



April 15, 2020

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the Coalition for a Strong Virginia Economy, our 28 business associations want to express our support for the Governor's amendments to delay the implementation date to May 1, 2021 for legislation related to minimum wage, prevailing wage, project labor agreements and collective bargaining.

While we still oppose the underlying policies due to the inherent consequence of increasing the cost of doing business in the Commonwealth, a delay to May 1, 2021 would provide businesses a critical opportunity to restart operations and embark on a recovery before facing new and costly government mandates.

However, we cannot emphasize enough how devastating the current economic environment is for Virginia businesses. The vast majority of our member businesses are experiencing closures, reducing production and furloughing employees. The top priority of our members is finding ways to ensure their employees keep their jobs. However, the short-term and long-term challenges are immense. Early data indicates that many businesses will not survive extended closures and stay at home orders, and many more have indicated that their operations are unlikely to return to pre-COVID-19 levels for some time.

Virginia's economy finds itself in uncharted territory. It's imperative that Virginia's elected officials understand the need to ensure businesses have the flexibility to adapt to the effects of the pandemic without more mandates. Some economists are already predicting it could be the fall of 2021 before the economy shows signs of rebounding from the current health crisis. If that's the case, an additional four months delay will not be enough. Certainly, we'll know more closer to the end of this year and we hope the Governor and General Assembly will be open to addressing the needs of Virginia's business community to better support communities all across the Commonwealth.

As you review the Governor's proposed changes to these bills, we respectfully request that you support his amendments to delay until May 1, 2021 the following legislation: Minimum Wage (HB 395 / SB 7); Prevailing Wage (HB 833 / SB 8); Project Labor Agreements (HB 358 / SB 182);and Collective Bargaining (HB 582 / SB 939). We hope this action will give Virginia's businesses, large and small, manufacturers, retailers, construction, housing and agricultural and forestry industries an opportunity to rebuild their businesses, restore their customer base and rehire their employees before taking on additional government mandated costs.

We look forward to working with you through this public health and economic crisis.

Best Regards,

Members of the Coalition for a Strong Economy

Associated Builders and Contractors of Virginia
Associated General Contractors of Virginia
Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce
Harrisonburg – Rockingham Chamber of Commerce
Heavy Construction Contractors Association
National Federation of Independent Business
Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce
Richmond Area Municipal Contractors Association
Shellfish Growers of Virginia
Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy
Virginia Agribusiness Council
Virginia Association of Roofing Professionals
Virginia Association for Home Care and Hospice
Virginia Automatic Merchandising Association
Virginia Electric Cooperatives
Virginia Forestry Association
Virginia Forest Products Association
Virginia Loggers Association
Virginia Manufactured Association and Modular Housing Association
Virginia Manufacturers Association
Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
Virginia Poultry Federation
Virginia Retail Federation
Virginia Retail Merchants Association
Virginia Seafood Council
Virginia Trucking Association
Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
Virginia Wholesalers and Distributors Association

<https://coalition-for-a-strong-va.constantcontactsites.com/>

Cc: Governor Ralph Northam
Clark Mercer, Chief of Staff
Brian Ball, Secretary of Commerce and Trade