



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

*Virginia Council on Women*

September 18, 2013

The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell:

Over the past four months, the Virginia Council on Women endeavored to research and develop recommendations aimed at improving the overall quality of life for working women in Virginia. Today, we are pleased to report our final report for your review and consideration. These recommendations are the collaborative product of Council member research, recommendations submitted by women working within your administration as well as further research from the policy office.

You charged us to "look at all aspects of the state government and develop recommendations for your review on what the Commonwealth can do better to help make life simpler and government more efficient for working women." We identified four priority areas in which to develop recommendations: 1) entrepreneurship 2) education and health 3) state services and 4) role of the Council. You will note that some recommendations may require additional resources. We submit these recommendations knowing that a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis is required to ensure the best use of time and resources is considered.

On behalf of the Council, we thank the policy office for their work and the many individuals who submitted recommendations, ideas and feedback over the past four months. It is clear that the Virginia Council on Women is contributing to the success and health of women and girls throughout the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tracy Key in black ink.

Tracy Key  
Chair, Council on Women

Handwritten signature of Dawn James in black ink.

Dawn James  
Chair, Subcommittee on Working Women

CC: The Honorable Janet V. Kelly, Secretary of the Commonwealth

The Council on Women is established in Virginia Code § 2.2-2630 as an advisory council in the Executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Council is to identify ways in which women can reach their potential and make their full contribution to society and the Commonwealth. The Council consists of 18 members, appointed by the Governor, from around the Commonwealth. Additionally, the Secretary of the Commonwealth is an ex-officio member with full voting privileges. Members serve a term of three years and may be reappointed.

The Council has the powers and duties to:

1. Determine the studies and research to be conducted by the Council;
2. Collect and disseminate information regarding the status of women in the Commonwealth and the nation;
3. Advise the Governor, General Assembly and the Governor's Secretaries on matters pertaining to women in the Commonwealth and the nation;
4. Establish and award scholarships pursuant to regulations and conditions prescribed by the Council;
5. Review and comment on all budgets, appropriation requests and grant applications concerning the Council, prior to their submission to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources or the Governor; and
6. Develop programs and projects on matters pertaining to women in the Commonwealth and the nation through public-private partnerships.

Council Members:

Tracy Key, Chair  
*Reston, Virginia*

Ann Harbour  
*Manakin-Sabot, Virginia*

Mais Abousy  
*Arlington, Virginia*

Dawn James  
*Midlothian, Virginia*

Leslie Anderson  
*Alexandria, Virginia*

Nicole Neily  
*Arlington, Virginia*

Elisabeth Bresee  
*McLean, Virginia*

Theresa Preda  
*Richmond, Virginia*

Jeff Caruso  
*Fredericksburg, Virginia*

Carey Sousa  
*Mechanicsville, Virginia*

Bakula Dave  
*Chester, Virginia*

Rita Surratt  
*Clintwood, Virginia*

Brenda Fastabend  
*Lynchburg, Virginia*

Brook Tribble  
*Richmond, Virginia*

Camille Fleenor  
*Alexandria, Virginia*

Ruth Zajur  
*Richmond, Virginia*



# Working Women in Virginia

*A Report from the Virginia Council on Women  
September 18, 2013*



Women in Virginia lead complex and fast-paced lives. They are often balancing the needs of a family, professional responsibilities and personal challenges. It is with this in mind that Governor Robert F. McDonnell asked the Virginia Council on Women to develop recommendations that would better align state services and priorities with the needs of women and families.

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In February of 2013, the Virginia Council on Women was tasked to consider and present recommendations aimed at improving the day to day lives of working women in the Commonwealth. The recommendations, while aimed at working women, will also improve the lives of every Virginian.

The committee identified four strategic priority areas:



## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



## **EDUCATION AND HEALTH**



## **STATE SERVICES**



## **ROLE OF THE COUNCIL**

The subcommittee then solicited ideas and recommendations from women across the Commonwealth. The subcommittee presented draft recommendations at the August 21, 2013 meeting, inviting comment from the Council and the public.





## ENTREPRENERUSHIP

**Small businesses represent 97.8 percent of all employers and employ 47.9 percent of the private-sector labor force in Virginia. Women-entrepreneurs have tremendous opportunities to grow their business in the Commonwealth. Indicators demonstrating the need for access to capital, the employment size of start-ups, employment in small firms and income are all on the rise. The following recommendations ensure the women in Virginia are considered when crafting economic development policy and programs.**

- 1.01** The Governor and Cabinet should work to better market certain small business tools to women, such as the Virginia Small Business Investment Grant.
- 1.02** The Governor and Cabinet should strategically align incentives and resources to focus on start-up companies.
- 1.03** The Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) should consider developing a program focused on women entrepreneurs.
- 1.04** The Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) and the newly developed Innovation and Entrepreneurship Measurement System (IEMS) should use an indicator focused on women entrepreneurs.
- 1.05** The newly created Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity (DSBSD) should work with the Virginia Council on Women to encourage small business ownership among women.





## EDUCATION AND HEALTH

**Women often manage critical family issues, including decisions related to education and health. While Virginia offers a superior quality of life and a top-ranked education system, we must continue to innovate and pursue solutions to ensure Virginians have access to high quality education and healthcare.**

- 2.01** The Governor and Cabinet should continue to support STEM-H (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Health) policies and programs and better coordinate with the Virginia Council on Women’s STEM-H initiatives.
- 2.02** The Secretary of Education should review K-12 education standards and assessment policies and practice to ensure Virginia’s children are college and career ready at the time of graduation. The Department of Education should engage working women and parents in an open conversation related to the Virginia Standards of Learning and other key measures of student achievement and growth.
- 2.03** The Secretary of Education should examine higher educational priorities for working women in universities, colleges and community colleges. Access and affordability is critical for women considering higher education both for themselves and their children.
- 2.04** The Governor and Cabinet should continue to promote the CommonHEALTH program to encourage healthy lifestyles among state employees.
- 2.05** The Governor and Cabinet should continue to engage healthy lifestyle priorities into programming and communication to citizens.
- 2.06** The Secretary of Health and Human Resources should partner with private health care providers and health plans to offer regional healthcare seminars and screenings to citizens.
- 2.07** The Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission (MIRC) should consider the unique needs of women and those with disabilities. These groups should be carefully considered as the Commission continues discussions about how to ensure better health outcomes and access to those in greatest need in the Commonwealth.
- 2.08** The Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM) should consider adopting a leave policy to accommodate unexpected situations, e.g., a sick child who cannot go to school.





## STATE SERVICES

**The Commonwealth of Virginia offers state services aimed directly at women and other services that frequently impact women. The Council on Women recommends that high quality technology-based solutions be utilized whenever possible. The following recommendations reflect the need for flexibility and accessibility across state government.**

- 3.01** The Governor and Cabinet should encourage the use of electronic meetings. Building on changes adopted in the 2013 General Assembly Session, the Freedom of Information Act Council and General Assembly should expand opportunities for state boards to utilize electronic communication for meetings not previously permitted.
- 3.02** The Governor and Cabinet should encourage state agencies to utilize social media as a form of communication with citizens.
- 3.03** The Governor and Cabinet should encourage state agencies to provide services at varied hours throughout the week.
- 3.04** The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) should consider eliminating the fee for citizens who change their name after getting married or divorced. Additionally, the DMV should review options for this service to be online.
- 3.05** The Department of Tax (TAX) should assemble a user-friendly manual to aid in the tax and reporting requirement related to household employees.
- 3.06** The Governor and Cabinet should add a 'How to Guide' to Virginia.gov that addresses frequently searched issues, e.g., how to change your name, car registration, taxes.
- 3.07** The Secretary of Health and Human Resources should review the mission of 2-1-1 Virginia and contemplate including other state services.
- 3.08** The Secretary of Technology should develop a comprehensive state government application for smart phones. The application should feature commonly asked questions and online transactions.
- 3.09** The Secretary of Administration should continue to review and expand the use of telework and flexible scheduling for state employees.
- 3.10** The Department of Motor Vehicles should provide families and teenage drivers a checklist outlining the process to obtain a driver's license.

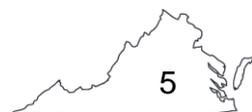




## ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

**The Virginia Council on Women is well-positioned to represent women and girls across the Commonwealth. The Council conducted a comprehensive review of best practices in peer states and identified several opportunities to improve the reach and success of the Council.**

- 4.01** The Governor and Cabinet should consider an independent review of the effectiveness of current initiatives aimed at working women.
- 4.02** The Virginia Council on Women should embark on a strategic planning process to review and enhance the role of the Council.
- 4.03** The Virginia Council on Women should consider how best to provide additional communications to update key stakeholders and partners, e.g., e-newsletters, annual reports.
- 4.04** The Virginia Council on Women should build a more engaging website to better position the Council for citizen engagement.
- 4.05** The Virginia Council on Women should consider looking more closely at what other States are doing via their Women's Councils and/or Women's Commissions and determine best practices, e.g., Women's Hall of Fame Annual Recognition Award, Annual or Bi-annual Women's Leadership Conference.
- 4.06** The Governor should consider a dedicated 0.5 or 1.0 FTE to provide staff support and continuity to the Virginia Council on Women.



## Resource Links

California: <http://women.ca.gov/>

Florida: <http://www.fcsw.net/>

Georgia: <http://gacommissiononwomen.org/>

Maryland: [http://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/?page\\_id=2393](http://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/?page_id=2393)

Indiana: <http://www.in.gov/icw/>

New Jersey Women's Conference:

<http://www.nj.gov/dca/hmfa/home/womensconference/index.htm>

Oklahoma: <http://www.ok.gov/ocsw/>

Oregon: [http://www.oregon.gov/Women/Pages/about\\_us.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/Women/Pages/about_us.aspx)

South Carolina: <http://www.oepp.sc.gov/sccw/index.html>

Texas: <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/women>

Texas Women's Conference: <http://www.txconferenceforwomen.org/>

Vermont: <http://women.vermont.gov/>

## Appendix

Letter From Governor McDonnell To The Virginia Council On Women





# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

February 27, 2013

Robert F. McDonnell  
Governor

Virginia Council on Women  
1111 E. Broad Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Council Members:

Thank you for the great work you have done on the Council on Women. I commend each of you for sharing your time, talents, and skills with the Commonwealth as members of this Council. I was pleased to learn that your inaugural STEM Essay Contest in May 2012 raised \$10,000 and awarded three deserving young women with a scholarship to study STEM. As you know, STEM subjects have been a priority in the McDonnell administration and your encouragement of this priority is much appreciated.

Another goal I have as Governor is to make state government more efficient. As you know, women are the backbone of our society and often work full time in addition to bearing the majority of the responsibilities of caring for children or aging parents. They are also the backbone of our economy, making up more than half of the workforce in the Commonwealth.

I respectfully request the Council on Women to form a "Working Women's Government Simplicity Subcommittee." The goal of this subcommittee would be to look at all aspects of state government and develop recommendations for my review on what the Commonwealth can do better to help make life simpler and government more efficient for working women. I would like to receive your recommendations by September 30, 2013.

Representatives from the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Secretary of Health and Human Resources and my Policy staff will be available to assist in your research and recommendations.

Thank you for your continued service to the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert F. McDonnell".

Robert F. McDonnell

