

You are receiving this letter because you are considered a Virginia business leader...and as such you are probably very familiar with the economics of your community. Because of your knowledge, it is no surprise to you that small, independent Virginia businesses represent the best opportunity for economic recovery and community growth.

For instance, you are probably aware of the fact that small businesses employ just over half of the country's private sector workforce. Such enterprises also represent 97.3% of all the exporters of goods and 99.7% of all employer firms.

Furthermore, buying locally helps produce more income, jobs, and tax receipts for local communities than dollars spent with big box stores. Local businesses are more likely to utilize local ads, banks and other services. Local businesses donate more money to nonprofits and are more accountable to their local communities. Supporting local businesses preserves the economic diversity of our communities and the unique character of our neighborhoods. And, supporting local businesses is good for the environment, because it cuts down on fuel consumption. Buying locally produced goods reduces the need to ship goods from thousands of miles away and also cuts down on the distances shoppers travel.

So, why not express your support for a "buy local" initiative?

Retail Alliance is working with Virginia's General Assembly this session to create a "Buy Local" Virginia license plate. The cost is just \$25, but the impact could be significantly more.

Sen. Yvonne Miller (Norfolk) is sponsoring legislation to enable creation of the "buy local" specialty plate. Proceeds from plates will help fund the educational and grant-making operations of the Retail Alliance Foundation, a 501©3 organization that supports business training and grants for small, local merchants throughout the Commonwealth. The services provided to the small businesses from the foundation are focused on helping them survive the current economic crisis and continue to retain employees. The Retail Alliance Foundation grants also help businesses that are growing and need extra support to expand and hire new employees.

In order to secure the "buy local" license plates, Retail Alliance must solicit 350 pre-paid applications before any plates are created. Upon presentation of the applications to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, delivery of the plates should be no later than October 1, 2010. If fewer than 350 applications are collected by July 1, 2010, all funds will be returned by July 10, 2010.

An application for one of the new "buy local" license plates is attached along with a postage paid envelope. Please consider expressing your support for local businesses by purchasing one or more of these very special license plates.

For more information, please contact Shona Haven, Retail Alliance, 757/466-1600.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Susan L. Milhoan, CAE
President and CEO