2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

NVC

Northern Virginia Chamber

OVERVIEW

The 2026 Legislative Agenda includes recommendations from NVC's Policy Committee — comprised of NOVA Roadmap Executive Council Co-Chairs and advocacy partners — that support the four bold goals of NVC's NOVA Roadmap initiative. The policy priorities herein support the fact that Virginia has a strong and resilient economy, based on our Right-to-Work status, a business-friendly environment, and a strong and growing innovation ecosystem.

Throughout this document, text boxes labeled "Roadmap Spotlight" contain direct quotes from our *NOVA Roadmap* report, linking its key findings and recommendations to the specific policy priorities outlined in this agenda.

Despite the strength of Virginia's economy, we are continuing to face challenges due to the uncertainty in the federal workforce and federal government contracting. While attention to these critical changes may have waned, we continue to experience the effects in the form of cooling confidence among business leaders (as evidenced in our 2025 Business Leaders Surveys), softer job growth, and more cautious consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that our elected leaders work together to solve these challenges and put Virginia on the path that NOVA Roadmap lays out.

We extend our sincere gratitude to NVC's Policy Committee for their generous commitment of their time and insight, which guided the development of this policy document.

ABOUT NVC

For 100 years, the Northern Virginia Chamber (NVC) — the largest and most influential chamber in Greater Washington — has driven innovation and economic growth. NVC has championed key developments such as the Metro, Dulles Airport, and George Mason University. Representing over 400 members, NVC continues to lead on affordability, workforce, and regional development.

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NOVABIZPAC

NOVABIZPAC
NVC ADVOCACY WORK

To ensure that Northern Virginia has a voice in the legislative process, NVC established the Northern Virginia Business Political Action Committee (NOVABIZPAC) in 2002 to support legislators who champion a pro-business, pro-growth agenda.

NOVABIZPAC utilizes NVC's Legislative Agenda to determine whether candidates are supportive of NVC's policy priorities.

Our PAC is administered by a Board of Trustees composed of NVC members, chaired by a member of NVC's Board of Directors, and receives advice and oversight from NVC's Board of Directors. Trustees must meet key requirements: seniority, a relevant organizational position, and the ability to represent their organization at PAC meetings.

NVC members are encouraged to join the NOVABIZPAC to advance our advocacy work. For more information, please contact NVC Senior Vice President for Government Relations Clayton Medford (CMedford@NVCBusiness.org) to schedule a meeting and learn more about service as a Trustee.

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AFFORDABILITY

The high cost of living in our region impacts every employer, hampering their ability to attract and retain a high-quality workforce. NOVA Roadmap identifies housing and childcare costs as critical to affordability issues.

Equitable access to fundamental needs like affordable housing and childcare is essential to develop an economy that isn't just grounded in innovation; it's grounded in inclusive participation. By cultivating affordability through public-private partnerships, revitalization, and regulatory reform, Northern Virginia can ensure that all residents can contribute to and benefit from the region's economic transformation.

CHILDCARE

Northern Virginia needs a coordinated childcare strategy that expands access, affordability, and workforce alignment. This includes streamlining zoning and licensing to grow home- and center-based options, integrating childcare into economic development and site planning, and increasing employer-supported solutions such as on-site centers, stipends, and co-investments. NVC believes state and local governments should treat childcare as a pillar of our workforce infrastructure by expanding subsidies.

HOUSING

NVC supports development projects that will increase attainable housing for our workforce, particularly those employees entering the housing market for the first time.

NVC will advocate on behalf of its members to advance legislation that will:

- Streamline state and local planning, zoning, and permitting regulations (including the Virginia Department of Transportation) to support the expansion of affordable, attainable housing in Northern Virginia.
- Reduce the cost of new housing construction by reforming development requirements, including required parking ratios and proffers.
- Pilot innovative housing models, including modular housing, smaller homes, and corporate campus housing, and reforms meant to encourage or incentivize office-to-residential conversion.
- Institute reliable, realistic, and expedited timelines for local approval of housing developments.
- Review the impact of property taxes on the ability for individuals and families to remain in their homes, particularly seniors.
- Increase federal, state, and local funding for housing, including:
  - Investments in local trust funds and the Virginia Housing Trust Fund;
  - The allocation of federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits and more expedited and regular approval processes;
  - Incentives for new housing creation, including funding for the Urban Public-Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund;
  - Development of a Virginia Housing Voucher program to supplement the Federal Housing Choice Voucher.

NVC will strongly oppose state and local processes that result in slower development timelines for new housing, as well as rent control legislation.

HEALTHCARE

Affordability impacts all employers by driving up the cost of healthcare. As 80% of health outcomes are driven by social, behavioral, and environmental factors rather than medical care itself, the lack of access to housing, education, transportation, childcare, and overall economic stability drive up the cost of healthcare.

The high cost of and reduced access to healthcare present an acute crisis for Northern Virginia. NVC will continue to work with state and local governments, healthcare providers, and insurance companies to alleviate the healthcare crisis.

NVC advocates on behalf of its members to advance policies that:

- Increase access to healthcare and lower costs for consumers and employers without compromising quality.
- Improve access to healthcare insurance coverage via employer-sponsored, Virginia's Insurance Marketplace, and Medicaid plans to ensure equity in health outcomes.
- Secure sustainable and reliable state funding for behavioral health care services, such as the 988 Suicide & Crises Lifeline, crisis receiving centers, and behavioral telehealth, to meet rising demand and relieve overburdened healthcare providers.
- Maintain private and non-profit sector delivery and access to health care.
- Protect Virginia's business-friendly legal environment.
- Innovate the delivery of medical care.
- Ensure access to telehealth.

NVC opposes any regulations that add administrative costs without improving access to, or quality of, care.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT & BUSINESS CLIMATE

The *NOVA Roadmap* envisions Northern Virginia as a leading innovation economy, built around technology clusters, access to venture capital, and coordinated research partnerships linking universities, startups, and government. It calls for investment in high-growth sectors such as AI, space, biotech, semiconductors, and quantum computing to anchor the region's transition toward a future-ready economy.

NVC supports tax and regulatory policies that ensure Virginia's economy is nationally and globally competitive, while advocating for maintaining the Dillon Rule, a state law limiting the powers of local government to those expressly granted by the state.

INNOVATION ECONOMY

NVC will advocate on behalf of its members to advance legislation that will:

- Increase support for the Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC).
- Explore the opportunity to stand up a Northern Virginia Innovation Corridor as a formal entity within VIPC that coordinates intellectual property (IP) commercialization, site development, tech workforce planning, and research and development (R&D) initiatives.
- Target foreign direct investment (FDI) and export promotion toward future-focused sectors.
- Provide early-stage support, including measures such as tax credits, prototyping grants, and zoning flexibility for lab and manufacturing space.

HEALTHTECH

To ensure Virginia's leadership in the high-growth health technology (healthtech) sector, NVC advocates for a regulatory environment that incentivizes innovation while ensuring our region's workforce has access to affordable, cutting-edge care.

NVC advocates for policies and initiatives that:

- Increase the availability of wet lab space and public-private R&D partnerships.
- Expand incentives that encourage innovation in healthtech.

ROADMAP SPOTLIGHT

Healthtech represents a critical intersection of Northern Virginia's strengths in biotech, data infrastructure, and cybersecurity. By investing in digital health platforms, AI-driven diagnostics, and secure health data systems, the region can lead in transforming healthcare delivery while creating high value jobs and improving population health outcomes.

REGULATIONS

NVC routinely reviews state and local regulations to determine redundancies and consistency across jurisdictions.

ROADMAP SPOTLIGHT

In addition to addressing the complexity and inconsistency of the tax environment, the region must also modernize how government interacts with private enterprises in areas like licensing, procurement, and regulatory compliance. Doing so reduces a significant bottleneck for high-growth firms — particularly startups, scale-ups, and advanced industries — that require fast approvals, flexible contracts, and predictable timelines.

RIGHT-TO-WORK

NVC is committed to preserving Virginia's longstanding right-to-work status. Repealing the right-to-work law would weaken our economic competitiveness as our region navigates rapid transformation.

Virginia competes for new economic opportunities with states like North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas, all of which are right-to-work states. Virginia must lead the nation in job creation and economic growth. NVC urges lawmakers to reject any dilution of right-to-work that could compromise this economic imperative. Maintaining our competitive edge is essential to ensuring Northern Virginia builds a stronger, more resilient economy for the future.

TAXES

NVC advocates on behalf of its members to support:

- Equitable tax reform that emphasizes the impact of gross-receipts taxes on small- and mid-sized, low-margin firms.
- Reinstating the dealer's discount, a tax write-off for companies using credit cards to process payments and cover transaction fees, which was phased out and is no longer available.

NVC opposes single-industry taxes that are not supported by the targeted business sector and taxing authority for school boards.

ROADMAP SPOTLIGHT

The scope and complexity of the Virginia tax code is a significant deterrent to economic growth, especially for small firms with limited resources and experience in the region. This is a critical reason why Virginia ranks 31st in cost of doing business despite earning top marks for quality of life, business friendliness, education, and infrastructure.

INFRASTRUCTURE

ENERGY

ROADMAP SPOTLIGHT

Attracting more [business] to the region means addressing energy supply challenges and grid bottlenecks, and solving problems related to land availability, regulations and cost. In addition, modernizing the digital infrastructure requires expanding fiber optic networks across rural and suburban areas and investing in transportation infrastructure to support future-focused industries. To sustain its leadership position in the AI economic boom, Northern Virginia must strengthen the power grid, scale renewables and battery storage, and adopt on-site small modular reactors (SMRs). All are fundamental to modernizing the digital infrastructure. Failure to do so will constrain the region's ability to create and leverage the economy of the future.

NVC advocates for policies and initiatives advancing the:

- Federal and state funding increases for energy grid upgrades to meet rising demand while addressing rising costs.
- Public-private collaboration to advocate for grid resilience investments and predictable interconnection timelines.
- Cost-effective, future-focused, and data-driven climate resiliency standards, and use of tax credits and design flexibility to make climate resiliency standards affordable.
- Continued and appropriate utilization of energy sources such as natural gas, nuclear power, renewable energy, and cost-effective green building construction.
- Development and usage of innovative energy technologies such as fusion, biofuels, hydrogen, solar, and wind, and a focus on new nuclear technologies.

NVC opposes local energy and environmental objectives, including building standards and siting of energy infrastructure, not required by federal or state laws/regulations, as well as local regulations that preclude innovative solutions to meeting rising energy demand, such as on-site generation.

LAND USE

Predictable and efficient land use policy is critical to supporting infrastructure needs, sustaining economic growth, and fostering a positive business climate. NVC advocates for comprehensive land use policy reform to accelerate development timelines and ensure consistent, predictable land use decisions across the region.

NVC advocates to advance policies that:

- Remove regulatory obstacles to the ongoing deployment of broadband expansion through public-private partnerships across the Commonwealth
- Reform planning, zoning, and permitting processes at the state and local level to establish reliable and expedited timelines for commercial, mixed-use and housing developments.
- Designate a government position akin to an ombudsman to oversee accountability for all agencies involved in the land use process.
- Ensure the consistent and predictable application of land use regulations across all Northern Virginia jurisdictions.

TRANSPORTATION

FUNDING FOR THE FUTURE

Securing reliable, sustained funding is the fundamental prerequisite for maintaining and upgrading Northern Virginia's multimodal network, ensuring its capacity keeps pace with regional economic demands. NVC will:

- Advocate for sustainable investments in multimodal transportation infrastructure — including roadways, transit, bike and pedestrian facilities — to ensure Northern Virginia's economic competitiveness.
- Support sustainable net-new state and regional funding for Northern Virginia transit operators, including the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).
- Champion autonomy and dedicated funding for the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority.
- Promote the use of Transportation-focused public-private partnerships (PPP) to accelerate key projects.

TECHNOLOGY

To maximize the efficiency of public investments, transportation policy must shift toward data-driven, technology-compatible standards that deliver measurable improvements in regional mobility and preparedness for long-term economic and population growth.

CRITICAL PROJECTS

NVC is committed to advocating on behalf of its members to advance two of the region's most critical transportation funding projects: the replacement of the American Legion Bridge and the completion of the I-495 Southside Express Lanes.

METRO OPERATIONS

As a region, we must guarantee that WMATA is efficiently operated, transparent, accountable, and fiscally responsible.

AVIATION

NVC advocates for policies that maintain and enhance the aviation industry and our airports, including the protection of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport's High Density Rule (or "Slot" rule) and Perimeter Rule.

TALENT
&
WORKFORCE

Helping people shift from federal into private sector roles is essential to prepare the workforce for economic reinvention over the long term. Coordinated public and private sector collaboration is key to understanding how federal jobs map to the private sector and ensuring that workers have access to the necessary education and training to excel in them.

Building an adaptable, highly skilled workforce is paramount to maintaining Northern Virginia's economic competitiveness and supporting the innovation economy. NVC advocates for deep public-private collaboration to guarantee necessary funding for K-12 and higher education, establish comprehensive support systems for workers transitioning into high-demand careers, and connect entrepreneurs with the resources they need to accelerate their access.

To this end, NVC advocates on behalf of its members for policies that:

COACHING & MENTORING SERVICES

- Build comprehensive support services in Virginia's workforce system for transitioning workers — including those transitioning from federal employment to the private sector, from one field to another, and from school and/or caregiving into the workforce — to ensure their success. These services should:
  - Recognize the high cost of living in Northern Virginia by embedding wraparound supports such as childcare, transportation, and career coaching throughout the workforce system.
  - Create transition navigators in higher education to provide benefit guidance, 1:1 coaching, and other support for transitioning workers.
  - Expand student supports such as mentoring, tutoring, and flexible scheduling to help adult learners succeed.
  - Support marketing campaigns aimed at increasing participation in these programs.

ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT

- Create connections between public K-12 school systems and leaders of successful startups for mentorship and guidance.
- Build capacity within existing workforce training programs to encourage entrepreneurship as a viable career pathway.
- Promote the Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC) in order to encourage the development of incubator and accelerator networks in Virginia.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Promote collaboration between the Virginia Community College System and industry on workforce development.
- Adequately fund in-state undergraduate students at four-year colleges and universities.

INDUSTRY & EDUCATION COLLABORATION

- Fund industry and education collaborations aimed at upskilling and reskilling workers, including:
  - Northern Virginia Construction Careers Coalition (NV3C)
  - Northern Virginia Health Care Workforce Collaborative
  - NOVAnext
  - Virginia Values Veterans (V3)
  - Virginia Talent & Opportunity Partnership
  - The G3 initiative, and others.
- Recognize and support unique education partnerships, such as the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business collaboration with the U.S. military and George Mason University's partnership with the Marine Corps Congressional Fellowship Program.
- Expand FastForward beyond entry-level certifications by creating connected pathways to associate and bachelor's degrees.
- Ensure industry certifications count for college credit, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields like cloud computing, robotics, and automation.
- Reimagine the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia process to allow universities to adapt to support the immediate and long-term workforce needs of in-demand fields.
  - Offer hands-on experiences — like paid internships and project-based learning — within credential programs to build practical skills, both in K-12 and Higher Education.
  - Create and support platforms that connect employers with jobseekers.

K-12 EDUCATION

- Increase investment in public K-12 education and address the recommendations of the 2023 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report, ***Virginia's K–12 Funding Formula***.
- Invest in credentialing, building trades apprenticeship programs, other programs that prepare high school students to enter a skilled workforce, and new, innovative curricula meant to prepare students to work in AI and quantum computing, space, biotech, semiconductors, and robotics.

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