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**VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS HONOR DELEGATE JAMES**

***RICHMOND*** - The Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) has awarded Virginia Delegate Matthew James its sixth annual Legislator of the Year Award. The award was created to honor legislators who serve as ambassadors for economic and community development in Virginia.

"Delegate James has steadily and skillfully promoted and supported much of the legislation that has made Virginia's economic and workforce development efforts a success," said VEDA Legislator of the Year Committee Chair, Patrick Barker (Frederick County Industrial Development Authority). "He has a keen appreciation for economic development in the Commonwealth and understands what it takes to create jobs, build companies and improve quality of life."

During the most recent two General Assembly sessions, Delegate James has patroned legislation expanding grant eligibility for the Commonwealth Opportunity Fund; expanding criteria for enterprise zone designations; establishing a state purchasing program for the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity; expanding the Port of Virginia Economic and Infrastructure Development Grant Program; creating Tourism Zones, providing tax revenues for tourism projects; and establishing a Small, Women-owned, and Minority-owned Business Loan Fund.

VEDA's leadership put the Legislator of the Year Award in place to recognize public officials who not only support economic and community development, but who are actively engaged in public policy efforts that advance economic prosperity in the Commonwealth. The 2015 award was announced at VEDA's Annual Legislative Reception in January.

VEDA was formed in 1982 to provide educational, networking and technical assistance to increase the effectiveness of professionals practicing economic, industrial and community development in Virginia. VEDA provides input to help maintain the Commonwealth's leadership position in economic development, encourages continued education through state and national economic development organizations, and promotes professionalism and ethics within Virginia's economic development community. In its 30-year history, the organization has grown from less than 100 to more than 550 economic development professionals.

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