

2025 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity

Wednesday October 29 - Rural Summit

8:30 am, Rural Summit Welcome

Kristie Proctor, Executive Director, Virginia Rural Center

Kristie Helmick Proctor is a rural Virginia native and organizational leader who was appointed to serve as the Executive Director of the Virginia Rural Center in 2017. The Center is partnership of the Senator Frank M. Ruff Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia, which collectively work together on a joint mission to advocate for rural policy and create innovative solutions in rural Virginia. The Center was created by the Virginia legislature in 2004, and the Council is associated with the National Rural Development Partnership, created out of the 2002 Farm Bill.



Before joining the Virginia Rural Center, Kristie worked at the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the nation's largest small business association, where she managed a team of staff that implemented and oversaw grassroots activities in 17 different states.

Proctor earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology from Longwood University in 2004 and a Master of Arts degree in Government from Regent University in 2007. She studied abroad at Oxford University and is a graduate of the University of Virginia's Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership.

Kristie sits on a number of boards, including her 2022 appointment to the Board of Visitors at Longwood University. She has received numerous awards including, Virginia Business Magazine "100 People To Meet", Style Weekly's "Top 40 under 40" and she was a recipient of Marquis "Who's Who in America."

Proctor and her husband, Aaron, both grew up in rural Virginia and currently reside in Eastern Hanover County with their three young children, hunting dogs and chickens.

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

Senator Creigh Deeds has dedicated his life to fighting for a Virginia that works for everybody. Raised in Bath County on his grandparent's farm, Creigh attended Bath County High school before graduating from Concord College. Creigh's grandfather was a local Democratic Committee Chair during the Great Depression, which instilled within him a passion for democracy and helping others at an early age. Determined to pursue a career of service, Creigh then graduated from Wake Forest University with his law degree before being elected Commonwealth's Attorney of Bath County.



Four years later, Creigh won a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates, where he fought for working families for nearly a decade before being elected to serve in the State Senate, where he remains to this day.

Passing more bills than any other member of the General Assembly, Creigh is the most effective legislator in the Commonwealth. His track record of delivering results on the progressive issues that matter to us most—like fighting for gun violence reform, protecting abortion access, and fixing our broken mental healthcare system—are one of many reasons he's been endorsed by Virginia's top abortion access and women's right advocacy organizations REPRO Rising VA (formerly NARAL Pro-Choice VA) and the VA National Organization for Women PAC. Creigh's also earned the endorsement of America's top gun reform leader Gabby Giffords, her lifesaving organization Giffords PAC, and over 75+ other progressive groups and local and statewide leaders.

As one of the most trusted leaders in the State Senate, Creigh presides as the Chair of the Commerce and Labor Committee and serves on the Finance and Appropriations, Judiciary, Commerce and Labor, Rules, and Privileges and Elections Committees. Senator Deeds also serves as Chair of the Health and Human Resources Subcommittee, Chair of the Behavioral Health Commission, and Chair of the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules.

Creigh is the second highest ranking member of the State Senate—which means this district has the most powerful advocate fighting for our priorities in the legislature.

Creigh lives in Charlottesville with his wife Siobhan and three rescue pups Mila, Dilly, and SallyMae. He is the proud father of four children and four beautiful grandchildren.

8:30 am, Welcome to Hanover – Keynote Speaker

Governor Glenn Youngkin, 74th Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia

Born in Richmond and raised in Virginia Beach, Governor Glenn Youngkin is a homegrown Virginian from humble beginnings. From washing dishes at a local diner to being named co-CEO of one of the world's top investment firms, Governor Youngkin knows what it's like to work hard and is doing so on behalf of all Virginians. Since day one, Governor Youngkin has been a champion for parents rights, students, and teachers. He ushered in historic investments in education, launched a lab school initiative to inject choice and innovation into our public school system, raised teachers' salaries 12%, passed the Virginia Literacy Act to improve literacy among elementary school-age students, renewed Virginia's focus on career and technical education and implemented the *ALL In Virginia* plan to tackle persistent learning loss stemming from forced pandemic school closures through targeted tutoring in math and reading.



As the chief economic development officer of the Commonwealth, the governor has facilitated waves of economic investments and business expansions to reinvigorate job growth and opportunity. Under Governor Youngkin's leadership, the Commonwealth has welcomed companies committing nearly \$71 billion in capital investment and major corporate companies like Boeing, Amazon Web Services, Raytheon and The LEGO Group, along with major expansions from others like Hilton, Northrop Grumman and Framatome.

Lowering the cost of living has been a top priority for the governor and he's delivered \$5 billion dollars in tax relief for Virginians and working families. Fulfilling his promise to reduce the tax burden on Virginia's veterans, Governor Youngkin also implemented a state tax exemption for military retirement pay. The Youngkin administration has an unwavering commitment to support our men and women in law enforcement, providing additional compensation and salary increases for our public safety heroes.

The governor has made government run more efficiently and more effectively, bringing down DMV wait times, reducing Virginia's regulatory burden, streamlining permitting processes and easing licensing restrictions for dozens of occupations in the Commonwealth.

At the plight of Virginia's behavioral health crisis, Governor Youngkin launched historic efforts to transform our overwhelmed behavioral health system through his Right Help, Right Now plan which provides Virginians pre-crisis, in-crisis, and post-crisis help. He didn't stop there, he has worked to revamp our childcare system – critical for working families, a foster care system that was failing too many, and a developmental disability waiver system that left so many unserved.

Throughout his time as governor, Governor Glenn Youngkin has embraced innovation and commonsense especially when it comes to developing Virginia's All-American, All-of-the-Above energy approach to deliver reliable, affordable, and increasingly clean power for the Commonwealth's future.

Governor Glenn Youngkin has transformed government, expanded opportunity in Virginia, and delivered for Virginians.

Governor Youngkin has been married for over 29 years to Suzanne S. Youngkin, a devoted leader in non-profits and charitable causes. Together, they are dedicated to their four wonderful children. Their family journey has been and continues to be guided by their faith, walking hand in hand as humble followers of Christ.

8:30 am - Panelists

Senator Ryan McDougle, Minority Leader, SD 26

Senator McDougle is a lifelong resident of Hanover County. He attended JMU before attaining his law degree from The College of William and Mary. Upon graduation, he worked as a prosecutor in the Hanover County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.



He began his legislative service in 2002 as a member of the House of Delegates, and in 2006 he won a special election to the Senate, where he now represents the 26th Senate District. His district covers all of Gloucester County, Mathews County and New Kent County, and parts of Hanover County, James City County and King and Queen County.

He serves as the Senate Minority Leader and is a member of the Rules, Finance, Courts of Justice, Rehabilitation and Social Services, and Commerce and Labor Committees. When he's not practicing law, working at the Capitol, or meeting with constituents, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Dr. Robyn McDougle, and their daughter, Reagan.

Senator Luther Cifers, SD 10

Born into humble beginnings in 1974 in a farm community in Amelia County, VA, Cifers was home schooled from the 3rd grade, working from a young age the farms of his family and neighbors, and later in his father's small businesses. His parents instilled in him the conservative values of hard work, self-reliance, and serving others, and when he started his manufacturing career with an entry level job working for an automotive supplier in Farmville, VA in 1993, he quickly rose through the ranks, developing strong skills in design, engineering, and leadership. In 2009, Cifers started YakAttack, today's industry leader in kayak fishing accessories, in a friend's basement with an investment of less than \$2,000. Today, he is working to create affordable housing solutions by bringing innovation and efficiency to the home building process, with a goal of reducing the cost of single-family home construction by 30%.



Del. Scott Wyatt, HD 60

As a County Supervisor, Scott was a strong advocate for local business, public safety, and lower tax rates. As a Delegate, serving in the Virginia House of Delegates for the last four years, Scott has served on the House Committee on Appropriations; the House Transportation Committee, where he chairs the Sub-Committee on Funding and Infrastructure; and the House Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns. Scott also serves on several Boards and Commissions, including the Department of Criminal Justice Services Board; the Public Private Partnership Advisory Commission; and the Commission on Updating Virginia Law to Reflect Federal Recognition of Virginia Indian Tribes.



Del. Buddy Fowler, HD 59

Buddy is a graduate of Hermitage High School and is a Magna Cum Laude graduate of the University of Mary Washington with a degree in History. Buddy worked primarily in the private sector and was also a small business owner before coming to the Virginia General Assembly as an aide to former Delegates Frank Hargrove and John Cox, and was first elected in 2013. His committee assignments include Finance, General Laws, and Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources.



A lifelong resident of Virginia, Buddy and his wife, Patsy, reside in Hanover County where they raised their three children. He is an active member of Winns Baptist Church.

John Budesky, Hanover County Administrator

John A. Budesky is Hanover's County Administrator, appointed by the Board of Supervisors on March 25, 2020.

John has been a local government administrator for over 28 years. Most recently John served as County Administrator for Goochland County and prior to that role he served as a Deputy County Administrator for Hanover County, Virginia. Before Hanover, he served as the City Manager for the City of Manassas, Virginia. He also was appointed as the Executive Director of the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission during two separate Governor Administrations. Prior to serving the Commonwealth, he was the County Administrator for New Kent County, Virginia, Assistant City Administrator in the City of Hagerstown, Maryland, and a Department Head within Washington County government, in Hagerstown, Maryland. He has also operated a private consulting company specializing in strategic planning, team building, and community relations.



Michael Herzberg, Chair, Hanover County Board of Supervisors

Michael Herzberg is the Chairman of the Hanover County Board of Supervisors. He was elected in November 2019 to represent the Cold Harbor District. He serves on the following Board committees: Agricultural and Forestal Districts, Facility, Safety and Security, Joint Education, Parks and Recreation Advisory, and Rules.

Mr. Herzberg is a small business owner and he regularly attends Grace United Family Church.

His son Jamison is a 3rd grader in Hanover County Public Schools. He enjoys volunteering at his son's school and regularly attends field trips and school activities.



Sponsor Spotlight: Chris McNamara, Virginia Housing Strategic Housing Officer

In July 2021, Chris joined Virginia Housing, where the mission is to help Virginians attain quality, safe, affordable housing. “I was able to hit the ground running because of the connections I had through VEDA,” he says. “As part of the Community Outreach Team with Virginia Housing, I share our resources with our partners and connect them with others in the field working to achieve the same goals. It’s all about figuring out how we can work together.”

Traditionally economic development has been geared more toward business retention and attracting new companies. Today more employers are prioritizing housing, too. Chris has officially checked off visiting every county in the Commonwealth. His firsthand experiences gives him the confidence to say there the lack of affordable housing affects the entire state. What’s affordable in Northern Virginia varies from what’s affordable in southwestern Virginia, but the need is great and it’s growing.



10:30 – 11:30 am – Breakout Session #1 – Celebrating 250 years of America in Virginia

Mackenzie Babichenko, Hanover Commonwealth Attorney

Mackenzie Babichenko has more than thirteen years prosecution experience, including a decade of service to Hanover County. Mackenzie began her career in 2010 as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in Portsmouth, Virginia. In 2014, she joined the Hanover County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney, before rising through the ranks to the position of Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney in 2021.

Mackenzie is dedicated to Hanover County and touts a strong record of convictions against those who have committed serious crimes.



Cheryl Wilson, Moderator, Executive Director, Virginia 250

Cheryl Wilson serves as the Executive Director for the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission, which was created by the General Assembly for the purpose of planning for and commemorating the 250th anniversary of Virginia's participation in American independence, the duration of which will be 2022 through 2031. The Commission is composed of legislative leaders, tourism and economic development officials, historians, and experts across a wide spectrum. Prior to serving with the VA250 Commission, Cheryl worked with the Virginia General Assembly for more than 30 years, in leadership positions of varied and increasing responsibility. Most recently, she served as Deputy Clerk for Committee Operations for the House of Delegates, overseeing hundreds of legislative meetings, and working closely with leadership to ensuring proper parliamentary procedure and process. Before that, Cheryl was a senior manager with the Division of Legislative Services, where she drafted bills and resolutions, staffed the House and Senate Rules committees, and handled special projects.



Panelists:

Aimee Guidera, Virginia's Secretary of Education

Aimee Rogstad Guidera was named Secretary of Education by Governor Glenn Youngkin in December 2021. In this Cabinet position, she oversees education from Pre-K through Postsecondary in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Before joining the Youngkin administration, Aimee was a strategic consultant helping states, foundations, companies and non profit organizations strengthen their efforts to improve student learning and outcomes. Prior to launching her consultancy, Aimee was Founder, President and CEO of the Data Quality Campaign, a national, nonprofit advocacy organization leading the effort to ensure that students, parents, educators, and policymakers have the right information to guide their actions so that every student can excel. Before founding DQC, Aimee served as the director of the Washington, DC, office of the National Center for Educational Achievement. She previously served as vice president of programs for the National Alliance of Business (NAB), worked in the education division of the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices, and taught for the Japanese Ministry of Education.



Senator Ryan McDougale (bio on page 4)

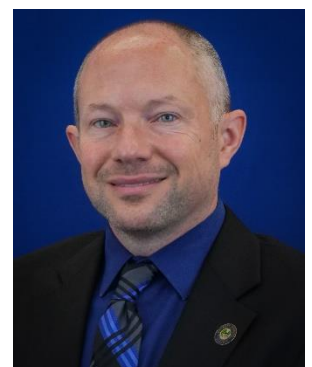
Staci Martin, Grants Director, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Staci Martin is an accomplished professional with extensive experience in tourism marketing, grant management, and community development. Currently serving as the Grants Director at the Virginia Tourism Corporation since August 2015, Staci leads multiple tourism marketing grant programs and manages ongoing partnerships with the VA250 commission. Previously, Staci held various roles within the organization, focusing on destination development and assisting local communities with economic revitalization. In addition, Staci is a School Board Member for the Virginia Beach School Board and serves as adjunct faculty at Old Dominion University, teaching courses in Sustainable Tourism Management and other subjects. Staci's strong educational background includes a Master of Arts in English from Old Dominion University, ongoing studies in Economic Development, and a Bachelor's degree from Radford University in Media, Marketing, and English.



Brandon Turner, Director, Hanover Economic Development

As the Director of Economic Development, Brandon helps to implement local economic development policy within Hanover County. He uses his extensive background in both regional and local development to attract capital investment to the County. This is done by recruiting businesses to relocate to the County, encouraging existing County businesses to invest and expand, and providing local entrepreneurs with guidance and resources for their start-up ventures. He also works to expand the County's supply of commercial and industrial sites and buildings. Establishing partnerships and fostering communication with County Officials, the Economic Development Authority and Hanover citizens, Brandon strives to improve Hanover County's future economic outlook and helps make the County a destination for companies looking to grow and expand.



Breakout Session #2 – Building Vibrant Rural Economies

Introduction: Del. Eric Phillips – HD48

Born and raised with small-town Southern Virginia values, Eric believes in protecting life, safeguarding our Second Amendment rights, limiting government intrusion into our daily lives, and ensuring that families aren't burdened with more taxes than absolutely necessary. Eric's roots in the 48th District run deep. His family came to Henry County generations ago, drawn by the promise of work in Virginia's once-thriving manufacturing industry.



Moderator: Sen. Emily Jordan, Vice Chair of the Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr. Center for Rural Virginia

Senator Emily Jordan is a fighter for the communities that she serves. In the General Assembly, Emily has worked to secure millions to expand broadband internet, championed workforce training initiatives that create good paying jobs, and has opposed burdensome regulations on our farmers and agricultural communities. First elected to the House in 2017 and elected to the Senate in 2023, Emily represents the 17th Senate District which includes all of Brunswick County, Greenville County, Isle of Wight County, Southampton County, Emporia City, Franklin City, Suffolk City, and parts of Dinwiddie County and Portsmouth City. Emily lives in Windsor with her husband, Andrew, a law enforcement professional, and her family. She currently serves on the Senate Courts of Justice Committee, General Laws and Technology Committee, and Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee.



Panelist:

Juan Pablo Segura, Virginia's Secretary of Commerce and Trade

Juan Pablo Segura is the Secretary of Commerce and Trade for the Commonwealth of Virginia. He oversees 13 agencies with 1,300 team members and a \$3B budget. Juan Pablo leads economic growth through a variety of initiatives and agencies to generate an environment that makes Virginia the best place to start, grow, or relocate a business. Juan Pablo is a Virginia native and has spent a majority of his career focused on starting businesses and transforming antiquated industries. Juan Pablo is one of the founders of Babyscripts, a next generation maternity monitoring company that over the last 10 years has become one of the largest maternity management platforms in the world, recently being named one of the 150 most innovative healthcare technology companies in the world by CB Insights.



Jason El Koubi, President & CEO at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership

Jason El Koubi serves as President and CEO at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, where he leads VEDP's overall strategy and operations to encourage, stimulate, and support the development and expansion of the economy of the Commonwealth. Prior to joining VEDP in July 2017 as Executive Vice President, El Koubi was previously President and CEO of One Acadiana, a regional economic development organization based in Lafayette, Louisiana. Under his leadership, the organization developed and successfully launched one of the most successful capital campaigns of its kind in the nation to deliver a new economic development program



for the nine-parish region. Previously, El Koubi served as Assistant Secretary of Louisiana Economic Development, where he led initiatives that helped secure projects creating more than 63,000 new jobs along with more than \$28 billion in new capital investment, while dramatically improving Louisiana's position in virtually every state business climate ranking.

John Budesky, Hanover County Administrator

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Breakout Session #3 – Brick by Brick: Revitalizing Historic Buildings into Rural Assets

Introduction: Michael Herzberg, Hanover Board of Supervisors Chairman

Michael Herzberg is the Chairman of the Hanover County Board of Supervisors. He was elected in November 2019 to represent the Cold Harbor District. He serves on the following Board committees: Agricultural and Forestal Districts, Facility, Safety and Security, Joint Education, Parks and Recreation Advisory, and Rules.

Mr. Herzberg is a small business owner and he regularly attends Grace United Family Church.

His son Jamison is a 3rd grader in Hanover County Public Schools. He enjoys volunteering at his son's school and regularly attends field trips and school activities.



Moderator: Stefanie Taillon, Secretary of Natural & Historic Resources

Stefanie Taillon currently serves as Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources for the Youngkin Administration. She previously served as Deputy Secretary, with a primary focus on Virginia's Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts.

Prior to joining the Youngkin Administration, Stefanie was Associate Director of Governmental Relations for Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, where she led policy efforts related to farmland preservation, wildlife and game laws, animal welfare, and animal-based commodities. She has also served as the Commissioner's Office Director at the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and as a legislative aide in the Virginia General Assembly.

Stefanie holds a Bachelor of Science in Animal and Poultry Sciences and a Master of Public Administration, both from Virginia Tech. She was a member of the Virginia Agriculture Leaders Obtaining Results (VALOR) Program Class IV. She grew up on a row crop farm in Southampton County.



Panelists:

Rick Barker, President & CEO, Supply Resources

The new Supply Resources headquarters has become a fascination among many visitors from around the world. What began as a need for more office space, has turned into a metaphor for how we approach every aspect of our business. In 2012, Rick identified a historic building in the downtown area that had a rich history, and the bones to be a grand space for the new office. After months of research and planning, work finally began on 554 Craghead Street, the former Piedmont Hardware building. Rick envisioned a space that spoke to our attention to detail, creativity, and above all – quality.

We took our time, and made more thoughtful, long term decisions about each step working with the Department of Historic Resources to renovate the space to historical standards. This was a more expensive approach, but one that was rewarded with tax credits upon completion. Upon entry to the main lobby, you immediately know the philosophy of our brand; patience, pride in our work, a sense of community, and revitalization. We ended up with a space that exceeded all expectations and that over time will be less expensive – not to mention pay for itself in new revenue. That is our philosophy, and we apply it to everything we do.



Luke Allison, Chief Advancement Officer, MOVA Technologies

Luke Allison serves as the Chief Advancement Officer for MOVA Technologies, where he has successfully raised \$2.8 million in private equity to support the company's air emission filtration platform. A 2017 graduate of Virginia Tech with a B.S. in Forestry Resources and Environmental Conservation, Luke has managed multiple historic rehabilitation projects in rural communities and advanced processes to reduce society's carbon footprint. His work reflects a strong commitment to community and environmental health, aligning with MOVA's mission to create sustainable, innovative solutions for industrial emissions.



Julie Langan, Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Julie Langan works as a Acting Director and State Historic Preservation Officer at Virginia Department of Historic Resources, which is a Government company with an estimated 52 employees; and founded in 2013., their management level is Director. Julie graduated from University of Virginia and is currently based in Richmond, United States.



Faye Prichard, Hanover County Supervisor, Ashland Magisterial District

A former longtime Mayor for the Town of Ashland, Faye Prichard was elected to the Board of Supervisors for the Ashland District in November 2015 and is serving her third term. She serves on the Board's Community Development, Finance, Legislative and Rules Committees. Ms. Prichard serves as a Board representative on the Hanover/Ashland Liaison Committee, the Hanover Airport Advisory Committee, the Joint Education Committee and the Social Services Advisory Board. She also represents the Board on the Capital Region Collaborative, Plan RVA and as an alternate representative on the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization.



Breakout Session #4 – Mapping Rural Virginia: Turning Data into Rural Progress

Introduction: Sen. Barbara Favola, SD 40

Barbara Favola is an experienced public servant and a fierce advocate for women, children, families, and our most vulnerable populations.

Senator Favola began her career as a Presidential Management Intern, in what is now called the Presidential Fellow Program, and worked her way up to become a Senior Advisor in the Department of Health and Human Services. During her fifteen years with the Department, she worked to improve the health of minorities and increase access to healthcare. She also worked as a congressional staffer on the House Budget Committee. Senator Favola was first elected to the state Senate in 2011, and now serves in leadership as a Democratic whip. Senator Favola spent her childhood in Connecticut. She graduated from Saint Joseph's College in West Hartford, Connecticut, and in 1980, earned her Master of Public Administration from New York University.



Moderator: Del. Nadarius Clark, HD 84

Nadarius Clark is a working-class community organizer, health care professional, and Delegate in the Virginia General Assembly. He comes from a military family with a background in business entrepreneurship. He grew up in a strong faith community and attends Zion Community Church in Northern Suffolk. Born in Norfolk, he attended I.C. Norcom High School in downtown Portsmouth. He worked his first job at the age of 14 at his local 7-Eleven. He is an alumnus of Virginia Union University, where he earned a degree in Music and Theatre and was the head drum major of VUU's "Ambassadors of Sound" marching band. As a working-class Delegate, outside of the legislative session Nadarius works for The Kairos Group, helping local health care providers and community clinics start and thrive in Hampton Roads.



Panelists: Chandler Vaughan, Program Developer, Virginia Rural Center

Chandler Vaughan is the Associate Director in the Office of Broadband. Before joining the Office of Broadband, Chandler worked for a local government to assist with broadband planning efforts. In the Office of Broadband, Chandler assists communities in accessing state, federal, and tribal resources and has played a key role in the development of policies, procedures, and guidelines for broadband infrastructure deployment programs, play an instrumental role in scaling a \$50 million dollar program to accommodate a \$700 million investment of American Rescue Plan Act funding in 2021 and now an additional \$1.5 billion investment in both deployment and non-deployment broadband programs under the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act.



Hamilton Lombard, Estimates Program Manager for the Demographics Research Group at the UVA Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

Hamilton Lombard is the Estimates Program Manager for the Demographics Research Group at the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. His expertise is in demographic change, particularly the different components of population growth and decline, population estimates, school enrollment projections, and the effect of government policy on population patterns.

Hamilton has worked in local and regional planning in Virginia and the United Kingdom. He earned his B.A. in History and B.S. in Planning from the University of Virginia.



Panelists: Secretary Matthew Lohr, Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry

The Honorable Matthew Lohr, Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry
Matthew Lohr was raised on a Virginia century family farm in the Shenandoah Valley. As a fifth-generation farmer, he has spent his entire life working for the betterment of the agricultural industry and rural America.

Matthew developed his passion for public service and agricultural policy while serving as both a state and national FFA officer before graduating from Virginia Tech with a B.S. degree in Agricultural Education. He has more than 30 years of experience as a professional leader and communicator.



Over the past two years, Matthew has served as the Chief of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency with more than 10,000 employees across 3,000 field offices and an operating budget of over \$4.5 billion.

Matthew previously served in the Virginia House of Delegates from 2006-2010 before being appointed as the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. His other career experiences include serving as Director of the Farm Credit Knowledge Center, teaching middle school agriscience, operating his own leadership development company, and serving as President of Valley Pike Farm, Inc., his family's farming operation.

Bryan Slater, Secretary of Labor

Bryan Slater brings more than 20 years of experience to the Youngkin Administration with a wealth of knowledge and senior-level experience leading public, non-profit, and private sector organizations.

Bryan received his associate's degree from Ferrum College, his bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Richmond, and an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Ferrum College. He has taken on roles large and small from campaign work to serving in senior management, operations, transformation, and administration.

In Virginia, Bryan served as Secretary of Administration for Governor James Gilmore (R-VA) and as Director of Administration for the Attorney General's Office under Attorney General James Gilmore. Most recently, Bryan served as Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management at the U.S. Department of Labor, where he drove the implementation of the departmentwide shared services consolidation initiative, and as Assistant



Secretary of Administration for the U.S. Department of Transportation under President Trump. He served as the White House Liaison at the U.S. Department of Labor under President George W. Bush and as a congressional relations officer for the Department of Housing and Urban Development under President George H.W. Bush.

2:30 pm – Sponsor Spotlight: Dominion Energy

Justin Pope, External Affairs, Dominion Energy

Native of Sussex County. Virginia Tech undergrad – Go Hokies. VCU School of Business post-graduate. Have worked 16 years with Dominion Energy. Now serving as a Local Affairs Manager covering most of southside VA. Raising three children with my wife, Burch, living in Henrico County.



2:35-3:05 pm - Virginia Rural Leadership Institute Class of 2025 Cohort Presentation

Introduction: Bryan David, Chair, Council for Rural Virginia

Bryan David serves as a Program Director for the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service to advance economic, workforce, and community development in Southern Virginia. His work includes a partnership between the Cooper Center and the Growth and Opportunity Virginia Region 3 Council. He leads the operations of the GO Virginia Region 3 Council and directly collaborates with an extensive network of business and education leaders, partner organizations, and engaged residents. The Region 3 Council includes a 13-county region and the Cities of Danville and Martinsville in Southern Virginia.



With over 30 years of professional experience, Bryan has served rural Virginia localities as a County Administrator and held other local government leadership positions. He also headed Virginia's Region 2000 Partnership - Economic Development Council, serving the Lynchburg metropolitan region. He received a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University, a post-graduate Certificate in Litigation from the National Center for Paralegal Training, and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Hampden-Sydney College. He is a Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation Board of Directors member, Chair of the Council for Rural Virginia, member of the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute Advisory Committee, and member of the James Solomon Russell - Saint Paul's College Museum and Archives Advisory Board. His professional memberships include the American Institute of Certified Planners, the Virginia Economic Developers Association and its Public Policy Network and Rural Shared Interest Group, the American Planning Association and its Virginia Chapter, and the Virginia Local Government Management Association. He is a graduate of the University of Virginia's Senior Executive Institute.

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

Lindsey Watson currently serves as Director of Government Affairs at Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC), where she develops legislative policy proposals that are beneficial to REC and Virginia's electric cooperatives, lobbies on behalf of REC and Virginia's electric cooperatives before the Virginia General Assembly, and tracks legislation at the state and federal levels that could directly or indirectly impact Virginia's electric cooperatives. Lindsey was born and raised in rural Virginia, on a beef



cattle and broiler poultry farm in Cumberland County. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Master of Public Administration degree from Virginia Tech. Lindsey is also a graduate of the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia.