



Draft Statement of Position

GO Virginia

December 3, 2015

Virginia Beach Vision, representing 120 business and community leaders, endorses the GO Virginia program as an important tool to grow and diversify the private sector in each of the regions throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and encourages the Virginia General Assembly to adopt and fund this initiative.

GO Virginia has been formulated by a bipartisan, business-led group that seeks to provide a new framework to strengthen the economy in each of the State's regional areas by incentivizing collaboration by business, education and local governments.

Recognition of the need for local entities to work cooperatively is not new; in fact it was a central finding in the Hahn Commission report issued nearly 50 years ago. In the Hampton Roads region, business and community leaders have long advocated greater regional cooperation in areas such as the provision of public services and, most particularly, in economic development marketing and new business recruitment. However, regional collaboration has, in too many instances, been elusive in large part due to the local government structure that incentivizes parochial thought and achievement.

GO Virginia is a timely initiative that will incentivize our local governments to work cooperatively in facing the economic crisis that is threatening our communities through the downsizing in defense spending and sluggish private sector growth. These stressors have focused our collective attention on the critical need to grow and diversify the economy.

Best practices around the country demonstrate the role state government can play in changing parochial behavior with financial incentives. GO Virginia will provide such incentives to facilitate regional collaboration, leveraging resources and generating a multiplier effect, making it possible to achieve progress in economic development without raising taxes.

GO Virginia seeks to incentivize regional collaboration. It does not impose new mandates; it does not suggest new or increased taxing; it does not introduce new layers of government and it does not limit local responsibility or authority.

GO Virginia will create State grants that leverage investment in key regional initiatives and industry sectors. It will incentivize localities to cooperate on economic development initiatives. It will encourage local governments to seize cost-saving opportunities through collaboration between the localities, school divisions and colleges. It will support investment in research that will lead to new business ventures. It will encourage collaboration on capital projects that will have regional impact.

Virginia Beach Vision's Board of Directors supports the creation and implementation of the GO Virginia program and calls on the Virginia General Assembly and the Governor's administration to establish and fund the State grant program that will be central to its success.