

The Potomac Conference

Mission/Background

The Potomac Conference is a CEO-level leadership forum that brings together public, private and nonprofit executives from Washington, DC, northern Virginia, and suburban Maryland to focus their expertise and influence on improving the region's economic health and quality of life.

Currently led by Chair George Vradenburg, President, The Vradenburg Foundation and Vice Chair Robert M. Pinkard, CEO & Managing Partner, Cassidy & Pinkard, The Potomac Conference is an initiative of the Greater Washington Board of Trade, the largest regional network of business and nonprofit leaders and the only group representing all industry sectors. The Board of Trade's 1,200 member companies in the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia and Suburban Maryland employ 40 percent of the region's private-sector workforce. Organizations join the Board of Trade to grow their business and help build a better community.

The Greater Washington Board of Trade has long led efforts to develop innovative approaches to resolving regional issues. From transportation and federal funding for the District, to creating the Airports Authority and building the Beltway, the Board of Trade has been recognized as a leading and effective advocate for making the region a better place to live and work.

In May 1992, the Board of Trade convened fifty of the region's leaders at a two-day retreat to discuss Greater Washington's future with the goals of articulating a vision for the region and building trust and understanding among its leaders.

Current Initiatives

The Potomac Conference has evolved since its inception from a forum for creative dialogue to an advocate for cooperative regional improvement. Annually, the Potomac Conference convenes a meeting of more than 100 of the region's leaders to educate, discuss and strategize next steps on issues as varied as technology commercialization and regional development. By utilizing the expertise, hard work, and influence of Greater Washington's leaders, the Potomac Conference undertakes discrete, goal-oriented projects to bring about positive change in the region.

The Potomac Conference's current efforts, staffed by Caroline Cunningham, Director; Alison Gold, Program Manager; and Alex Freidin, Program Assistant include:

Emergency Preparedness Task Force (EPTF)—The Emergency Preparedness Task Force was formed in the aftermath of 9/11 and is responsible for the reopening of National Airport following the terrorist attacks; the creation of the Office of National Capital Region Coordination at the US Department of Homeland Security; and the development of "Media and the First Response" a national model for helping federal, state and local public information officers and the media better communicate to the public during a crisis. In May 2004, this program was rolled out nationally in 10 cities across the country by the Department of Homeland Security. The Emergency Preparedness Task Force continues to develop programs and policies to integrate the private sector--both businesses and nonprofit organizations--into emergency preparedness and response planning in Greater Washington. Current efforts focus on communications, business continuity and citizen education. *Co-chairs: Chip Akridge, Chairman, Akridge and Chuck Bean, Executive Director, The Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington*

Health Care Task Force (HCTF)--Members from the provider, insurer and employer communities collaborating to develop and implement regional programmatic and policy solutions to manage health

care costs, improve quality of care and expand the health care work force. The newest of the Potomac Conference initiatives, by the close of 2005, the Task Force will have already produced a series of measurable outcomes including a regional health care workforce and training shortages study; policy briefs aimed at educating non-health care business leaders on how policies affect health care cost; a regional employer coalition to facilitate health benefits strategy best practices exchange and leverage the collective purchasing power of large employers to improve the quality and control cost of health care; and launching a regional business-led physical activity campaign called "Wellness Works!" *Co-chairs: Charles Dalluge, President, Leo A Daly International and Vice President and Managing Principal, Washington DC and Patricia McGuire, President, Trinity University.*

Technology Task Force (TTF)-- Through the work of over 95 of the region's technology stake-holders -- including university presidents, federal laboratory directors, CEO's of tech and bio-tech businesses, venture capital firm managers, patent and IP attorneys and elected officials the committee continues to develop a coordinated strategy to improve technology partnerships among universities, business and federal labs in the Greater Washington. Accomplishments include, the publication of *Technology Commercialization in Greater Washington: January 2004 Benchmark Study*; the development of Federal Laboratory Demonstration Project focused on improving federal laboratory-university collaboration with pilot participants NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center and University of Maryland; and the launching of The Virtual Incubator which seeks to utilize the expertise of the business and research communities to identify promising technologies and help develop one to three of these technologies into start-up companies in an 18 month time frame. *Co-chairs: Martin Mullins, Vice President of Technology Transfer, Georgetown University; Gerard Eldering, Director of Technology Transfer, MITRE Corporation; Steve Ferguson, Director of Technology Transfer, National Institutes of Health*

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