

Small Business Commission
January 5, 2005
Richmond

The Small Business Commission was established for the purpose of studying, reporting, and making recommendations on issues of concern to Virginia's small businesses. Its duties include evaluating the impact of existing statutes and proposed legislation on small businesses; assessing the Commonwealth's small business assistance programs and examining ways to enhance their effectiveness; and providing small business owners and advocates with a forum to address their concerns.

After several years of inactivity following the retirement of its former chairman, Delegate A. Victor Thomas, the Commission met at the call of vice chairman Senator Nick Rerras on January 5, 2005. Senator Brandon Bell was elected to serve as the Commission's chairman, and Delegate Jeffrey Frederick was elected its vice-chairman. The meeting focused on the variety of state programs and agencies providing assistance to Virginia's small businesses. The meeting featured presentations by:

- Michael J. Schewel, Secretary of Commerce and Trade, who alerted the Commission to Governor Warner's new "Virginia Works" initiative.
- M. Shea Hollifield, Deputy Director, of Department of Housing and Community Development, who discussed the status of the Enterprise Zone program, the Virginia Enterprise Initiative, and the Main Street Program.
- Michael Eisenman, Director of the Department of Business Assistance, who addressed the work of his agency's workforce services, financial services, and existing business services divisions.
- Jody Keenan of George Mason University, who addressed the Small Business Development Centers network of 29 local offices around the Commonwealth.
- Peter Jobse, President of the Center for Innovative Technology, who focused on 8 small business programs administered by the Center.
- Edward Hamm, Director of the Department of Minority Business Enterprise, whose remarks focused on efforts by the administration to increase state procurement from small, women- and minority-owned (SWAM) businesses.
- Gary R. McLaren, Deputy Director of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, who dispelled the notion that the Partnership only deals with large businesses.

The Commission plans to play an important role in providing small businesses with a forum for presenting concerns to the General Assembly. The Commission will meet after the adjournment of the 2005 Session, at which time it will establish priorities and develop a plan for future activities.