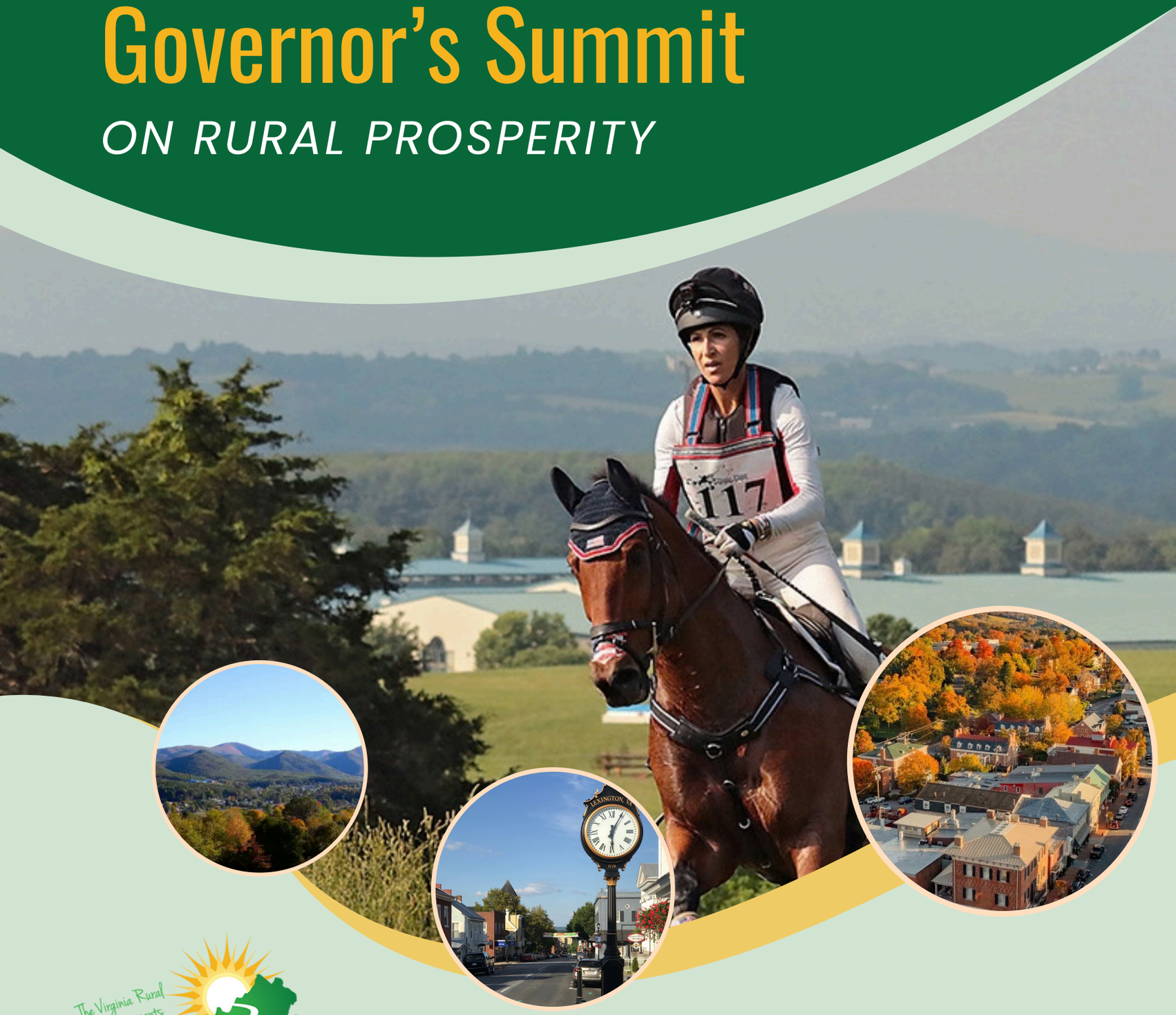
2026

Governor's Summit

ON RURAL PROSPERITY

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



The Virginia Rural Center presents

THE GOVERNOR'S SUMMIT ON RURAL PROSPERITY

Rockbridge County

Virginia Horse Center | 487 Maury River Road | Lexington, VA 24450

www.cfrv.org/ruralsummit

Agenda

The Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity

View speaker bios by scanning the QR code below:

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

10:30am Registration Opens & Visit Exhibitors

11:15am Lunch Buffet Open

11:50am 2026 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity Officially Begins

Welcome Remarks:
Kristie Proctor, Executive Director, The Virginia Rural Center
Senator Creigh Deeds, Chair, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia
Steve Shank, CEO, Virginia Horse Center

12:10 – 12:55pm "Welcome to Rockbridge" Panel and Discussion

Every great summit needs a great host, and this year, that host is Rockbridge County. Nestled in the Shenandoah Valley, this region blends small-town charm, deep history, and a thriving spirit of community and commerce.

Moderator:
Senator Chris Head

Panelists:
Jen Carpenter, Executive Director, Main Street Buena Vista
Jeremy Franklin, Executive Director, Main Street Lexington
Brandy Flint, Director of Economic Development, Rockbridge County
Tracy Lyons, Executive Director, Lexington, Buena Vista and Rockbridge County Chamber of Commerce
Sheryl Wagner, Executive Director, Lexington, Buena Vista and Rockbridge County Tourism

12:55 – 1:10pm Lieutenant Governor Ghazala Hashmi

Introduction:
Senator Creigh Deeds, Chair, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

1:10 – 1:55pm Federal Funding Put to Work in Rural Virginia

Explore how federal investments are advancing rural Virginia through the Rural Health Transformation Fund and expanded broadband deployment supported by the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) and Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program.

Introduction:
Delegate Lily Franklin, Board Member, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

Speakers:
Heidi Hertz, Director, Rural Health Transformation
Chandler Vaughan, Director, Virginia Office of Broadband

1:55 – 2:10pm Break and Visit Exhibitors

Agenda

THE GOVERNOR'S SUMMIT ON RURAL PROSPERITY

View speaker bios by scanning the QR code below:

2:10 – 3:00pm Rural Virginia at Work: Economic Development & Opportunity

Economic development is essential to building strong, vibrant rural communities and creating opportunities for Virginians to live, work, and thrive across the Commonwealth. Secretary of Commerce and Trade Carrie Chenery will share an update on the Administration's economic development priorities and vision for rural Virginia, followed by a lightning round with agency leaders highlighting emerging opportunities, key initiatives, and the resources available to support business growth, innovation, tourism, energy, and economic development across rural communities.

Introduction:
Bryan David, Chair, Council for Rural Virginia

Moderator:
Secretary Carrie Chenery, Secretary of Commerce and Trade

Panelists:
Eric Lin, Director, Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity
Joe Benevento, President & CEO, Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation
Vince Maiden, Director, Virginia Department of Energy
David Manley, Executive Director, Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
Rita McClenny, President & CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation
David Devan, Senior Vice President, Policy and Strategic Partnerships, VEDP

3:00 – 3:15pm The Honorable Don Scott, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates

Introduction:
Senator Emily Jordan, Vice Chair, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

3:15 – 3:30pm Natural & Historic Resources Update

Speaker:
Secretary David Bulova, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources

Introduction:
Senator Tammy Mulchi

3:30 – 4:15pm Break and Travel to Field Trip Sites

4:15 – 5:15pm Field Trips and Experiential Opportunities *(Choose one)*

Downtown Walking Tour of Lexington
Starting Location: Lexington Visitor Center
106 E. Washington Street, Lexington, VA 24450

Downtown Walking Tour of Buena Vista
Starting Location: Virginia Innovation Accelerator/Buena Vista Visitor Center
245 W. 21st Street, Buena Vista, VA 24416

6:30 – 8:00pm Evening Reception

The Livery at The Georges
11 North Main Street
Lexington, VA 24450

Parking Garage: 20 South Randolph Street, Lexington, VA 24450 (street parking also available)

Welcome Remarks:
Beth Green, Vice Chair, Council for Rural Virginia

Agenda

THE GOVERNOR'S SUMMIT ON RURAL PROSPERITY

View speaker bios by scanning the QR code below:

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

7:30 – 8:15am **Breakfast Buffet Open**

8:15am **2026 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity: Day 2 Officially Begins**

Invocation:
Liz Povar, Board Member, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

Welcome Remarks:
Bill Tucker, Board Member, Council for Rural Virginia

8:30 – 9:20am **Rural Housing Panel and Discussion**

A panel discussion exploring creative solutions to rural housing challenges and highlighting successful housing projects from across the Shenandoah Valley.

Introduction:
Delegate Sam Rasoul, Board Member, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

Moderator:
Kristen Dahlman, Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade

Panelists:
Delegate Briana Sewell, Chair, Virginia Housing Commission
Dr. Tamarah Holmes, Director, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
Dr. Monique Johnson, Chief of Programs, Virginia Housing
Brandy Flint, Director of Economic Development, Rockbridge County

9:20 – 10:10am **Rooted in Rural Virginia: Agriculture, Forestry & Equine Industries**

Agriculture and forestry are cornerstones of Virginia's rural economy, supporting communities, creating jobs and new opportunities for growth across the Commonwealth. Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Katie Frazier will share an update on the Administration's priorities and vision for these vital industries, followed by a lightning round with agency leaders highlighting emerging opportunities, key initiatives, and the work underway across agriculture, forestry, and Virginia's equine and racing industries.

Introduction:
Delegate Nadarius Clark, Board Member, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

Moderator:
Secretary Katie Frazier, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry

Panelists:
Charles Green, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Terry Lasher, State Forester, Virginia Department of Forestry
Waqas Ahmed, Executive Secretary, Virginia Racing Commission

10:15am **Governor Abigail Spanberger, 75th Governor of Virginia**

Introduction:
Senator Creigh Deeds, Chair, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

10:45 – 11:00am **Break and Visit Exhibitors**

Agenda

THE GOVERNOR'S SUMMIT ON RURAL PROSPERITY

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11:00 – 11:50am Moving Rural Virginia Forward: Transportation, Technology, and Economic Opportunity

Transportation is the backbone of rural Virginia's economy. From the farms and forests of the Shenandoah Valley to the small businesses lining our rural corridors, the ability to move people, goods, and services efficiently is essential for economic growth. Meanwhile, emerging technologies like unmanned aircraft systems and electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft are opening doors that rural Virginia has never had before.

Moderator:
Former Senator Emmett Hanger, Board Member, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

Panelists:
Delegate David Reid
Delegate Terry Austin
Former Secretary of Technology Karen Jackson, President and CEO, Apogee Strategic Partners and Senior Fellow, CCALS

11:50am – 12:30pm Drone Demonstration, Visit Exhibitors, and Lunch Buffet Opens

12:30pm Sponsor Spotlight:

Virginia Housing
Candice Turner, MSW
Strategic Housing Officer

12:35 – 1:00pm Virginia Rural Leadership Institute Class of 2026 Presentation

This presentation will showcase the work of the 2026 cohort and highlight community impact projects from across rural Virginia.

Introduction:
Lindsey Watson, Board Member, Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

1:00pm Rural Summit Concludes

Thank You to Our Annual Sponsors!



PRESENTED BY THE VIRGINIA RURAL CENTER