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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**December 4, 2024**

VAB Regional Meeting (Roanoke)  
202 Social House | Roanoke, VA

**December 5, 2024**

VAB Regional Meeting (Abingdon)  
Martha Washington Inn | Abingdon, VA

**March 3-5, 2025**

NAB State Leadership Conference | Washington, DC

**April 2, 2025**

VAB Small Market Radio Roundtable  
Charlottesville, VA

**April 24-25, 2025**

VAB Best of the Best Session  
Charlottesville, VA

**June 19-21, 2025**

VAB 88th Annual Summer Convention  
Marriott Oceanfront Hotel | Virginia Beach, VA



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# MEET THE VAB BEST OF THE BEST 2025



**Caleb Peek**  
Producer/Anchor, WHSV-TV  
Harrisonburg, VA

**Where did you grow up/go to school?**

I grew up in Marshall, NC - a small town about 30 minutes west of Asheville in the Blue Ridge Mountains. I was part of the inaugural graduating class at Madison Early College High School, and I earned my undergraduate degree from Western Carolina University.

**What was your first job in broadcasting?** My first job in broadcasting was at WPTL - a small mom-and-pop radio station in Canton, NC. I hosted a morning show from 6-to-noon, and handled play-by-play coverage for the local high school sports teams.

**What is your career goal?** To become a trusted source for news at the highest possible level. Whether it's at an anchor desk in Washington DC or at my current role in Harrisonburg, I'm striving to be the voice people turn to first for the information that matters to them.

**What are you most looking forward to learning/taking away from the Best of the Best Leadership program?** I'm hoping to take away a better understanding of how to lead from the front. I've always respected leaders who command authority through actions rather than words - especially the ones who put themselves in vulnerable positions, taking arrows for their employees when necessary.

**What do you like to do in your free time?** When I'm not on the air, you'll probably find me at some type of game or concert. I'm a junkie for all things sports and music, so if I'm not cheering on JMU or Penn State, there's a good chance you'll catch me vibing to a live band at a local venue somewhere in Harrisonburg.

**If you could have dinner with somebody from the past, present or future who would it be and why?** I would easily choose John F. Kennedy. I like to think my position as a news anchor is high-pressure; but could you imagine leading the most powerful country on Earth into a nuclear standoff with another nation who isn't afraid to use them - all while kickstarting a program to put an American deeper into space than we ever thought possible? His steady hand during unbelievably challenging times is one of the most incredible stories in human history, and I'd love to sit down and hear it straight from JFK himself.



**Nathan Crawford**  
Executive Producer, WWBT-TV  
Richmond, VA

**Where did you grow up/go to school?**

As a military brat, I had the opportunity to live in several states, but I consider metro-Atlanta to be home. After graduating high school there, I moved to northern Virginia to attend George Mason University. I graduated from Mason with my undergrad in Communication, before doing

my master's degree online from the University of Alabama.

**What was your first job in broadcasting?** My very first job in broadcasting was a weekend evening Digital Content Producer at WAVY-TV 10.

**What is your career goal?** This is a tough question - because working in broadcast journalism is my dream. Truly - I recognize each day to be a dream come true. In the future, I look forward to growing in management positions and move to a network or cable news outlet.

**What are you most looking forward to learning/taking away from the Best of the Best Leadership program?** I look forward to learning from the most incredible broadcast journalists in the state. The industry is truly a team sport, so I am grateful for the opportunity to work with people from departments I don't often work with in my day-to-day life.

**What do you like to do in your free time?** What is free time? Haha kidding! I love going to musicals and visiting new places.

**If you could have dinner with somebody from the past, present or future who would it be and why?** Tough question! If I could eat dinner with someone from the past it would be Alex Trebek or Walt Disney. But, in the present, I'd love to eat dinner with Savannah Guthrie or Taylor Swift.



**Sonja Morrell**  
Marketing Director  
WNOR/WAFX  
Chesapeake, VA

**Where did you grow up/go to school?**

I was born and raised in Hopewell Township, New Jersey. I graduated from Emerson College in Boston with a Bachelor of Science in Speech with a concentration in Public Relations.

**What was your first job in broadcasting?** My first stint in broadcasting was at Emerson's 4,000-watt FM station, WERS. At the time, it was completely student run. I was an on-air host of "The Coffeehouse," an AM Drive program dedicated to folk and acoustic music. Just after I graduated, I got a job at WUMB, a small, non-commercial station in Boston that played primarily folk and acoustic music.

**What is your career goal?** I am about 18 months shy of hitting the 30-year mark at Hampton Roads Media Group, owned by Saga Communications. I would really like to continue as Marketing Director and on-air personality here through that 30-year milestone (and beyond!). Saga is a fantastic company to work for. There aren't too many companies where you're on a first-name basis with the CEO and COO.

**What are you most looking forward to learning/taking away from the Best of the Best Leadership program?** The trip to DC is what I'm most looking forward to. I have very little knowledge of lobbying and how that process works, so I'm interested in learning about that aspect of the industry.

**What do you like to do in your free time?** I do Yoga 3-4 times per week. I also go to the gym with 11-year-old son. My teenaged daughter is a competitive swimmer, so we are at her swim meets many weekends. I also enjoy walking my 2 dogs and baking.

**If you could have dinner with somebody from the past, present or future who would it be and why?** Bono, U2's legendary frontman. He is so much more than a songwriter and performer.

# RICHMOND REGIONAL MEETING

Thank you to everyone who joined us at our Richmond regional meeting on November 19th at the Bartizan!

It was great to connect with so many dedicated professionals in local media. We're grateful for your support and look forward to continuing to grow together. Mark your calendars for the next VAB Regional Meetings in Roanoke on December 4th and Abingdon on December 5th. We can't wait to see you at one soon!







# COCKTAILS & CONVERSATIONS

The VAB would like to invite you to join us for an update regarding your Association and its activities as well as a social hour to get to know other broadcasters in your market!

**Wednesday, December 4th**  
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

**202 Social House**  
*(Speakeasy)*  
202 Market Street SE  
Roanoke, VA

**Thursday, December 5th**  
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

**Martha Washington Inn**  
*(Backstage Room)*  
150 W. Main Street  
Abingdon, VA

We look forward to seeing you!

Please RSVP, for any of the events (please indicate which location), to Laura Lake at (434) 326-9813 or [laura.lake@easterassociates.com](mailto:laura.lake@easterassociates.com)

## Share Your Stories!

We want to know what your station(s) have been up to lately as well as to be able to share our members photos and stories.

Do you have any standout employees, exciting new projects you're taking on, community service initiatives, or other future big plans?

We want to share your stories on VAB's social media pages (Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram). Some might even make their way into the news. It's a great chance to put a spotlight on the good work happening in our industry.

Please take a moment to fill out this Survey Form to let us know! We're genuinely excited to hear from you and to share the diverse and impactful stories from the VAB community.

**CLICK HERE**

**TO FILL OUT THE SURVEY**

# SUMMER INTERNSHIPS



Through the NCSA programs and membership services, the VAB will again offer PAID summer internships during Summer 2025 to college students entering their Junior or Senior year in the Fall of 2025! The internship program is 8 weeks in length and will begin on Monday, June 2, 2025. All interns should plan to work 40-hours per week at \$15.00/hour. A total of 32 students statewide can be selected to participate. We need stations in all markets to volunteer to host an intern.

If you are interested in hosting a VAB intern, please let me know via email, [christina.sandridge@easterassociates.com](mailto:christina.sandridge@easterassociates.com), by February 21, 2025. I will also need to know who the internship coordinator is going to be at your station, his or her phone number, and his or her email address. If your station is selected to participate, the intern assigned to you **MUST** be interviewed by you prior to final commitment. Please be advised that every attempt will be made to place an intern at your station, but unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that we will receive an application from a student who will be living in your area over the summer!

[Click here](#) to view more information about having an intern at your station, including payment procedures from the VAB to you and from you to your intern, as well as guidelines established by the VAB on implementing a successful internship program at your station.

Please remember: in order for a student to be a VAB intern, he or she must complete the application online - [click here](#) to download - and it must be returned by the deadline date of **February 21, 2025**. I am happy to try to match students to stations, especially if you request a particular student, but that student still needs to complete an application with the VAB.

Only students who are Virginia residents OR a non-resident currently attending an accredited college, university, or community college in the state of Virginia (as well as Elizabeth City State University) are eligible for the Summer Internship Program.

Help the VAB spread the word to students! Please let us know if you would like some sample scripts that can be used as PSA's. We certainly appreciate it!



# WTKR General Manager Named One of RBR+TVBR's Top Local TV Leaders

NORFOLK, Va. – (November 12, 2024) — News 3's is celebrating Vice President and General Manager Adam Chase for being recognized as one of the Top Local TV Leaders by RBR+TVBR.

"Honored to be named one of Radio + Television Business Report's Top 20 TV Leaders," Chase said. He came in ranking at number 19.

He brings over 20 years of experience in television news previously working as a VP and general manager at news stations in Texas and California.

"The real honor is leading the amazing team at WTKR. Their tireless efforts to support our community continues to inspire me every day," Chase said.

Chase completed the NAB Broadcast Leadership Program and 2020 and he actively contributes to the community as an Honorary Commander for the 755th ISRG at Langely AFB, as a Civic Leader for the Air Force Reserve Command, and as an advisor at the Scripps Howard School of Journalism at Hampton University.

He is also a board member of both the Virginia Association of Broadcasters and CBS Affiliate Board.



**Adam Chase,**  
Vice President and General Manager, WTKR News 3

# VIRGINIA EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATE - GETTING YOUR COMPANY COMPLIANT FOR 2025

By Karen S. Elliott, Brendan C. Horgan, and Victoria L. Creta

There are several Virginia and federal compliance deadlines set for January 1, 2025 and another for July 1, 2025. Below are key items to have in place along with some suggested best practices:

## 1. Virginia minimum wage increase

Effective January 1, 2025, the Virginia minimum wage will increase from \$12.00 to \$12.41.

Although the General Assembly voted down the proposed \$15.00 minimum wage increase for 2025, current law requires the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Labor to adjust the minimum wage annually by the Average Consumer Price Index for all items, urban consumers (CPI-U). The 2024 increase was 3.4%. This adjustment will happen every year going forward in accordance with the CPI-U for that year. See the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry [guidance](#) on the increase.

• **Action item:** Audit all hourly employees to ensure no employee earns less than \$12.41 per hour

## 2. DOL Salary threshold increase for July 1, 2024 and January 1, 2025 is stricken down and set aside

The Department of Labor issued a final rule that increased the salary threshold for Fair Labor Standards Act “white-collar” and “highly compensated” exempt employees. The rule established increases in two phases, and the first went into effect on July 1, 2024. The second was set to take effect on January 1, 2025 as follows:

- Previously: \$684 per week (\$35,568 annually)
- 7/1/24: \$844 per week (\$43,888 annually)
- 1/1/25: \$1,128 per week (\$58,656 annually)
- To be reviewed every three years

On November 15, 2024, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas vacated and set aside the DOL final rule on a nationwide basis. This means the July 1, 2024 increases are nullified, and the January 1, 2025 will not take effect.

It remains to be seen if the DOL will appeal this decision to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. For now, the increases are stayed. Please see the FordHarrison [legal alert](#) for more information about navigating this issue.

• **Action Item:** Work with counsel to determine the best path for navigating the DOL Final Rule, including whether to revise your salary structures again in light of the court’s ruling regarding the July 1, 2024 increase.

## 3. Virginia Employment Commission Changes - July 1, 2025

### a. Tax Rate Hike Notices Coming Mid-December

The Virginia Employment Commission has stated that the tax rate on unemployment claims will be rising for 2025 (rates have apparently been frozen since COVID), and notices will be coming out in mid-December. This means you will want to be sure to contest cases that are due to misconduct because awards of benefits will have increased financial consequences. In order to contest those cases, you need to make sure you are getting notice of the employee’s filing. Anecdotally, we have determined that many clients have not been receiving the VEC’s notice of request for information from the employer. The VEC states that it is currently mailing and emailing the notices for the past several months. However, the VEC is recommending that all employers move to SIDES (referenced below). Because regular mail is so slow, the request for information may be received untimely, and if the person receiving the email is no longer there, the request will be missed. This is extremely important because starting July 1, 2025, a regimen of fees and legal consequences will be applied to employers who cannot prove that the Commission did not deliver the request to the physical or electronic mailing address specified in writing by the employer. This is much different than an employer saying that they never received what was delivered to the mail or email address. See [Virginia Code § 60.2-619](#).

### b. State Information Data Exchange Systems (“SIDES”)

SIDES is an online system that sends notices of claims of benefits to employers and provides an online mechanism for employers to submit required responses.

Because an employer has only 10 days to respond to the VEC’s request for information, and because the mail is so slow, or someone may not be monitoring a particular email, the VEC recommends that Virginia employers sign up for SIDES. Here is the [administrative code section](#) that establishes SIDES.

• **Action Items:** (1) [register for SIDES here](#), (2) ensure all mailing addresses with VEC are up to date, and (3) periodically review the current VEC online portal to ensure no new claims have been filed.

## 4. “Ethnic Origin” is now a protected class in Virginia

The General Assembly has added “ethnic origin” as a protected category under the Virginia Human Rights Act. This means that discrimination, harassment or retaliation based on an employee’s ancestry (i.e., where their ethnic group of people originated) can be the basis for a private cause of action.

• **Action items:** (1) Ensure anti-discrimination/anti-harassment policies are updated to include “ethnic origin,” and (2) include “ethnic origin” topics in anti-discrimination/anti-harassment training.

## 5. RetirePath Virginia

The General Assembly enacted a law that requires certain employers to participate in RetirePath Virginia if they do not offer a retirement savings plan for employees. It is administered by private-sector financial firms and managed by Commonwealth Savers, formerly known as Virginia529, an independent agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Employers are required to register if they meet the following criteria:

- (1) operated for two or more years,
- (2) have 25 or more employees, and
- (3) do not offer a qualifying retirement account option.

If the above applies, employees of registered employers are automatically enrolled in RetirePath Virginia, triggering withholdings (if the employee does not opt out within 30 days). If an employee does not want to participate, they must opt out. For covered employers, employer registration was required as of February 2024. If a covered employer fails to register, they could face civil penalties of up to \$200 per employee. Even if an employer is not required to register, eligible employees may be allowed to open a RetirePath account.

• **Action item:** Employers need to review the [RetirePath VA website](#) (or connect with a RetirePath VA representative) to determine coverage.

## 6. Beneficial Ownership Information Report (“BOIR”)

The federal Corporate Transparency Act has a new requirement that certain businesses report information to the Federal Crimes Enforcement Network (“FinCEN”). The deadline to submit required information is January 1, 2025.

- Step 1: Determine whether the company needs to report. Many Limited Liability Companies and Corporations need to report. Some businesses are exempt. FinCEN published [guidance](#) to help businesses determine if they are exempt.
- Step 2: Identify all beneficial owners. A beneficial owner exercises substantial control over the business and has at least a 25% ownership interest, with some other considerations. See the previous guidance link.
- Step 3: Report required beneficial ownership to FinCEN. See the attached [instructions](#) for submitting the Beneficial Ownership Information Report (BOIR).

Failure to submit the BOIR by January 1, 2025, could lead to civil penalties.

• **Action Items:** (1) review the FinCEN guidance, and (2) work with counsel to verify reporting obligations.

If you have any questions about the issues discussed in this Alert, please contact the authors, [Karen Elliott](#), partner in our Richmond office at [kelliott@fordharrison.com](mailto:kelliott@fordharrison.com), [Brendan Horgan](#), counsel in our Richmond office at [bhorgan@fordharrison.com](mailto:bhorgan@fordharrison.com) and [Victoria Creta](#), senior associate in our Richmond office at [vcreta@fordharrison.com](mailto:vcreta@fordharrison.com). Of course, you can also contact the FordHarrison attorney with whom you usually work.



# STRATEGIES TO CONNECT, CELEBRATE, AND MAKE AN IMPACT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

by Jennifer Lane | Nov 13, 2024

## Finish 2024 Strong: Strategies to Connect, Celebrate, and Make an Impact in Your Community

As 2024 draws to a close, it's a prime opportunity for businesses to maximize engagement, strengthen connections, and set the stage for a successful 2025. Between big shopping days, "Shop Local" initiatives, and the festive season, these final weeks offer powerful ways to leave a lasting impression on your customers and community. Here's how to make the most of this time:

### **Build Loyalty by Celebrating Customer Relationships:**

While holiday promotions are everywhere, lasting loyalty is built on genuine connections. Stand out with messages that show heartfelt gratitude, highlight your customers' impact, and reinforce your role in the community.

**QUICK TIP:** Develop a "Thank You" campaign that acknowledges customer loyalty and hints at what's ahead in 2025. A video or post spotlighting your team's community involvement can resonate deeply and strengthen long-term loyalty.

### **Capture Last Minute Shoppers with Timely Offers:**

In the holiday rush, prioritize convenient, limited time offers that cater to last-minute shoppers. Simple, time-sensitive deals, bundled packages, or fast delivery options keep your brand top-of-mind and help you capture sales in the final weeks. **QUICK TIP:** Run a "Countdown to the Holidays" campaign with unique daily offers or reminders. Emphasize convenience and urgency in your messaging to engage the last-minute crowd effectively.

### **Showcase Your Community Roots with the "Shop Local" Movement:**

"Shop Local" resonates strongly during the holidays, appealing to customers who want to support community businesses. Share your local impact story, showing how customer support contributes to local jobs and services.

**QUICK TIP:** Create a social media campaign highlighting your team, partnerships with local businesses, or involvement in community events.

Positioning your business as integral to the local landscape strengthens connections with customers who value community support.

### **Build Goodwill by Giving Back:**

The season of giving is an ideal time to build goodwill. Launch a holiday charity drive or partner with a local cause to show that your business cares about more than just transactions. **QUICK TIP:** Dedicate a portion of sales to a local charity or organize a community event that invites customer participation. This approach shows customers that by supporting your business, they're also supporting their community.

### **Share the Joy and Personal Side of Your Brand:**

Beyond sales, authentic and festive messaging can strengthen brand connection. Show some behind-the-scenes holiday spirit, express gratitude, and share well-wishes with customers. **QUICK TIP:** Share a "Holiday Greeting" video from the team or a behind-the-scenes snapshot of staff celebrating. A simple, genuine message fosters a warm connection that can build long-term loyalty.

### **Preview an Exciting 2025:**

The end of the year isn't just about wrapping up; it's also a time to set expectations for what's to come. Give customers a taste of your 2025 plans—whether it's new products, upcoming events, or fresh services. **QUICK TIP:** Share a message or post thanking customers for being part of this year's journey and inviting them to stay tuned for 2025. This forward-looking message builds excitement and signals that the best is yet to come.

As we wrap up 2024 make sure you end each interaction on a high note with a thoughtful, customer-centered approach. Make these final weeks memorable, deepening connections and creating anticipation for the new year.



## How to Submit to the VAB Job Bank

Jobs that are printed in the newsletter are pulled directly from the online Job Bank.

- Go to [www.vabonline.com](http://www.vabonline.com). Login with your user name and password.
- Be sure to include your station ID or company name, information on how the applicant can apply and where to send the applications materials.

Welcome to the VAB Job Bank. Listed below are the latest job opportunities offered by the VAB Members. There are currently 16 jobs in the VAB Job Bank.

<b>Digital Reporter</b> Richmond, VA	Full Time	News	WRIC-TV	11/21/2024
<b>Media Advisor</b> Chesapeake, VA	Full Time	Sales	Saga Communications	11/13/2024
<b>Digital Content Producer</b> Portsmouth, VA	Full Time	News	Nexstar Media Inc.	11/12/2024
<b>Senior Account Executive</b> Roanoke, VA	Full Time	Sales	WXLK-FM	11/8/2024
<b>Account Executive</b> Hampton, VA	Full Time	Sales	Lockwood Broadcast Group	11/7/2024
<b>Account Executive</b> Charlottesville, VA	Full Time	Sales	Lockwood Broadcast Group	11/7/2024
<b>News Producer</b> Charlottesville, VA	Full Time	Sales	Lockwood Broadcast Group	11/7/2024
<b>Master Control Operator</b> Charlottesville, VA	Full Time	Production	Lockwood Broadcast Group	11/7/2024
<b>Reporter/Multi-Media Journalist</b> Charlottesville, VA	Full Time	News	Lockwood Broadcast Group	11/7/2024
<b>Chief Engineer</b> Charlottesville, VA	Full Time	Engineering	Lockwood Broadcast Group	11/7/2024
<b>Weekend Meteorologist/Reporter</b> Charlottesville, VA	Full Time	News	Lockwood Broadcast Group	11/7/2024
<b>Traffic Anchor/Reporter</b> Portsmouth, VA	Full Time	News	Nexstar Media Inc.	11/6/2024
<b>Assistant Editor of Rocktown Now</b> Harrisonburg, VA	Full Time	News	WSVA-AM/FM	11/5/2024
<b>Meteorologist</b> Portsmouth, VA	Full Time	News	Nexstar Media Inc.	10/30/2024
<b>Multimedia Journalist</b> Roanoke, VA	Full Time	News	WDBJ-TV	10/30/2024
<b>Part-Time Board Operator/Air Talent</b> Chesapeake, VA	Part Time	On Air	Saga Communications	10/29/2024
<b>WAVY Unpaid Sports Intern, Spring 2025</b> Portsmouth, VA	Part Time	News	Nexstar Media Inc.	10/24/2024
<b>WAVY Unpaid Sales &amp; Marketing Intern Spring 2025</b> Portsmouth, VA	Part Time	Sales	Nexstar Media Inc.	10/24/2024