



Rural Center

Partnership of the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia

2022-2023

Center for Rural Virginia Annual Report

Our Mission

The Center is a partnership of the Center for Rural Virginia, a Virginia legislative entity advocating for rural policy, and the Council for Rural Virginia, an entity organized by federal statute that is a conduit for building rural capacity by facilitating the collaboration and creation of coalitions of the key economic regions and sectors of the Commonwealth.

Our History

Created by the General Assembly in 2004, the Center for Rural Virginia works to advance economic development, job creation, workforce development, education, infrastructure, healthcare and other vital initiatives for the prosperity of rural Virginia.

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Dear Friends,

We are pleased to report that The Center for Rural Virginia (The Center) continues to build on recent successes and had a very impactful year. It has been an exciting time for our organization as we completed the second year of the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI) and congratulated 28 graduates who went onto complete their community impact projects within their respective rural communities. VRLI is the Commonwealth's first and only leadership program that was created by the Center with the goal of retaining and attracting the best and brightest in our rural communities.

In addition to the launch of VRLI, the Center continued to serve as an educator, convener and facilitator of programs and initiatives that work towards making our rural communities thrive. The Executive Director at the Center continues to serve as statewide spokesperson on issues pertaining to Rural Virginia. In addition to her duties of running the organization, the Executive Director continues to place a large focus on fundraising to ensure that the Center's programming can move forward, including VRLI.

This past year the Center celebrated many successes, including the graduating class of 2023 Virginia Rural Leadership Institute, the 2023 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity in Blackstone, the 2023 Rural Caucus Reception, and served as staff to host and organize regular meetings of the Virginia General Assembly Rural Caucus during the 2023 General Assembly session.

The Center remains committed to serving as a leader in retaining and attracting our best and brightest in rural Virginia, promoting rural economic development opportunities, helping create innovative workforce solutions, promoting broadband deployment, and ensuring that small businesses have an opportunity to thrive in our small and rural towns.

Enclosed in this report, you will find a summary of the Center's activities throughout this operating year. It has been a privilege to work and meet with many of our rural friends as we traveled around the state visiting rural communities throughout Virginia. We sincerely appreciate the dedication and hard work from The Board of Directors at the Center for Rural Virginia. We are grateful to have an incredible Board of Trustees that care deeply about the success of rural Virginia and remain dedicated to ensuring the Center's success.

Warm regards,

Kristie Helmick Proctor

Organizational Structure

Executive Director

The Center for Rural Virginia hired Executive Director, Kristie Helmick Proctor in 2017. Since that time, Mrs. Proctor has worked to heighten the visibility of the Center, build new partnerships and programming opportunities that benefit rural Virginia.

Under her management, the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute was created and implemented and has seen great success. Additionally, Mrs. Proctor has been able to obtain historic levels of fundraising and investment from the private sector to ensure programming can continue, while also being faced with record high inflation and expanding capacity.

2023 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity

The Virginia Rural Center held the annual 2023 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity at Fort Barfoot located in Blackstone, Virginia. The Southside based event occurred October 11-12, 2023 and attendees were able to immerse themselves entirely in the town and familiarize themselves with surrounding amenities. This annual event was co-hosted with the Governor's office and the Center was proud to provide interactive and meaningful experiences for attendees.

The Center was delighted to have over 200 attendees from nearly 40 counties and 18 different cities join us for the 2023 Rural Summit. Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears served as the keynote speaker of the event and several members from Governor Youngkin's Cabinet participated in this successful Summit.

Board Meetings

In addition to hosting an all-virtual Board meeting, the Center was pleased to host quarterly Board meetings in the following locations:

- Winchester, VA
- Richmond, VA
- Blackstone, VA

Collective Services Agreement

The Center for Rural Virginia is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2004. The creation of the Center was a recommendation of the Rural Prosperity Commission, created by the General Assembly in 2000. The goal of the Commission was "Prosperity for all Virginians". The 18-member Commission was instructed by the General Assembly to "undertake a detailed analysis of rural Virginia economies and recommend flexible but targeted state policies which, combined with local efforts, will help foster sustainable economic growth in Virginia's rural areas."

The Center currently operates in a collaborative partnership with the Council for Rural Virginia through a collective services agreement as the Virginia Rural Center. The two organizations operate

independently but share an executive director and operate in conjunction to fulfill their joint mission of economic prosperity for rural communities throughout Virginia.

The final report of the Rural Prosperity Commission was issued in December 2001 and featured specific policy recommendations, including the creation of the Center for Rural Virginia to address the obstacles and capitalize on the many opportunities of Rural Virginia. In 2004, founding board members Senator Frank Ruff and Delegate Steve Landes, sponsored the enabling legislation, creating the Center.

The 21-member board of the Center for Rural Virginia works in partnership with the Council for Rural Virginia. Together, the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia work with policymakers and regulators as well private sector stakeholders to improve economic opportunities and preserve the quality of life throughout rural Virginia.

Institutional Partners

In addition to the support of the Virginia General Assembly and the Governor's Office, the Virginia Rural Center continues to enjoy partnerships with two other entities that make the daily operations of the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia efficient, effective, and successful.

The first is the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This agency provides office space for the Executive Director. Additionally, DHCD provides back-office support and assistance that enhances the productivity and accessibility at The Virginia Rural Center.

The second is Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. The Virginia Rural Center's partnership with VCE, provides assets and operational efficiencies that enhance the cost-effective operation for the organization. Additionally, Virginia Tech serves as the payroll agent to the Executive Director.

Annual Sponsors

The Center for Rural Virginia is fortunate to have numerous organizational sponsors committed to the Center's mission and rural prosperity. The Executive Director spends a large amount of time obtaining financial support from various organizations to ensure the Virginia Rural Center is successful.

The 2023 Annual Sponsors include (in alphabetical order):

- All Points Broadband
- Appalachian Power
- Cozen O'Connor
- Danville Community College Foundation
- Dominion Energy
- Farm Bureau of Virginia
- Farm Credit
- Letterpress Communications
- Lumos
- Old Dominion Electric Cooperative
- Rappahannock Electric Cooperative
- RiverLink Group
- Sentara Health
- Smithfield Foods
- Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project
- The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
- The Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
- University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service
- Virginia Broadband Industry Association
- Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Housing
- Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation
- Virginia Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives
- Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative
- Virginia Resources Authority
- Virginia Rural Health Association

Project Overview & Status Updates

2023 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity

When rural Virginia thrives, everyone in the Commonwealth prospers. That was among one of the key takeaways from the 2023 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity, held Oct. 10-11, 2023, at Fort Barfoot in Blackstone, Virginia.

Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears delivered the keynote address at the event that brings together state, business and civic leaders to explore the future of rural Virginia and the innovative initiatives in their respective communities.

Lt. Gov. Earle-Sears called for increased broadband expansion to continue to attract businesses to rural Virginia. The infrastructure, she said, is also important for companies with remote employees. Energy is also an important priority, she said, given Virginia's 28 military installations along with data centers that continue to flock to the Commonwealth, the top data center in the world.

The event commenced with opening remarks from Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Craig Crenshaw, followed by the opening of the Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research & Extension Center ag expo and a panel discussion on how localities can unlock innovation in rural Virginia.

Special guest Ward Burton, winner of the 2002 Daytona 500, spoke on the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation that partners with local, state and federal organizations to advocate for conservation and land management best practices. A key element of that is protecting the military mission from encroachment, what he calls military readiness via conservation. "We can put the military mission first while still practicing conservation," he said.

Matthew Lohr, Virginia's Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, spoke on the importance of small businesses in farming localities as more than 80% of farmers rely on some form of off-farm income. Attendees also heard from Travis Voyles, Virginia's Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, who commented on increasing transparency, accountability and paving the way for more efficient economic development.

Closing out the first day of the summit, Dr. Quentin Johnson, President of Southside Virginia Community College, said that "88% of community college graduates stay and work right here in Virginia." The opportunity for innovation is ripe, and this is the place to do it," Johnson said, adding that programs in artificial intelligence must be part of future conversations.

Summit attendees experienced Fort Barfoot, downtown Blackstone and demonstrations at the Southside Virginia Community College Occupational Technical Center before an evening reception at the Inn at Blackstone.

Following Lt. Gov. Earle-Sears' remarks on the summit's second day, a rural workforce panel convened, stressing the need for students to graduate with industry-ready skills and the growing gap in health and wellness and affordable housing that affects many in the rural part of the state. Ferrum College President, Mirta Martin, urged higher education to recognize the importance of apprenticeships in preparing students to be career-ready.

Sentara also offered tours of its Mobile Care bus that delivers healthcare directly to communities with the greatest needs in the state, including those on Medicaid and the uninsured.

Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick and Virginia Economic Development Partnership CEO and President Jason El Koubi closed the summit. “My job is to make Virginia the best place to start, grow or relocate a business,” Sec. Merrick said. El Koubi targeted five focus areas to driving regional growth in target industries: capacity building, workforce, site development, infrastructure and strengthening incentives that lower the cost of doing business. “When we first started in 2017, out of the 18 economic development regions in Virginia, only four were projected to grow,” he said. “Today 16 are projected to grow.”

Drawing hundreds of attendees from around the Commonwealth, the summit was one of the largest multi-day events of its kind ever hosted in Blackstone. “The town of Blackstone was incredibly excited to host this year’s Governor’s Summit on Rural Prosperity,” said L. Benjamin Green, Town Mayor. “While the economic impact for our local businesses, restaurants and lodging establishments was important, what we’re really proud of is the world-class experience that our Southside Virginia community successfully created and the terrific feedback we received from event attendees.”

2023 Rural Caucus Reception

Nearly 300 rural Virginia stakeholders gathered at the 14th Annual Rural Caucus Reception on January 18th, 2023, including dozens of state government legislators and administration officials who pledged support for rural Virginia.

Representatives from more than 45 counties across the Commonwealth participated in the event at the Omni Richmond Hotel. Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr and Secretary of Health and Human Resources John Littel all delivered remarks at the reception.

Lohr, who serves on the Board at the Center for Rural Virginia, noted that agriculture is the number one industry in the Commonwealth, with forestry ranking as the third largest industry. Recent statistics show that combined, the two have an economic impact of \$105 billion dollars. Additionally, behavioral health was a key theme for Secretary Littel, who touted the behavioral health plan Gov. Youngkin rolled out earlier and that should have a transformative effect in rural communities.

The annual Rural Caucus Reception is a joint effort of the Center for Rural Virginia, the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) and the Virginia General Assembly Rural Caucus.

VACo’s Executive Director Dean Lynch; Sen. Emmett Hanger, Chairman of the Rural Caucus; Del. Emily Brewer, Vice Chairman of the Rural Caucus; Sen. Frank Ruff, Chairman of the Center for Rural Virginia, and Del. Les Adams, Vice Chairman of the Center for Rural Virginia were also among the guests in attendance.

Hanger touted recent accomplishments of the Center for Rural Virginia, including launching the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI), the first program of its kind focused on attracting, developing and retaining leaders in rural communities.

Virginia General Assembly's Rural Caucus

The Virginia Rural Center (VRC) organized and staffed numerous meetings of the Virginia General Assembly's Rural Caucus during the 2023 General Assembly session.

The special guests for the 2023 Rural Caucus meeting included:

- The Honorable Caren Merrick, Virginia's Secretary of Commerce & Trade
- The Honorable Aimee Guidera, Virginia's Secretary of Education
- The Honorable John Littel, Virginia's Secretary of Health & Human Resources
- The Honorable Sheppard "Shep" Miller III, Virginia's Secretary of Transportation
- Susan Dewey, Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Housing
- Dr. Tamarah Holmes, Director, Office of Broadband at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

The Rural Caucus provides an opportunity for legislators and stakeholders to learn about legislation and initiatives impacting rural areas of the State. At the Rural Caucus meetings, legislators heard from stakeholders and cabinet members about legislation and its potential effect on rural Virginia.

Rural Caucus meetings continue to provide a forum to share information, learn, and collaborate to increase prosperity across rural Virginia.

Virginia Rural Leadership Institute

The Virginia Rural Center understands that prosperous communities rely on qualified, enthusiastic leaders who can adapt to the ever-changing community and economy. Additionally, strong civic-minded leadership has been well-documented as a driver of community vitality.

While recognizing the unique challenges faced in rural Virginia and the limitations of current leadership programs focused specifically on rural leaders, the Virginia Rural Center created the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI) in 2023.

Now in its second year, VRLI is accomplishing its mission to retain, attract, and develop rural Virginians into innovative, responsible, and civic-minded leaders who build strong communities. The second annual cohort of VRLI was announced in April of 2023 and includes 28 Cohort members from all corners of the Commonwealth. The program continues to remain competitive with more folks applying than can be accepted again in 2023.

The Virginia Rural Center was pleased to see the following Cohort members graduate in November 2023 from The Virginia Rural Leadership Institute:

John Patrick Clair, *Marion*
Town of Marion, Chief of Police

Donna J. Dagner, *Victoria*
Community Resources Services, Executive Director

Jackie Davis, *Farnham*
Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board, Executive Director

Jessica K. Drake, *Suffolk*
Filanthropic Consultancy, Founder & Principal

Jarrold Elwell, *Doswell*
Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Community Development Regional Manager

Todd Fortune, *Farmville*
Commonwealth Regional Council, Deputy Director

Olivia Garrett, *Henry County*
New College Institute, Director of Institutional Advancement

Josh Gillespie, *Louisa County*
County of Louisa, Director of Community Development

Courtney L. Harper, *South Hill*
Building Blocks to Success, LLC, CEO and Occupational Therapist

Darren Hays, *Freeman*
Spotts Fain Consulting, Government Relations Assistant

Tabitha Hodge, *Christiansburg*
Floyd County Economic Development Operations Director

William Johnson, III, *Emporia*
City of Emporia, City Manager

Stephanie Lillard, *Luray*
Director of Community Economic Development, People Incorporated

Jamie Lynn Anderson Lindley, *South Boston*
Comfort Systems USA MidAtlantic, Outreach, Recruiting, & Training Manager

Vanesa Livingstone, *Warsaw*
Richmond County Department of Social Services Director

Craig McCroskey, *Bassett*
United Way of Henry County & Martinsville, Director of Financial Stability Programs

Angela McPhaul, *Waverly*
Town of Waverly Mayor

Nick Minor, *King George County*
King George County Director of Economic Development

Alex Rendon, *Henrico County*
Dominion Energy, External Affairs Representative

AJ Robinson, *Tazewell County*
Tazewell County Director of Communications and Tourism

Jennifer Schmack, *Fluvanna County*
Fluvanna County Director of Economic Development

Beth Simms, *Patrick County*
Patrick County, County Administrator

Kim Smith, *Russell County*
Heart of Appalachia, Interim Executive Director

Joe Sumner, *Martinsville*
New College Institute, Executive Director

Rhett Weiss, *Farmville*
DEALTEK, Ltd, Chairman & CEO

Alex White, *Luray*
Town of Luray Councilman

Kendra Wood, *Aylett*
Rappahannock Community College, Dean of Strategic Enrollment Management

Dr. Terrence M. Wood, *Greensville County*
Greensville County Director of Human Resources

VRLI program development began in 2019 with research conducted to create a curriculum focused on the unique skills required by rural leaders to address current and future economic and community challenges. Virginia Rural Center staff consulted other statewide leadership development program directors to determine best practices for the implementation of VRLI's curriculum and programming. Now, in both years of the program more applications were received than spots available in the Cohort and our diverse list of partners was instrumental in the selection process of the cohort.

While VRLI's sessions take place over one year, the program also includes a second-year component as well. In the first year, Cohort members participate in four 3-day sessions across different rural regions of the Commonwealth – learning from the stories of success and challenges faced by each region, as well as from guest speakers invited to share their expertise with the cohort. In the second year, the skills are demonstrated by VRLI graduates through a Community Impact Project.

2023 Session Locations included:

- Southern Virginia
 - Danville and South Boston)
- Middle Peninsula/Northern Neck
 - Tappahannock, Warsaw and King William County/Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe
- Southwest Virginia
 - St. Paul, Breaks and Abingdon)
- Shenandoah Valley
 - Broadway, Weyers Cave and Staunton

Each VRLI Session provides an immersive experience in the rural communities of the region where the Cohort tours recent economic and community development successes while also participating in discussions and presentations from experts.

The topics discussed included:

- Agriculture
- Broadband
- Building a Team
- Civic Engagement & Advocacy
- Communications
- Community Story Telling
- Difficult Conversations
- Engaging with Elected Officials & the Government
- Faith in Rural Communities
- Food Issues
- Growing Your Network
- Leadership Development
- Main Street Revitalization
- Organization & Funding
- Regional Collaboration
- Rural Entrepreneurship
- Rural Health
- Rural Housing
- Rural Tourism
- Tribal Governance
- Understanding Data
- Youth In Rural Communities

Additionally, the Mentorship Program provides a unique component of VRLI which connects Cohort members with established rural leaders providing valuable insight into their future Community Impact Projects. Mentorship meetings occur throughout the VRLI experience and includes at least three meetings between Mentors and Cohort members.

Mentors involved with Virginia Rural Leadership Institute come from the following organizations:

- Charles City County, Administrator
- Common Sense Strategies, Owner & Senior Manager
- Department of Housing and Community Development, Associate Director of Community Revitalization
- GOVA Region 3, Program Director
- Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) Hampton Roads, Executive Director
- Pittsylvania County Public Schools, High School Agricultural Educator
- Radford University, Center for Police Practice, Policy, and Research
- Shenandoah County, Director of Tourism and Economic Development
- Southern Virginia Food Hub, Founder
- Strata Clean Energy, Local Government Affairs
- The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, Vice President, Advanced Learning
- The Riverlink Group, Principal Officer
- University of Virginia (Retired), Public Health Expert
- University of Virginia's College at Wise, Associate Vice Chancellor for Economic Development and Engagement
- Virginia Association of Community Action Partnerships, Executive Director
- Virginia Community College System, Director of Career Education Programs & Workforce Partnerships
- Virginia Community College System, Youth Programs State Coordinator of Virginia
- Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Executive Director, Virginia Office of Education Economics
- Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Senior Vice President of Policy and Strategic Partnerships
- Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation and Rural Sustainability, Assistant Director
- Virginia Housing, Director of Strategic Housing
- Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation, Vice President, Entrepreneurial Ecosystems
- Virginia Rural Health Association, Executive Director
- Virginia Tech's Center for Economic & Community Engagement, Executive Director
- Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, Deputy Director
- Washington County Public Schools, Superintendent

Year two of VRLI focuses on implementing the Community Impact Projects selected by each Cohort member. Each project is approved by the VRLI Advisory Committee. This project-focused approach for year two allows Cohort Members to take learnings from the first year and quickly apply them in their communities, providing benefits for individual Cohort members and their locality as well as providing a return on investment for supporters of VRLI.

The VRLI Community Impact Projects include:

Agriculture & Food

- Build a food pantry and community services building in Lunenburg County
- Research, plan, and implement a county farm tour in Fluvanna and Louisa Counties

Tourism

- Create a destination center for tourism in the coalfields region of Southwest Virginia
- Establish a Virginia Restaurant and Travel Association branch in Southwest Virginia

Housing

- Modernize local zoning ordinances to promote housing development in Luray

K-12 Education & Jobs Training

- Create a youth entrepreneurship program and contest in Floyd County
- Develop an annual career and technical education summit for a local school division
- Develop partnership between Workforce Development Board and Local Department of Social Services to advance youth workforce development in Richmond County
- Establish a week-long technical training program for high schoolers to promote trade jobs and skills in Southside Virginia
- Found a workforce development center to assist at-risk youth with workforce development in Mecklenburg County
- Launch a "Careers in Solar" event to share employment opportunities in solar for Southside Virginia Youth
- Launch an experiential real estate development course for high school students in a rural Virginia school division
- Reinvalidate technology education in local schools in the City of Suffolk

Economic & Workforce Development

- Coordinate work across a Southside Virginia County's Economic and Community Development Offices
- Develop a county economic development strategic plan for King George County
- Develop workforce and economic partnerships across a three-county/city area in Southside Virginia
- Forming partnerships between a community college and regional workforce agencies and employers in the Rappahannock Community College Region
- Update a small town's Code to foster small business development in the Town of Luray

Community Development

- Build a local water feature to promote town tourism and community involvement in the Town of Waverly
- Build a program to deliver integrated financial services for individuals in need in Martinsville and Henry County
- Develop a Regional Aging Plan for Southside Virginia
- Develop an approach to promote rural community development financial institutions across Virginia

- Develop an inventory to promote old country stores in Louisa County
- Develop young professionals' group in Martinsville and Henry County for targeted professional development opportunities
- Implement a stratified policing model in the Town of Marion

The Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI) was able to provide a need-blind program in its inaugural year due to fundraising efforts from mostly private sector entities that are committed to the Center's and Institute's mission. The financial support from sponsors is essential to building more rural leaders across the Commonwealth.

These sponsors include (in alphabetical order):

- Appalachian Power
- Danville Community College Educational Foundation
- Dominion
- Mid Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation
- Microsoft
- River Link Group
- Virginia Housing
- Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative
- Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission

Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts

The Virginia Rural Center engages in numerous partnerships and collaborative efforts with other organizations. These partners, often sharing aligned missions, exponentially strengthen the Rural Center's efforts and provide a platform to elevate the Commonwealth's rural issues.

Taskforce for Rural Virginia Economic Growth, Founding Member

A collaborative effort organized by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (TRRC), and the Virginia Rural Center. The group officially launched in 2023 and works to foster a positive impact through collaborative and action-oriented efforts. The primary goal is to address rural areas' concerns and work together to discover sustainable solutions. The taskforce works to exchange insights on ongoing initiatives in different communities and delve into the current challenges faced by rural areas.

2023 Virginia Department of Education, Teacher of the Year Selection Committee Member

Served as rural representation on the VDOE Teacher of the Year Selection Committee, evaluating nominations and applications for teachers who were nominated for the very prestigious award.

Partners for Rural America, Board of Directors Member

Partners for Rural America (PRA) was founded in 1998 to support the efforts of its member State Rural Development Councils (SRDCs), which are uniquely positioned to expand economic and social opportunities for America's rural communities and their residents, promote equal treatment of rural America by government agencies and the private sector and provide a collective voice for rural America. Joined in January 2018, the PRA Board of Directors provides a networking platform for other state rural center leaders to share successes and answer inquiries on best practices in member states.

Broadband Advisory Council, Board Member

The Broadband Advisory Council was established to help determine the Commonwealth's goals for broadband and how best to achieve them. The Rural Center's executive director gathers knowledge and contributes thought to further advocate for broadband expansion across the Commonwealth.

Virginia Housing, Rural Housing Advisory Council Member

The Rural Housing Advisory Council (RHAC) is a cross-regional group that will provide guidance and expertise to Virginia Housing regarding housing issues in rural Virginia. Mrs. Proctor became a member of Virginia Housing's Rural Housing Advisory Council in August 2018, and she is pleased to take on this role and provide additional insight to the housing needs in rural Virginia.

Legislative Sportsmen Caucus, Participant

Formed in 2004, the Virginia Legislative Sportsmen’s Caucus is a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators dedicated to protecting and advancing hunting, fishing, trapping and recreational shooting in Virginia. Regular involvement by the Rural Center in the Legislative Sportsmen Caucus includes participating in and recruitment for weekly legislative sportsman caucus meetings and providing support for the annual sportsman caucus retreat.

Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Rural Initiative Steering Group, Member

The Richmond Fed created this group with the goal to bring together leaders who help rural areas and small towns thrive. Participants collaborate on the needs and challenges that are facing rural communities, as well as highlighting opportunities.

Areas of focus include helping rural communities develop innovations in community financing and leadership; and create a common set of community indicators, tools, and success stories.

Leadership

Board of Trustees Center for Rural Virginia

- *Chair*, Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr, Senate of Virginia
- *Vice-Chair*, Honorable Les Adams, Jr., Virginia House of Delegates
- Honorable Emily Brewer, Member, Virginia House of Delegates
- Honorable Winsome Earle-Sears, Lieutenant Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
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- Brian Isringhausen, CEO, Cranemasters, Inc.
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- Honorable Matthew Lohr, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Commonwealth of Virginia
- Sarah Marshall, Manager, State & Local Affairs, Dominion Energy
- Honorable Caren Merrick, Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Commonwealth of Virginia
- Liz Povar, Principal Officer, The River Link Group
- Eddie Ramirez, Ramirez Consulting, LLC
- Honorable Chris Runion, Member, Virginia House of Delegates
- Chris Van Vlack, Farmer, Hanging Rock Hay & Bush Hog
- Lindsey Watson, Director of Government Affairs, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative

In partnership with

Board of Directors – Council for Rural Virginia

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- *Vice-Chair*, Dr. Edwin Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech
- Shannon Blevins, Associate Vice Chancellor for Economic Development and Engagement, University of Virginia's College at Wise
- The Honorable Ruby Brabo, Realtor
- Katie Frazier, Director, Farm Credit of the Virginias Knowledge Center
- Sharon Johnson, CEO of the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
- Hugh Joyce, Owner, James River Air Conditioning
- Gary Keener, Dabney S. Lancaster Community College

- John A. King II, General Manager and Vice President of Sales, VA Poultry Growers Cooperative
- Dr. Angela Lawhorne, Director, Career Education Programs & Workforce Partnerships, Virginia Community College System
- Mark Lawrence, Vice President of Governmental and External Affairs, Carilion Clinic
- Patrick Mauney, Executive Director, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
- Jay Poole, Owner, Common Sense Strategies
- R. Morgan Quicke, County Administrator, Richmond County
- Bill Tucker, Tucker Family Farms
- Brian T. Warner, Rolls Royce
- Carlyle Wimbish, Hickory Hill Farm

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