Chamber Mission
The mission of the Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce is to build a vibrant community through programs of advocacy, public relations, and development.

Government Affairs Division-Key Objectives
Communicate to elected officials our positions on legislative issues; offer assistance in monitoring good business legislation; to generally be the liaison between government and the business community in matters where governmental decisions affect business in our region, state, and nation. Legislative Positions are available at www.brcco.com.

Civil Justice Reform
The Chamber supports civil justice reform that will restore balance and fairness to all citizens of our State, and which will create a business climate needed to attract new business venture capital and to support existing businesses.

Education
Education Positions are available as a separate brochure at the Chamber office or online at www.brcco.com.

Energy
Coal fired electrical generation is one of the least expensive method of producing electrical power. Low cost energy has been one of the chief drivers of the economy and the standard of living in our country. The precipitous recent decline in the coal industry and the consequent detrimental effects thereon can be traced to a world where demand are evident across the entire spectrum of business and education in our area. The United States is blessed with some of the world's outstanding coal reserves. At this time – when the United States is among the world's leading oil and natural gas producers – it is prudent to continue and to accelerate research into clean coal technology.

The Chamber supports continued research into clean coal technology, and supports a national energy policy that will continue to make low-cost coal-generated electrical power one of the pillars supporting our nation's economy and our standard of living.

Environment
Southern West Virginia is blessed with abundant natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities, and those blessings have been the catalyst for a thriving tourism industry. The Chamber recognizes that the sustainment and continued growth of our tourism industry is contingent upon the protection and preservation of our environment. Toward that end, the Chamber supports the enactment of laws that prevent or retard the despoliation of our environment by unregulated garbage and litter, by improperly treated sewage and industrial discharge, and by improperly reclaimed industrial sites.

Government Modernization
The Chamber recognizes transformative change is taking place in West Virginia’s economy. Erosion of our tax base from the decline of our natural resource industries coupled by the need to diversify our economy have created substantial current fiscal revenue deficits at all levels of government in our state. These circumstances create many challenges delivering government services moving forward. The Chamber supports public sector policies which promote and enable the modernization of government at all levels. West Virginia has tremendous opportunity to benefit by implementing efficiencies that have already taken place in both the business world and neighboring localities. Government modernization can create an environment in which our citizens receive services faster, cheaper and better. When government at all levels, at the same time, modernization promotes a pro-growth economic climate.

Highway and Infrastructure Funding
The Chamber recognizes the critical role of highways and infrastructure in establishing the foundation for a vibrant economy. Recent studies have documented inadequate funding levels to sustain our existing highway network while maintaining new investments in priority roadways, water, sewer, and broadband projects infra. The Chamber supports sustainable funding solutions for WV roadways and other infrastructure. Solutions should incorporate recommendations of the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation and be structured to strategically leverage funds from the Federal Transportation Bill. The Chamber acknowledges that new revenue sources will be part of the solution. However, we also advocate that state leaders must recognize modern realities and pursue policy reforms which encompass our world’s outsized global challenges and new, innovative, which make roadway and other infrastructure construction, operation and maintenance more timely and cost effective.

In recognition of the funding challenges, we believe the removal of tolling ability on the WV Turnpike is imprudent. This proposal will require new revenue to sustain highway funding issues, reduce maintenance, and thus reduce safety on this important roadway. While we support sustaining tolling ability, we advocate for reforms to ensure toll revenues can be dedicated and leveraged to support the infrastructure needs within the counties contiguous to the existing toll road.

Public Employees Collective Bargaining
The Chamber strongly opposes any legislation that mandates taxpayer-funded entities to enter into collective bargaining agreements where wages, hours and working conditions are discussed.

Redistricting
The Chamber believes voters should pick their representatives and representatives should not pick their voters and calls for the Legislature to establish an independent redistricting commission. After the Census, this commission should be charged with drawing the legislative districts that allows for the drawing lines in a non-partisan manner to that the greatest extent possible respect and align with county boundaries, municipal and magisterial districts and communities of similar interest.

Substance Abuse
While the Chamber recognizes and supports the many steps that have been taken by the Legislature to address this issue, in particular the area of prescription drugs, more work is needed with the additional requirement to illegal, is killing Virginians and West Virginia’s future. Funding for treatment and recovery is a critical need that must be addressed if West Virginia paper employers are to be able to find productive workers that are drug free.

Tax Reform
The work of Joint Select Committee on Tax Reform should continue and to look at ways to ensure that the taxes on citizens and businesses are fair and competitive with neighboring states and provide for stable and predictable sources of revenue for government. Any reform measures must be carefully planned so they do not significantly harm education and/or essential local government funding.

Turnpike Tolls
During the most recent fiscal year the West Virginia Turnpike generated approximately $90,000,000 in toll revenue. The overwhelming majority of this toll revenue is spent on the maintenance of the West Virginia Turnpike. In addition, more than four million dollars of this toll revenue is spent to defray the cost of West Virginia State Police patrols of the West Virginia Turnpike. A significant portion of these toll revenues (76%) were paid by out-of-state or commercial travelers. Without these toll revenues the State would have to spread its already overstretched highway dollars to cover the maintenance of the 88 miles of the West Virginia Turnpike, in addition to maintaining the balance of the state road network, and also would have to find more than four million dollars to maintain the State Police at its current level of funding.

The Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce is generally supportive of the continuation of tolls, provided that sufficient toll revenues from the Turnpike are used to subsidize highway road, or other projects in areas of the state burdened with a highway toll. Citizens of Raleigh and neighboring counties pay tolls in the amount of approximately $21 million a year in tolls that only rarely impacts residents of other parts of the state. It would be inequitable to subsidize other portions of the state with tolls paid by southeastern West Virginia residents.

The Chamber recognizes that the loss of these toll revenues would be devastating for West Virginia’s highway system. Existing road fund revenues are at best marginally adequate to maintain West Virginia’s roads and highways, apart from the West Virginia Turnpike. To burden the road funds with the additional requirement to illegal, is killing Virginians and West Virginia’s future. Funding for treatment and recovery is a critical need that must be addressed if West Virginia employers are to be able to find productive workers that are drug free.

Use the Chamber as a Megaphone
Our Chamber is the strongest business voice, representing 700 member businesses. It quickly draws the attention of legislators and other officials.

Use Your Member Influence
Chamber functions provide a forum in which you may discuss public policy with the most influential members of our society. Formally or informally, it’s a good way to express your opinion and educate others. Reporters routinely contact the Chamber to discuss public policy issues.

“Call to Action”
Our strongest means of communication is the “Call to Action.” During such a call, members immediately begin to write letters to their elected representatives to express their opinions on particular issues.

Wrapup of the 2023 Regular Session

How A Bill Becomes State Law

STEP 1: PREPARING A BILL

Anyone can propose a bill to a legislator. As many as seven of the 100 delegates and all 34 senators may sponsor. To ensure proper form, it must also pass legislative council or the Office of Legislative Services.

After a draft is prepared, the sponsor submits the bill to the chamber’s clerk, who assigns a number and presents it to the House Speaker or Senate President for reference to a committee.

STEP 2: COMMITTEE STUDY

Small groups of delegates are assigned to standing committees to examine bills in detail. After study, the committee files a written report, rejecting the bill or allowing it, or a committee substitute, to pass with or without amendment or recommendation. Some bills die in committee because of limited time.

The bill is referred to a committee for study.

STEP 3: FLOOR ACTION

Your bill will be read three times – first to alert the membership, then for a vote on committee and individual amendments, and finally for a vote on passage. If passed, it will be sent to the opposite chamber, where the process repeats.

Your bill will be read a third time and debate or vote on its acceptance.

STEP 4: GUBERNATORIAL ACTION

If the governor does not act, the bill automatically becomes law. If he vetoes, a simple majority in both houses may pass the bill over his veto.

If vetoed, the Legislature may vote to override, and the bill becomes law.

Monitoring Your Bill

The Legislature’s Reference & Information Center provides ready access to bill status and calendars for both houses and can provide copies of bills. For information, call (304) 347-4836, or visit www.legis.state.wv.us

March 15, 2023