



VWA

Legislative

Policy

Virginia Wineries Association Legislative Policy

Formed in 1983, the Virginia Wineries Association (VWA) grew out of the desire by owners of Virginia wineries to create a wine community that shared ideas and resources to the benefit of everyone in the Virginia wine industry. As a non-profit trade organization, the VWA advocates on behalf of the industry in several areas. The VWA will work consistently to promote and protect the rights of all Virginia wineries regardless of their level of production or the price of their products. The Virginia Wineries Association adopted the following set of policy positions, these policies are not meant to be all inclusive of all the issues the association will address.

Agriculture:

- Support the ability to promote the sale of, produce and sell wine and wine products.
- Promote an all-inclusive definition of agriculture that recognizes the importance of value-added agriculture and farm products, agri-tourism, and other rural development activities that contribute to the economic viability of farms and agriculture in the Commonwealth.
- Oppose any efforts to define as commercial the retail sales or marketing of agricultural products at a winery.
- Oppose attempts to expand or dilute the agritourism liability laws which protect farm wineries.
- Advocate to ensure pollution and sediment control regulation is not disproportionately imposed on the wine and vineyard industries.
- Oppose the imposition of additional mandatory burdensome pollution and sediment control regulations, and instead encourage voluntary compliance programs by Virginia winery and vineyard owners.
- Support the Virginia Right to Farm Act and oppose local ordinances which attempt to restrict that right.
- Encourage funding for ongoing research by and support of extension services for the industry.
- Promote consistency in laws that pertain to farm winery licenses.
- Promote the implementation of education and voluntary compliance with best practices in lieu of burdensome legislation with respect to groundwater protection.
- Oppose the regulation of storm water at agricultural operations such as farm wineries.
- Support for state and local efforts to preserve land for agricultural uses.

Alcohol Beverage Control Authority:

- Promote the responsible consumption of alcohol and continue to ensure minors do not have access to alcoholic beverages
- Support legislation which would require that the Alcohol Beverage Control Authority reinvests user fees and to support the regulated industries and streamlines its processes to ease the regulatory burdens on wineries.
- Promote the continued effort to establish a free-market system for the manufacture, distribution, and retail sale of all alcoholic beverages in the Commonwealth.
- Ensure wineries maintain the ability to distribute through the Virginia Winery Distribution Company.
- Streamline regulatory compliance and reduce the administrative and reporting burden for all entities regulated by the Department.
- Support consistent, reasonable, and understandable regulation of multi-line producers (wine/beer/distilled spirits).
- Reduce barriers to interstate commerce.
- Reduce existing barriers and oppose new barriers that would impact the direct-to-consumer distribution of wine, threaten wineries' ability to operate tasting rooms or obtain remote licenses.
- Advocate to ensure that ABC is applying laws evenly among the various regulated sectors, and that ABC is enforcing the laws consistently across the Commonwealth.

Local Government:

- Recognize the agricultural nature of Virginia farm wineries and the important role they play in preserving open space, rural land, and farms in Virginia.
- Advocate to limit additional regulation by localities on farm wineries.
- Support by rights granted to Farm Wineries by the Commonwealth.
- Assessments of farm wineries should be consistent with other agricultural uses in a city or county.
- Support for the exemption of farm buildings, such as farm wineries, from the statewide building codes.

- Promote the implementation of education and voluntary compliance with best practices in lieu of burdensome legislation with respect to public health and safety of those visiting agritourism enterprises such as farm wineries.
- Oppose local efforts to restrict events at farm wineries that are included in the usual and customary operations of such facilities.

Economic Development:

- Pursue the expansion of tourism and agri-tourism activities in the Commonwealth to stimulate job growth and expand tax revenue.
- Maintain funding for the Virginia Wine Board to provide ongoing education, research, and marketing activity of the Board.
- Improve and expand signage program for wineries.

Research:

- Encourage funding for ongoing research in accordance with Extension and others by producers.

Taxes:

- Support tax incentives that encourage growth and support the industry.
- Oppose raising excise taxes or any other taxes that would impact the industry.
- Support elimination of the estate tax in Virginia. However, if there is an estate tax, establishing one that does not negatively impact the industry.
- Oppose the expansion of Business and Occupational License and Merchants Capital Taxes into farm winery-based products and activities.

Worker Safety:

- Supports a safe workplace for wine industry employees and supports reasonable state workplace safety and health standards and the self-audit program.
- Encourages and promotes participation in educational programs to educate and assist in compliance with safety and health standards and guidelines.