



Rural Center

Partnership of the **Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr.**
Center for Rural Virginia and the
Council for Rural Virginia

2024 – 2025

Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia Annual Report

Mission

To work with policymakers and stakeholders to create innovative solutions and expand entrepreneurial opportunities to ensure economic prosperity for all regions of the Commonwealth. The creation of the Center was a recommendation of the Rural Prosperity Commission, created by the General Assembly.

History

Created by the General Assembly in 2004, the Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. 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.

Table of Contents

Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia – A Review of Accomplishments 2024 - 2025

A Letter from the Executive Director	.....	Page 3
Organizational Structure	.....	Page 4
Project Overview & Updates	.....	Page 8
Partnerships & Collaborative Efforts	.....	Page 14
Leadership	.....	Page 15
Contact Information	.....	Page 17

Dear Friends,

This year reflected continued momentum for the Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia, as programs matured and new initiatives were launched. Building on strong momentum from recent years, the Center continued to expand its reach, deepen its impact, and advance initiatives that strengthen rural communities across the Commonwealth.

One of the most notable milestones this year was the completion of the fourth cohort of the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI). We proudly celebrated 23 new graduates, surpassing 100 alumni since the program's inception. These leaders are now advancing community impact projects in their home regions, many of which are already taking shape and delivering tangible results. As the Commonwealth's first and only statewide rural leadership program, VRLI was designed to retain, equip, and elevate emerging leaders committed to rural Virginia. Four years in, the program's long-term vision is becoming reality as projects launched by alumni generate a return on investment in our rural communities.

The Center also reached an important milestone with the launch of the Rural Virginia Opportunity Dashboard at the Southwest Virginia Economic Forum in May 2025. Staff unveiled the platform through a live demonstration, introducing a first-of-its-kind, data-driven resource designed to support informed decision-making in rural communities. The dashboard highlights key demographic, housing, education, business, and health indicators, while also offering interactive asset maps that showcase infrastructure and community resources. Its Rural Resource Index provides a centralized guide to funding opportunities at the local, state, and federal levels—supporting governments, nonprofits, businesses, and individuals as they pursue impactful projects. With downloadable reports and trend analysis, this innovative tool represents a significant step forward in strengthening access to actionable data for rural Virginia.

Beyond signature programs and initiatives, the Center continues to serve as a trusted educator, convener, and facilitator on issues impacting rural Virginia. The Executive Director remains a statewide voice on rural policy and priorities while also leading the organization's operations and placing strong emphasis on fundraising to sustain and grow the Center's work.

Throughout the year, the Center successfully delivered several major initiatives, including the graduation of the 2025 VRLI cohort, the launch of the Rural Virginia Opportunity Dashboard, the 2025 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity held in Caroline County and Hanover County with a focus on history and America's upcoming 250th anniversary, the 2025 Rural Caucus Legislative Breakfast, and ongoing support and coordination of the Virginia General Assembly Rural Caucus during the 2025 session.

We invite you to review this report, which provides a summary of the Center's activities over the past year. It remains a privilege to engage with partners and communities across every region of the Commonwealth. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Board of Directors of the Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia for their continued leadership, commitment, and dedication. Their support is instrumental to the Center's success and to advancing a strong future for rural Virginia.

Warm regards,

Kristie Helmick Proctor

Executive Director
The Virginia Rural Center

Organizational Structure

Executive Director

The Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia has been led by Executive Director Kristie Helmick Proctor since 2017. Under her leadership, the Center has expanded its scope and impact statewide, including the development and execution of the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute and the launch of the Rural Virginia Opportunity Dashboard. During this time, the Center has also increased its visibility and strengthened its role as a convener and trusted educational resource on issues affecting rural Virginia.

In addition to programmatic leadership, the Executive Director has successfully secured unprecedented levels of private and public investment. These resources have enabled the Center to sustain and grow its programming despite rising costs, while supporting expanded capacity and new initiatives aligned with the Center's mission.

2025 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity

For the first time in the Center's history, the organization held the annual Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity in two different counties. The Summit began with an evening reception in Caroline County at Meadow Event Park, home to the famous racehorse Secretariat.

The second day of the Summit took place in historic Hanover County and featured a history-focused theme, which aligned well as the nation approaches its 250th anniversary. Sessions were held in the Historic Hanover County Courthouse, where Patrick Henry delivered his argument during the Parsons' Cause trial in 1763. Additional sessions and presentations were hosted at the Historic Hanover Tavern, as well as in the Hanover County Complex Auditorium.

In 2025, the Center brought together nearly 300 attendees representing 53 counties and 21 cities across Virginia. Participants traveled from all regions of the Commonwealth, including coastal communities such as the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, counties along the North Carolina border in southern Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley, and the mountains and hillsides of Southwest Virginia.

Board Meetings

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

- Charlottesville, VA
- Wallops Island, VA
- Richmond, VA (originally scheduled to occur in Caroline County, VA)

Collective Services Agreement

The Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2004. The organization was previously known as the Center for Rural Virginia and was officially renamed on March 26, 2024, when Governor Glenn Youngkin signed legislation to honor Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. The legislation—House Bill 1381 (Runion) and Senate Bill 704 (Mulchi) formally renamed the Center for Rural Virginia as the Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia.

The renaming legislation was a priority of Governor Youngkin’s Administration and received unanimous support from all 140 members of the Virginia General Assembly. This action serves as a tribute to one of the Center’s founding members and former Chair, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr., recognizing his tireless work and long-standing commitment to advancing rural Virginia.

The creation of the Center was originally recommended by the Rural Prosperity Commission, which was established by the General Assembly in 2000. The Commission’s charge was to pursue “prosperity for all Virginians.” The 18-member Commission was directed to undertake a detailed analysis of rural Virginia’s economies and to recommend flexible, targeted state policies that, when combined with local efforts, would foster sustainable economic growth in rural areas of the Commonwealth.

Today, the Center operates in a collaborative partnership with the Council for Rural Virginia through a collective services agreement as the Virginia Rural Center. While the two organizations operate independently, they share an Executive Director and work in close coordination to advance their shared mission of promoting economic prosperity in rural communities across Virginia.

The final report of the Rural Prosperity Commission was issued in December 2001 and included specific policy recommendations, among them the creation of the Center for Rural Virginia to address challenges and leverage opportunities unique to rural Virginia. In 2004, founding board members Senator Frank M. Ruff and Delegate Steve Landes sponsored the enabling legislation that formally established the Center.

The 21-member Board of Directors of the Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia works in partnership with the Council for Rural Virginia. Together, the Center and the Council collaborate with policymakers, regulators, and private-sector stakeholders to enhance economic opportunity and preserve 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 benefits from partnerships with two additional entities that support the efficient and effective daily operations of the Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia.

The first partner is the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which provides office space for the Executive Director. DHCD also offers back-office support and administrative assistance that enhance productivity and operational efficiency for the Virginia Rural Center.

The second partner is Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. This partnership provides operational support and shared resources that contribute to the organization's cost-effective operations. In addition, Virginia Tech serves as the payroll agent for the Executive Director.

Annual Sponsors

The Virginia Rural Center 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 businesses and organizations to ensure the Center is successful.

The 2025 Annual Sponsors include (in alphabetical order):

- Appalachian Power
- Cozen O'Connor
- Dominion Energy
- Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Farm Bureau of Virginia
- Farm Credit
- Letterpress Communications
- Lumos
- Rappahannock Electric Cooperative
- Rural Resilience Advisors
- River Street Networks
- Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project
- The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
- Virginia Broadband Industry Association
- Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association
- Virginia Housing
- Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative
- Virginia Resources Authority
- Virginia Rural Health Association

Project Overview & Updates

2025 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity

Breathing new life into the places that shaped Virginia's past — especially as the nation approaches its 250th anniversary — can spark cultural vibrancy, strengthen community identity and unlock powerful economic opportunities for rural communities.

That vision took center stage on Oct. 29 when the Virginia Rural Center brought together leaders from across the Commonwealth for the 2025 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity in Hanover County.

Governor Glenn Youngkin keynoted the Summit which was also attended by multiple members of his Cabinet. Dozens of state and local leaders, legislators, business executives and community partners were among the several hundred attendees at this year's event, representing 53 counties and 21 cities from across the Commonwealth.

The Summit featured two standout discussions: one exploring the significance of Virginia's role in the founding of the nation, and another examining how historic preservation can drive rural economic development.

With the national semi quincentennial approaching in 2026, a Summit session on "Celebrating 250 Years of America in Virginia" provided an in-depth look at the Commonwealth's leadership in marking the milestone. The conversation took place in the historic Hanover Courthouse, built in 1735 and still serving the public today. The building is among the nation's oldest functioning courthouses and is best known as the location where a young Patrick Henry argued the famed Parsons' Case in 1763.

The historic courthouse setting reinforced one of the session's key messages: while Virginia played a defining role in America's founding, national awareness of the anniversary remains surprisingly low. Recent data indicates that nearly 70% of Americans do not know that a 250th anniversary is happening.

With that in mind, speakers encouraged localities to make sure that there is an education and awareness component leading up to the celebration, one that is honoring one of the most exceptional moments in our nation's history.

Participants also emphasized that the anniversary represents an unparalleled opportunity for communities across Virginia — particularly rural towns and counties rich in history — to welcome visitors, support local storytelling, and boost tourism.

To support these efforts, the Virginia Tourism Corporation's Staci Martin explained how the organization's VA250 Tourism Marketing Program grants help communities develop programming, interpretive materials, events, signage and coordinated marketing campaigns connected to the 250th celebration. The program also encourages regional collaboration, allowing rural communities to pool resources and strengthen shared tourism assets.

The Summit's "Brick by Brick: Revitalizing Historic Buildings into Rural Assets" session addressed how rural communities across Virginia are restoring historic structures to stimulate economic development and civic pride.

Take, for instance, the transformation of Danville's River District, highlighted by Rick Barker. Once marked by neglected tobacco warehouses and factory buildings, the area has since been restored into a vibrant commercial and residential district, home to restaurants, shops, housing, public art and renewed pedestrian life. Barker shared how his work relied on long-term investment strategies, collaboration with the community and the strategic use of historic tax credits to help reduce financing barriers.

Since Barker revitalized the first property in the district, nearly half a billion dollars has been spent in the area and more than 800 apartments have been built within walking distance.

A video showcasing Barker's revitalization work on the 500 block of Craghead in Danville's River District was also shared during the session, offering a visual look at the community's transformation. The video is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6g0tLhJ0T9Y>

In addition to the featured sessions, the Summit offered a full slate of discussions that highlighted the breadth of opportunity in rural Virginia. A breakout session on "Innovations and Investment: Building Vibrant Rural Economies" examined major trends shaping rural economic development, while a "Mapping Rural Virginia: Turning Data Into Rural Progress" breakout provided insights into demographic shifts, housing needs and the Virginia Rural Center's new Rural Virginia Opportunity Dashboard.

Attendees also heard from leaders shaping the future of rural work and enterprise during the panel on The Next Generation of Industry in Rural Communities. The day concluded with a presentation from the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute Class of 2025, whose cohort shared their capstone work and perspectives on advancing rural prosperity across the Commonwealth.

Rural Summit began in Caroline County at Meadow Event Park where the Secretariat race horse was born! The Virginia Farm Bureau owns the property and their President, Scot Sink, welcome the crowd and gave an overview and introduction on agriculture and its importance within rural Virginia.

2025 Legislative Rural Caucus Breakfast

Legislators, Board members, rural stakeholders and Administration officials attended a breakfast at the General Assembly Building to discuss legislation and the upcoming session. This networking event allowed conversations to occur among key stakeholders and legislators while the General Assembly was in session

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 2025 General Assembly session. Senator Emily Jordan served as Chair of the Rural Caucus, Delegate Sam Rasoul served as Vice Chair of the Rural Caucus

The special guests for the 2025 Rural Caucus meeting included:

- The Honorable Caren Merrick, Virginia's Secretary of Commerce & Trade
- The Honorable Matthew Lohr, Virginia's Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry
- Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears
- Scott Sink, President, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
- The Honorable Bryan Slater, Virginia's Secretary of Labor
- The Honorable Janet Kelly, Virginia's Secretary of Health & Human Resources
- The Honorable Don Scott, Speaker, The Virginia House of Delegates

The Rural Caucus provides an opportunity for legislators and stakeholders to learn about legislation and initiatives impacting rural areas of the Commonwealth. 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

In its fourth year, the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute expanded its reach through new community experiences and immersive learning across rural Virginia. The Virginia Rural Center was proud to announce the graduation of the fourth cohort of the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI), the Commonwealth's flagship leadership program focused on developing and empowering existing and emerging rural leaders.

Over a duration of six months, VRLI cohort members engaged in a comprehensive series of sessions held across Virginia's diverse rural regions – including Southside Virginia, Southwest Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley, the Middle Peninsula, and the Northern Neck. Each session featured expert-led discussions on key topics such as economic development, housing, education, healthcare, broadband access, and agriculture, while also offering immersive, place-based learning experiences with local leaders and community innovators. This year, the program expanded its reach by adding new stops in Luray for the Shenandoah Valley session, Halifax for the Southside session, Wytheville for the Southwest session, and made a return visit to St. Paul, where cohort members experienced the region firsthand through an ATV tour or kayaking along the Clinch River.

Each VRLI participant completes a Community Impact Project as a capstone to the program. These projects, developed in partnership with wide range of mentors, the Virginia Rural Center staff, and the VRLI Advisory Committee, address issues such as public safety, food security, workforce development, youth engagement, senior support, and community revitalization. The initiative ensures that graduates not only gain leadership skills but also leave a tangible mark on their local communities.

The graduation ceremony, held in Tappahannock, brought together leaders and VRLI alumni from across the Commonwealth to celebrate this year's class. Program speakers included Senator R. Creigh Deeds, Chair of the Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia, Senator Emily Jordan, Vice Chair of the Center, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr, a member of the Center Board, and Bryan David, Chair of the Council for Rural Virginia.

The program's success is supported by a network of partners who invest in rural leadership development through funding, recruitment, and program design. Current sponsors include Commonwealth Fiber Services, Danville Community College Foundation, Dominion Energy, The RiverLink Group LLC, Microsoft, Mid Atlantic Broadband Corporation, Virginia Housing, the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, and the Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative. The Virginia Rural Center continues to expand this network to reach even more communities across the state.

The 2025 VRLI Community Impact Projects include:

Economic & Community Development

- Enterprise Zone Guidebook Expansion (Statewide) – Develop and distribute an Enterprise Zone amendment guidebook with practical frameworks and templates to support local administrators and expand economic development capacity statewide by December 2026.
- Downtown Pocket Park — The Gathering Place (Hillsville) – Create an accessible, inclusive pocket park in downtown Hillsville to strengthen community connection, public engagement, and downtown vibrancy.
- Commercial Property Revitalization Catalog (Emporia) – Catalog and promote unlisted small-to-medium vacant commercial properties to attract investment and increase occupancy rates for community revitalization.
- Bassett Community Center Revitalization (Bassett) – Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to reopen and sustain the Bassett Community Center as a hub for local programming and partnerships.

Workforce Development & Education

- Cybersecurity Education Expansion (New River Valley) – Expand rural access to cybersecurity education by enrolling 130 students and teachers in foundational courses, strengthening local pathways into tech careers.
- Non-Traditional Apprenticeship Access (Shenandoah Valley) – Increase student access to non-traditional registered apprenticeships by training counselors, distributing outreach materials, and building school partnerships.
- AI Literacy & Workforce Integration Program (Martinsville & Surrounding Area) – Establish a learning program that promotes responsible, secure, and effective use of artificial intelligence across business, education, and community contexts.
- Panther P.A.W.S. Leadership Initiative (Southside Virginia) – Launch Panther P.A.W.S. to develop civic leadership and community engagement skills among students through interactive, service-oriented workshops.
- Chamber-Managed Revolving Loan Fund (Danville-Pittsylvania) – Establish a chamber-managed revolving loan fund to finance homeownership projects and reinvest proceeds into workforce development initiatives.

Health & Emergency Services

- Rural 911 Expansion Collaboration (Southeast Virginia) – Improve rural healthcare access by expanding 911 emergency services through shared resources, partnerships, and mutual aid coordination.
- Certified Nurse Midwifery Workforce Growth (Southwest Virginia) – Attract at least eight new graduating nursing students per year into a certified nurse midwifery program by 2030 to strengthen maternal health provider capacity.

Tourism, Agriculture & Outdoor Economy

- AdventureWorks Outdoor Economy Summit (Southwest Virginia) – Host a two-day summit at Radford University to connect leaders, highlight rural outdoor assets, and showcase the economic impact of outdoor recreation.

- Fields to Farms Tour (Hanover County) – Host a one-day “Fields to Farms” tour to educate visitors about diverse farm operations and celebrate agriculture’s economic and cultural importance.

Resilience, Preparedness & Collaboration Tools

- Rural Economic Resilience Toolkit (Statewide) – Develop a toolkit by May 2026 to support rural businesses and communities in continuity planning, recovery strategies, and resilience against future disruptions.
- Innovative Rural Towns Initiative (Statewide) - Develop an interactive dashboard showcasing innovative rural town initiatives across Virginia to inspire collaboration, share best practices, and strengthen rural development statewide.
- Childcare Needs Assessment & Action Plan (Alleghany County) - Conduct a comprehensive childcare needs assessment in the Alleghany Highlands and develop an actionable plan to enhance or relocate childcare services by December 2026.

Outdoor Recreation & Stewardship

- Southwest Virginia Outdoor Recreation Hub (Southwest Virginia) – Build an online hub connecting Southwest Virginia communities with trail organizations to coordinate trail maintenance, volunteer training, and regional stewardship efforts.

Communication, Engagement & Planning

- WATCH Community Initiative Engagement Platform (Suffolk) – Launch a comprehensive communications platform for the WATCH Community Initiative to expand awareness, engagement, and digital reach by spring 2026.
- Local African-American History Museum (Tappahannock) - Purchase, rehabilitate, and reopen the old Harris Grill property, which is the last standing Green Book Location in Essex County and turn it into a local history museum within 2 years.
- Roanoke County Manufacturer’s Forum (Roanoke) - Host two Roanoke County Manufacturer’s Forums by December 2025 to strengthen industry collaboration, identify shared goals, and establish a sustainable manufacturing network for future growth.

Financial support from sponsors is essential to the success of the VRLI program, enabling the year-over-year development of more rural leaders throughout the Commonwealth.

The 2025 annual sponsors to the VRLI program include (in alphabetical order):

- Appalachian Power
- Commonwealth Fiber Services
- Danville Community College Educational Foundation
- Dominion Energy
- Microsoft
- Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation
- RiverLink Group
- Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
- Virginia Housing
- Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative

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.

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.

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.

Virginia Education Strategies, Board Member

In collaboration with K-12, business, and community stakeholders, develops and implements best practices to align education with employers needs and assists schools in improving academic and career outcomes for students.

Leadership

Board of Trustees Center for Rural Virginia

- *Chair*, Honorable Creigh Deeds, Senate of Virginia
- *Vice-Chair*, Honorable Emily Jordan, Senate of Virginia
- Bette Brand, CEO & Founder, Strategic Consulting LLC
- Honorable Nadarius Clark, Member, House of Delegates
- Amanda Cox, External Affairs Manager, Appalachian Power
- Paul Eberly, Executive Vice President- Chief Development Officer, F&M Bank
- Honorable Winsome Earle-Sears, Lieutenant Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
- Brian Isringhausen, CEO, Cranemasters, Inc.
- John A. King II, General Manager and Vice President of Sales, Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative
- Honorable Amy Laufer, Member, House of Delegates
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- Sarah Marshall, Manager, State & Local Affairs, Dominion Energy
- Honorable Juan Pablo, Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Commonwealth of Virginia
- Marshall Pattie, PhD, Professor, James Madison University
- Liz Povar, Principal Officer, The River Link Group
- Eddie Ramirez, Ramirez Consulting, LLC
- Honorable Chris Runion, Member, Virginia House of Delegates
- Lindsey Watson, Director of Government Affairs, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative

In partnership with

Board of Directors – Council for Rural Virginia

- *Chair*, Bryan David, Program Director, Growth and Opportunity Virginia Region 3
- Shannon Blevins, Associate Vice Chancellor for Economic Development and Engagement, University of Virginia's College at Wise
- The Honorable Ruby Brabo, Realtor
- Frances Chambers, Council Member, Town of Wakefield, Director of Academic Affairs, Nansemond-Suffolk Academy, Co-Owner, Commonwealth Fiber Services, LLC
- Brian Falin, IDA, Executive Director, Wise County
- Katie Frazier, Director, Farm Credit of the Virginias Knowledge Center
- Beth Green, USDA Rural Development, Virginia State Director
- Sharon Johnson, CEO of the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
- Hugh Joyce, Owner, James River Air Conditioning
- 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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