

Julio Gracia
Independent Candidate for Congress, Virginia's 8th District

Responses to Virginia Chamber of Commerce Questions

Education & Workforce Development

I concur with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's recommendations described in its "Blueprint Virginia" plan. Every elected official should review this document carefully, because it is a thorough review of actions to take to maintain prosperity in our state. I would add that "work-study" programs should be promoted in our educational institutions to further prepare our future workforce and as a means for college affordability.

Taxes and Regulation

We are a capitalist nation. We need to liberate the economy by reducing, where possible, the burden of taxes and regulation. Government should encourage success and job creation. Indeed, this can be done by reducing taxes and simplifying the tax system. Also, many employers have difficulty providing health insurance and retirement plans to employees because of the costs. We should consider removing healthcare coverage and retirement plans from the responsibility of employers. We should always remember that government has a duty to create an encouraging environment for business; and that businesses have a responsibility to society to do no harm, and must be held accountable when they break the law.

Business Climate

Civilizations that retreat from trade eventually disappear. With that in mind, I support the TPP and I believe it will ultimately be beneficial to our economy. To protect IP, the U.S. needs to be more aggressive in pursuing and punishing violators, particularly by restricting their access to our markets and those of our allies and partners. In regard to the CNBC rankings, Virginia needs to invest more in our infrastructure and lower the costs of doing business in the state. Tax reform may help alleviate some of the burden on business and lower the cost of living. Cuts in federal budget spending have definitely affected our state. However, I am optimistic that the federal government will have to increase spending soon and Virginia's location gives it advantages to recover lost revenues.

Energy

We must continue towards energy independence while protecting our environment. To combat the real threat of climate change, we must emphasize the use and development of natural gas, solar, wind, biothermal, and hydropower, as efficient and cost effective sources of energy.

The Budget

Sequestration is an abomination. It is leadership by abandonment. If elected, I would work to repeal it. At present, I do not think that the national debt will be a drag on the economy. The national debt is an important issue; but in the short term, private debt in the U.S. may be more problematic. American families are overextended on car loans, student loans, mortgages, and medical expenses. The majority of American adults no longer live in the middle-class. Tax reform can help address this problem. I will propose a comprehensive restructuring of our tax code, whereby the hourly minimum wage yields a yearly minimum wage not subject to taxation. This can be a starting point for a national discussion on taxation and how to properly link our revenues with our national priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Julio Gracia
2016 August 31