention of graduates from Virginia's colleges and universities and measure employment outcomes



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Continue to support the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program, delivered by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership in collaboration with VCCS, Virginia's world-class, customized, job-specific training and recruitment solution for Virginia's businesses, and identify opportunities to replicate the Talent Accelerator model for a broader set of employers
- Identify and increase funding for innovative programs in the private and public sectors, such as VCCS's FastForward program, to reskill, upskill, and provide new opportunities for workforce participants, especially those facing industry transitions, job disruptions, and transformations caused by the adoption of new technologies such as artificial intelligence
- Grow apprenticeships and focus on rebuilding our industrial and skilled trades workforce in high-demand occupations, starting this awareness opportunity beginning in elementary school, including by expanding partnerships with companies offering registered apprenticeship programs in technology, logistics, and other growing sectors

- Incentivize the expansion of work-based learning opportunities offered by the business community by offering tax credits and/or matching grants to employers that hire interns
- Ensure successful reentry for justice-involved individuals by strengthening job training and educational opportunities, including expanding access to skills-based education, career readiness, industry-aligned credentials, and degree pathways geared toward needs identified and developed by businesses, prior to their release and supporting access to essential infrastructure needed to obtain and retain employment such as housing, transportation, identification, and other wraparound services
- Develop the talent pipeline of people with disabilities through job training, placement opportunities, and attainment of industry-aligned credentials
- Integrate universal artificial intelligence literacy into the talent pipeline, including in K-12 education, post-secondary education, and workforce training programs

EMPLOYER ALIGNMENT

- Ensure that the Virginia Office of Education Economics has the data required (e.g., enhanced wage records) to analyze occupational pathways for all post-secondary programs in Virginia and to produce talent demand-supply gap analyses by occupation, industry, and region to inform state, regional, and institutional plans
- Develop a joint state talent plan, crafted with input from state leaders in K-12, higher education, workforce development, and economic development, to identify targeted, cross-sector alignment opportunities to strengthen talent pipelines for employers and employment outcomes for individuals
- Establish state funding and tuition models for post-secondary education that incentivize expansion of high-wage, high-demand programs of study which cost more to deliver (e.g., nursing, skilled trades, etc.)



INFRASTRUCTURE

Robust infrastructure is critical to business success. Businesses of all sizes, in all industries, and in all regions depend on reliable energy, clean water, safe transportation, and dependable broadband. Reliable energy is now paramount, and Virginia has the opportunity to become the epicenter of energy technology development.

Regardless of infrastructure type, funding and project approval are key considerations. As the cost of infrastructure continues to increase, Virginia must continue to find creative and innovative ways to leverage investments and deliver capital projects. This can be accomplished through the expansion of public-private partnerships, progressive design build, and best value procurement that balances reliability, resiliency, and affordability. And as project delays are particularly damaging to costs, the Commonwealth, including its local governments, must work together to simplify and accelerate permitting and approval processes.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to ensure the Commonwealth's infrastructure supports its economic competitiveness through 2035 and beyond.

ENERGY SECURITY AND GRID MODERNIZATION

- Champion an affordable, reliable, resilient, and balanced approach to energy that recognizes the value and importance of a secure and diverse energy mix capable of meeting Virginia's growing needs with continuous, uninterrupted, always available energy
- Create expedited siting and permitting processes for critical energy infrastructure, including transmission lines, storage facilities, and new generation, while maintaining environmental protections
- Accelerate deployment of solutions, including emergency provisions, to address immediate consumer energy demands and grid reliability
- Ensure redundant power systems and adequate reserves for critical infrastructure
- Expand baseload generation capacity in Virginia, including natural gas infrastructure, to address rising demand for energy and support investments in the development of small modular reactors (SMRs) and fusion technology
- Invest in advanced energy storage systems to enhance grid reliability and support renewable integration



PERMITTING AND INVESTMENT REFORM

- Consolidate reviews and reduce duplication in permitting processes, including through coordination with federal agencies, and where possible, establish One Decision models and adopt permitting “shot-clocks” with clear and enforceable timelines for infrastructure approvals while maintaining rigorous environmental protections
- Expand and make permanent the Virginia Business Ready Expedited Permitting Program
- Further the expansion of the Virginia Permit Transparency initiative to include permits and approvals from all state agencies and local governments
- Incentivize local governments to digitize processes and develop fast-track permitting programs to reduce delays for key economic development projects such as business-ready sites, housing, and energy facilities
- Establish a framework to scale damage prevention systems, including locator services and workforce training, with infrastructure expansion, recognizing under-resourcing of these systems can lead to costly delays and damages

TRANSPORTATION

- Standardize management, communication, and Traffic Impact Analysis practices across the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) regions to improve consistency and reduce delays for major projects
- Enhance and maintain Virginia’s multimodal infrastructure, including public and private marine terminals, inland ports, navigation channels, freight rail, airports, interstate and U.S. highway systems, and last-mile logistics
- Leverage public infrastructure investments through innovative procurement methods including the expanded use of public-private partnerships, progressive design build, Construction Management/General Contractor, and best value contracting to deliver projects on-time and on-budget
- Support innovative models of public transportation to better enable workforce mobility
- Provide financial support for transit system operations and capital needs based on metrics that incentivize continued progress on cost efficiency, innovation, safety, and demonstrated service levels for workers, customers, and visitors to participate in and grow the Commonwealth’s economy
- Expand access to passenger rail to support commuter transport corridors and statewide tourism development

WATER AND WASTEWATER

- Invest to modernize aging public and private water and wastewater infrastructure in Virginia’s urban and rural communities to protect public health, strengthen system resilience, and better enable economic development
- Explore innovative water management strategies, such as groundwater trading programs similar to nutrient credit systems, to promote sustainability and balance competing needs and expand water supply options, including accelerated approvals of surface water reservoirs
- Encourage public-private partnerships, regionalization, and consolidation for financing, maintaining, and expanding water and wastewater systems to reduce local burdens and foster innovation
- Expand and improve upon initiatives, including regulatory modifications, that support a circular water economy through the recovery and beneficial reuse of resources generated from wastewater treatment, such as reuse water, nutrients, and renewable energy, thereby stretching existing water supplies, supporting business needs, and promoting climate resilience



HOUSING

In the recent past, housing was not a key issue for Virginia's business community. Today, however, it is one of the most pressing issues for the Commonwealth's businesses and residents alike.

Affordability is a key concern for workers at all income levels. A shortage of supply is the primary driver, impacting workforce growth and limiting Virginia's overall economic competitiveness. Addressing the Commonwealth's housing needs by 2035 is a daunting task and requires decisive action. Supply of all types must increase at all price points and in all regions to meet demand.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to expand Virginia's housing supply for all residents to enable economic growth through 2035 and beyond.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- Address housing affordability challenges across all income levels and all housing types by expanding and preserving the existing housing supply
- Encourage employers to provide or expand housing-related benefits, for owners and renters, and financing tools as part of their

compensation packages such as down payment and closing cost assistance, the use of employer-owned land for housing, or direct subsidy for housing development. Encourage the General Assembly to incentivize these Employer Assisted Housing Programs through corporate or other business-related tax incentives

- Expand opportunities for income tax credits for renting, buying, and selling real estate
- Increase funding for the Housing Trust Fund while also expanding the uses of the Fund to further assist homebuyers with closing costs, gap financing, and other costs

HOUSING SUPPLY

- Improve consistency, transparency, and efficiency in housing development by incentivizing local government to develop fast-track permitting programs to reduce delays
- Develop model codes and toolkits to guide local governments' zoning practices, housing typologies, and permitting processes
- Limit exclusionary zoning practices that restrict housing diversity
- Examine the current uses and roles that comprehensive planning plays in land-use decisions and the appropriate aspects of comprehensive plans that should be required to ensure consistent applications
- Require uniform interpretation and application of the Uniform Building Code across the Commonwealth

HOUSING PRODUCTION

- Encourage localities to adopt incentive programs, such as Affordable Housing Performance Grants, to further the development of affordable multifamily housing
- Support targeted tax incentives, such as the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program to preserve historic infrastructure and the Housing Opportunity Tax Credit, while also increasing the Commonwealth's housing supply
- Create incentives around Transit Oriented Development (TOD), affordable housing co-located to public goods and services (e.g., childcare, hospitals, etc.), and density bonuses through infrastructure cost offsets and other means
- Maximize housing production outcomes through the use of Opportunity Zone programs and pair them with other state and local incentives such as additional tax increment financing (TIF) or performance grants for including rent-restricted housing
- Integrate housing plans into local, regional, and state economic development plans to match the job potential of projects

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Advancements in technology have long shaped business productivity and economic growth. Today, employers and employees across the Commonwealth are grappling with new technologies, including artificial intelligence tools, which provide both challenges and opportunities.

The widespread adoption of new technologies creates an environment ripe for entrepreneurship and new industries. To seize this opportunity, all businesses across Virginia must have access to the critical infrastructure and technology capabilities needed to thrive.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to drive economic growth through technology and innovation through 2035 and beyond.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

- Digitize data and information and implement ethical AI solutions in government operations to modernize services, reduce administrative costs, and improve permit processing times
- Develop programs to integrate responsible and trustworthy AI technologies into business operations that enhance productivity and workforce efficiency while providing guidance and model policies regarding AI use by employees
- Advocate for cohesive federal-level, industry-specific AI regulations while maintaining state-level oversight focused on protecting data privacy and preventing unlawful and unethical applications
- Develop and implement new workforce training resources and improve visibility and access to existing training resources to strengthen workplace skills essential in an AI-enabled workplace for incumbent workers, those transitioning industries, and those seeking new opportunities
- Quickly establish AI-related curricula and classroom use policies in the K-12 system and at higher education institutions that encourage appropriate AI training and usage for students

- Develop and provide training in business process redesign, systems thinking, and change management for managers who are leading the deployment of ethical AI tools and resources in a rapidly changing workplace

BROADBAND, CYBERSECURITY, AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Expand access to broadband to achieve universal high-speed internet coverage across Virginia with priority in unserved areas and continued use of performance metrics tied to public investment to ensure timely project delivery
- Strengthen digital and physical infrastructure security for data centers, cloud computing facilities, advanced manufacturing sites, and private telecommunications networks, including examining and updating existing state statutes to properly define and protect private infrastructure from theft and vandalism
- Create small business and local government cyber protection programs providing training, risk assessment tools, and security resources, including resources for Cyber Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) compliance
- Expand cloud, digital, and energy infrastructure investments in targeted growth regions
- Establish a process for the safe and secure relocation of telecommunications facilities in the public rights of way, including the creation of a permanent funding source for the reimbursement of any relocation costs

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS AND RESEARCH COMMERCIALIZATION

- Reinstate and expand research and development (R&D) tax credits and incentives for Virginia businesses

- Create and expand university-industry partnerships focusing on technology transfer in the quantum computing, artificial intelligence, energy, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, defense, and advanced manufacturing sectors
- Develop regional innovation districts through public-private partnerships with both public and private nonprofit educational institutions
- Increase applied research funding for priority sectors including energy, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, defense, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence
- Establish innovation hubs with shared makerspaces, testing facilities, and business incubators

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND START-UP GROWTH

- Expand early-stage venture capital access through the Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation and programs such as Lab to Launch
- Simplify regulatory processes for technology companies and emerging industries
- Support and expand technical assistance programs and access to capital for entrepreneurs, including first-time founders and small business owners seeking to expand or enter new industries
- Create regulatory sandboxes for testing emerging technologies in quantum computing, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, energy, aerospace, and autonomous systems



MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

National security investment is a key driver of Virginia's economy, and the Commonwealth has long been recognized as a vital contributor to our nation's defense, as well as home to one of the largest active duty, reserve, and veteran populations in the country.

By investing in strategic infrastructure and land use protections, Virginia can grow this economic impact, sustain mission readiness, and attract new national defense assets. At the same time, focused strategies to support military families—through improved childcare, healthcare, employment, housing, and education—will ensure service members, veterans, and spouses thrive both during and after service. These initiatives also prioritize attracting veterans and their families into Virginia's workforce, recognizing their valuable skills and experience. With aligned action across all levels of government, nonprofits, and active involvement of the business community, Virginia can continue to lead in mission readiness and opportunity beyond the uniform.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to ensure the Commonwealth remains a premier destination for national security investment and human resource talent, strengthen military-community partnerships, support defense-driven economic growth, and enhance quality of life for service members, veterans, and their families through 2035 and beyond.



ATTRACT AND SUSTAIN MILITARY INVESTMENT

- Invest in strategic partnerships and land use protections—including the Military Community Infrastructure Grant and Encroachment Grant Programs—to fund mutually beneficial infrastructure and resilience projects and ensure Virginia remains mission-ready
- Accelerate Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSAs) and increase participation in the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program to expand shared services and resource initiatives
- Include defense as an economic development priority for the Commonwealth with appropriate staffing and branding to maximize the number of defense suppliers choosing to locate and grow in Virginia
- Build partnerships that increase energy workforce and capacity while balancing reliability, resiliency, and affordability
- Strengthen local and regional Military Engagement Communities to advocate for installations, missions, service members, veterans, and families
- Continue and expand the role of the Virginia Military Affairs Committee (VMAC) as a central coordination forum

MAKE VIRGINIA A PREFERRED DESTINATION FOR MILITARY TALENT

- › Develop a statewide military family support strategy addressing childcare, employment, education, housing, and healthcare while empowering regionally driven solutions
- › Foster welcoming, prosperous communities that bridge the military-civilian divide and ensure service members and families are supported and connected
- › Commission a study using best available data to evaluate tax incentives, including expanding military retirement pay exemptions and creating tax relief for separating veterans
- › Organize the “Virginia Base Tour” to connect business leaders with military installation commanders to highlight opportunities for collaboration
- › Launch a targeted marketing campaign to attract and retain military families in the Commonwealth

EMPOWER AND STRENGTHEN MILITARY FAMILIES

- › Incentivize affordable housing development near installations and expand first-time homeownership support for veterans and military families

- › Expand access to quality, affordable childcare through public-private partnerships (including ISGAs), improved local service directories, and tax incentives for providers who participate in military subsidy programs
- › Improve healthcare access, including behavioral health, through expanded community-based and telehealth solutions, supported by incentives for providers who accept military and veteran coverage
- › Include military spouses on Governor-appointed commissions and boards addressing childcare, spouse employment, education, housing, and healthcare
- › Achieve 100% Purple Star designation for all eligible schools, ensuring military-connected students receive sustained, tailored support

GENERATE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

- › Reduce military spouse unemployment and underemployment by leveraging initiatives, such as the Military Spouse Career Accelerator, to enhance connections with employers across Virginia
- › Incentivize the development of portable, skills-based career pathways and other employer engagement strategies to promote long-term career mobility
- › Fully integrate military spouses into the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program

- › Advance occupational state licensing reciprocity by legislating adoption of all federally-sponsored compacts and providing clear, web-based licensure guidance

CONNECT VETERANS AND SPOUSES TO A THRIVING WORKFORCE

- › Develop a statewide veteran transition strategy that includes mentorship, training, and career-matching resources
- › Partner with workforce agencies to create employer-led pathways into high-demand industries with expedited recognition of military training and credentials
- › Launch an artificial intelligence-powered workforce portal to help veterans translate their skills into civilian job qualifications and connect with employers
- › Expand incentives for internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships that prioritize military-connected talent
- › Strengthen industry collaboration with higher education institutions and nonprofit/non-governmental organizations to ensure student veterans' academic success, leadership development, and career readiness
- › Expand support for military spouse and veteran entrepreneurs through financial literacy programs, access to capital, and procurement opportunities

HEALTHCARE AND LIFE SCIENCES

Virginia's healthcare and life sciences sectors are essential to the Commonwealth's economy and quality of life. The demand for innovative, accessible, and equitable healthcare solutions continues to accelerate, driven by an aging population, advances in biotechnology, and a growing emphasis on public health.

Virginia is uniquely positioned to lead in this evolving landscape, with world-class research institutions, a thriving biotechnology and life sciences industry, a growing healthcare workforce, and a commitment to expanding access and improving outcomes for all residents. We must continue to invest in cutting-edge research, workforce development, public-private partnerships, digital health innovation, and rural healthcare access.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to allow every Virginia community to benefit from high-quality, innovative healthcare services and position the Commonwealth as a global hub for life sciences research, commercialization, and job creation through 2035 and beyond.

POPULATION HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Expand access to affordable preventive and primary healthcare services by supporting initiatives that increase access to screenings, pharmacy services, vaccinations, wellness visits, and chronic disease management—especially in rural and underserved communities
- Promote public-private partnerships to address social drivers of health by encouraging collaboration between healthcare providers, businesses, local governments, and nonprofits to improve access to housing, transportation, childcare, eldercare, healthy food, and safe environments
- Leverage technology and telehealth to improve efficient access and integrated coordination of care by expanding broadband and digital health tools to improve care delivery, particularly for rural and aging populations
- Address health disparities and advance health equity by supporting data-driven initiatives that identify disparities and direct resources toward communities facing the greatest barriers to optimal health
- Improve health literacy and community education by supporting statewide campaigns and community-based education efforts that empower individuals to make informed health decisions

ACCESS, QUALITY, AND COST

- Encourage healthcare providers and insurers to continue to improve access to clear, timely, transparent, and understandable pricing and quality information for patients and employers
- Transition from fee-for-service to value-based payment models that use consistent metrics to incentivize better health outcomes, care coordination, and cost efficiency
- Endorse policies and payment models that address whole person care and integrate mental health, substance use disorder services, primary care, and pharmacy services to improve outcomes and reduce duplicative costs
- Support employer-sponsored health coverage and the important role it plays for employers to offer health benefits to their employees
- Promote policies and initiatives that provide greater support for employees with caregiving responsibilities for both children and adults

HEALTHCARE AND LIFE SCIENCES TALENT SUPPLY

- Establish and expand targeted incentives, such as the Virginia Department of Health's Nursing Preceptor Incentive Program, to encourage practicing healthcare professionals—especially in high-demand fields—to serve as instructors, preceptors, and mentors in clinical and academic training programs
- Enhance state support for Virginia's medical, nursing, dental, allied health, behavioral health, and life sciences training programs, at both public and private nonprofit educational institutions, including the Commonwealth's Earn to Learn and Graduate Medical Education programs and tuition assistance and loan repayment programs tied to in-state service
- Strengthen the statewide expansion of the Blue Ridge Partnership for Health Sciences model to address regional workforce needs



LEGAL CLIMATE



Virginia's legal climate is a significant consideration when a company is deciding where to locate or expand. Maintaining Virginia's fair, stable, and predictable legal and regulatory practices is critical to the Commonwealth's economic growth and success. The opportunity to obtain a fair and efficient resolution of legal disputes, access to courts, and threats of frivolous litigation all contribute to a company's overall operational decisions.

Continued protection of property and contract rights, labor laws, and comprehensive regulatory review is especially important in an increasingly litigious society and complicated regulatory environment. Nonetheless, there remains room for additional efficiencies in legal proceedings and permitting.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to promote a predictable legal climate, encourage efficiency in the civil justice system, and defend Virginia's business climate through 2035 and beyond.

FAIR AND BALANCED CIVIL JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Advocate for the establishment of a specialized business court docket to handle complex business litigation within the Commonwealth's circuit courts, in collaboration with the Virginia Supreme Court, consistent with models in 30 other states
- Advocate for sensible judicial reform measures to control excessive litigation, discourage frivolous lawsuits, and continue limited punitive damages, promoting a more predictable landscape while encouraging alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, such as mediation and arbitration, as cost-effective and timely alternatives to traditional litigation
- Support the continued prudent and limited scope of class action mechanisms within Virginia's state court system, which provides predictability and helps prevent costly litigation for employers
- Advocate for the expanded use of summary judgment to promote judicial efficiency and reduce unnecessary litigation costs
- Limit the expansion of private rights of action to prevent excessive litigation and maintain an efficient civil justice system

CONTRACT INTEGRITY AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

- Emphasize the importance of clear and robust legal protections for private property rights, including intellectual property
- Advocate for a legal system that ensures contracts are consistently upheld and disputes are resolved fairly and efficiently, providing certainty for commercial transactions
- Oppose retroactively impairing existing contracts and undue government interference in private commercial agreements

LABOR LAWS

- Ensure an efficient and balanced unemployment and workers' compensation system and support improvements to process valid claims and identify fraudulent ones
- Advocate for reasonable labor laws and tort reform that maintain at-will employment and balance employee protections with employer flexibility, avoiding mandates that unduly increase labor costs or hinder operational agility
- Provide clear legal guidance and predictable enforcement regarding non-compete and non-solicitation agreements, balancing employer interests in protecting proprietary information with employee mobility

REGULATORY PREDICTABILITY AND EFFICIENCY

- Support periodic and systematic review of all state regulations and their functional equivalents, including through the use of artificial intelligence, to identify and eliminate outdated, redundant, or unnecessarily burdensome rules
- Push for regulations to be written in plain language, easily understood by businesses, avoiding overly complex jargon or ambiguous interpretations
- Advocate for consistent and transparent enforcement of existing laws and regulations by state agencies, minimizing arbitrary or sudden shifts in interpretation
- Support initiatives to streamline and expedite state and local permits and licenses necessary for business operations (e.g., zoning, occupational licenses, construction permits)
- Continue to evaluate privacy laws and regulations to ensure they are reasonable and balanced and not unduly burdensome to the business community, while protecting personally identifiable information



BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental stewardship and economic prosperity are complementary objectives. By creating frameworks that incentivize excellence, support innovation, and build resilience, Virginia can establish itself as the premier destination for businesses seeking to thrive in a sustainable economy. Success requires balanced approaches that address immediate needs while building long-term capacity for environmental and economic leadership.

The recommendations in this section provide a comprehensive policy framework to allow businesses to prepare for and withstand disasters of all kinds, achieve ambitious sustainability goals, and maintain robust economic growth through 2035 and beyond.

INCENTIVE-BASED SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS

- Revitalize and expand the Environmental Excellence Program to reduce regulatory burden for companies that have strong environmental records
- Explore strategies to incentivize the development of wetland mitigation banks to increase the supply of credits necessary to support economic growth and development
- Incentivize adoption of efficient building and fleet technologies for businesses and residents

RESPONSIBLE PRODUCT LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT

- Develop Virginia-specific policies that encourage recyclable, reusable, and/or compostable packaging without creating undue compliance or implementation burdens
- Support businesses in transitioning to circular economy models through technical assistance and financial incentives
- Address residential waste stream improvements through public-private partnerships

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

- Develop public infrastructure resilience programs and public-private partnerships that serve business continuity needs
- Support sufficient local staffing and resources to promote all-hazard preparedness and mitigation efforts and to ensure ample coordination with state and federal personnel, as well as the private sector, during and after emergencies
- Enhance the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's (VDEM) partnerships with the business community with clearly defined Emergency Support Functions (ESF) for private sector contributions during disaster response and recovery
- Maintain a dedicated State Resilience Office and establish regional branches to coordinate and facilitate localities in all-hazard preparedness and planning

ECO-TOURISM AND THE OUTDOOR ECONOMY

- Promote and market Virginia as a national leader in eco-tourism and the outdoor economy, especially by highlighting their role in small business formation, talent recruitment, and rural economic development
- Support the protection, continued development, and funding of Virginia's state parks, including addressing the deferred maintenance backlog
- Support land conservation programs, public access projects, and reforestation efforts which expand eco-tourism opportunities and leverage Virginia's natural resources from Appalachia to the Chesapeake Bay

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