

Declaration of Interdependence

May 6, 2010

The unanimous Declaration of the region of Hampton Roads

Preamble:

We, the elected officials of Virginia's Hampton Roads, realize that competition is no longer between cities or counties but rather between metropolitan regions in the global economy. Accordingly, we recognize that neighboring localities often experience the ripples of each other's economic gains or losses and should thus work cooperatively to improve the region's standing in the global marketplace.

While disagreement is a normal and necessary part of any group decision-making process, it must not be permitted to impede constructive discussion. Cooperation and communication are crucial for the economic health of localities and the region as a whole. Interdependence and collaboration open localities to greater resources and opportunities. We thus encourage representatives of Hampton Roads localities to actively and respectfully engage with other representatives to enable the implementation of regional goals.

The Hampton Roads region consists of the cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg, the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry, and York and the town of Smithfield. To become a more competitive region with an ever increasing quality of life across academic, economic, cultural and recreational boundaries for the benefit of our citizens and workforce, we present and endorse this Declaration of Interdependence for Hampton Roads to increasing efficiency through cooperation and to achieve the following goals:

Article I : Legislative Unity

We see the need for those Delegates and Senators representing Hampton Roads in the General Assembly to speak with a unified voice on those issues with regional significance. Therefore, it is of great importance that the Hampton Roads Caucus be a vibrant and useful body meeting actively and receiving the necessary information to make decisions for the benefit of all of Hampton Roads.

Further, we commit our localities to support these efforts and help create and maintain a unified delegation.

Article I I : Education

Our public schools are the key to producing productive adult citizens in our society. Education provides the base for all future workforce or other skills training throughout the Hampton Roads region. Student educated in one district may choose to work in another locality. It hurts the entire region when one locality's schools are underperforming, and it benefits the entire region when all students are achieving at their highest levels. Competition between school divisions, for teachers or any other resources only hinders the ultimate success of the region. We therefore urge our School Boards and Superintendents to look for new opportunities of collaboration between divisions in order to provide the best learning environment for all students.

Article I I I : Transportation

Our citizens do not limit their travels to their home locality. Approximately half travel to another locality for employment and many others travel to visit, shop, and recreate. Furthermore, employers look at the region for workforce needs and its overall mobility for ease of doing business. This is of particular importance to Hampton Roads given the presence of the Port of Virginia and its movement of goods into and out of the region. Therefore, we commit to identifying regional transportation solutions including a system of roads but also public transportation opportunities accessible to all citizens.

Article I V: Public Safety

Crime does not respect political boundaries, but by working together and sharing information we can better protect all of our citizens. Additionally, it does no good for one locality to incur the expense of recruiting and training an officer, only for another locality to hire that officer causing the first to repeat the process at additional expense. Furthermore, when an incident occurs near a locality's border, a neighboring locality is often better equipped to respond to the situation. Therefore, we ask our police and fire departments to actively support formal plans to coordinate activities with other Hampton Roads' localities.

Article V: Public Communication

We recognize the value of productive, inclusive and informed public debate and decision making processes. The potential for increased mutual understanding is directly linked to information sharing and open communication. This requires a commitment for the timely distribution of widely accessible and accurate information. Connected to the expanding use of new means of communication should be determination to use new approaches to listening to one another and our public.