



Monthly Newsletter

National Security Highlights



A Note from the President

*Tracy Gregorio,
President, Women in
Defense Greater
Hampton Roads*

At Women in Defense Greater Hampton Roads, we prove every day that excellence isn't confined by labels—skill, grit, and sharp ideas come from every corner. This year, we're cranking up our momentum with mentoring opportunities, industry day, lunch and learns, and a fast-hit professional development day designed to sharpen what the fleet and our defense community need right now. We're building a stronger, smarter, and more resilient workforce—together.

I encourage you to jump in, participate, and bring a friend or colleague who shares your commitment to national security and professional growth. Every conversation, every new connection, and every new idea strengthens our impact.

Thank you for pouring your time, your talent, and your leadership into both the mission and into one another. Your energy is what keeps WIDGHR moving forward with strength and purpose.

Let's keep raising the bar—together.

*With gratitude,
Tracy Gregorio*

As U.S. companies navigate with new tariffs and evolving international trade policy, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) stands as a vital ally for businesses as they adjust to global changes. For Hampton Roads—home to critical shipyards, military installations, and a layered defense supply chain—VEDP's resources and guidance offer a critical buffer against economic fluctuations.

Strategic Guidance in a Shifting Trade Landscape

A new 10% tariff on all U.S. trade partners has introduced sourcing and cost challenges across industries. While this initiative addresses US trade imbalances, it requires thoughtful adaptation from defense contractors in Hampton Roads to maintain production and profitability. VEDP supports businesses through this transition with proactive supply chain assessments, expert consulting, and timely regulatory guidance—helping companies stay competitive and resilient in a changing global landscape.

Through its International Trade division, VEDP equips Virginia companies with the tools to understand new tariff structures, explore new markets, and design strategic export plans. Trade missions and curated market intelligence give firms the agility needed to pivot when federal policies shift.

Local Support, Global Reach

VEDP's regional presence ensures companies in Hampton Roads—whether supplying Naval Station Norfolk or Newport News Shipbuilding—can access grants, training, and export support. Their compliance assistance helps defense-adjacent firms enhance competitiveness while staying aligned with U.S. trade controls and safeguarding intellectual property.

Their Supply Chain Optimization Program is especially critical now. It helps businesses reduce reliance on foreign vendors, strengthen domestic partnerships, and build long-term resilience—key goals in today's strained global trade environment.

A Foundation for Long-Term Security

As economic security becomes inseparable from national defense, VEDP's role in helping companies remain contract-ready and globally competitive directly supports U.S. security priorities. For Hampton Roads, that means more stable jobs, stronger industry ties, and a robust regional economy prepared to thrive.

Get Involved with VEDP

WIDGHR members interested in strengthening their supply chains, expanding into international markets, or navigating trade compliance are encouraged to explore VEDP's services. Visit exportvirginia.org to connect with regional trade managers, access market research tools, and register for upcoming trade missions and training events. Whether you're a startup supplier or an established defense contractor, VEDP offers tailored resources to help you grow—at home and abroad.



AI Tip of the Month

Rising tariffs and defense spending shifts can leave business leaders scrambling, but AI tools like ChatGPT can help translate these macroeconomic changes into smart, localized decisions. By analyzing news trends and generating scenario plans, AI can turn uncertainty into clarity.

How It Helps:

- **Trend Summarization:** AI can digest multiple headlines and policy statements, summarizing what matters most to your business.
- **Scenario Forecasting:** Ask ChatGPT to explore best-case, worst-case, and most likely impacts on your operations based on proposed tariffs or budget cuts.
- **Supply Chain Strategy:** Quickly assess risks to suppliers or opportunities in reshoring by prompting AI to evaluate domestic vs. international sourcing.

This empowers Hampton Roads businesses to stay agile, spot opportunities, and align operations with evolving federal priorities, especially those impacting shipbuilding, defense logistics, and local economic development.

Try this prompt...

Summarize the key U.S. trade policy changes in 2025 and help me identify three potential impacts on a small defense contracting business based in Hampton Roads. Create a brief strategic action plan to adapt to these changes.

Heard at the Congressional Water Cooler...



On Tuesday, April 29th, the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee approved \$150 million as part of its reconciliation process which allows the party with a congressional majority to fast-track legislation without risking a filibuster. The funding included in this measure is intended to increase defense spending for certain priorities such as Golden Dome, advanced fighter jet and drone procurement, shipbuilding, and munitions production, among others. The proposal was approved in the House Armed Services Committee by a 35-21 vote and now advances to be combined with other legislative components to create the “One Big, Beautiful Bill” that President Trump and congressional republicans have been working towards since inauguration.

Shortly after, on May 2nd, the Trump Administration released its highly anticipated Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) skinny budget request. In sum, the administration is requesting a \$892.6 billion base defense budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The Trump administration is touting the first \$1 trillion defense budget and a 13 percent increase in overall funding. To do this, the administration is considering the yet-to-be-approved reconciliation measure, which provides \$150 million intended to “supplement certain discretionary activities.” Because the reconciliation process operates outside the traditional budget and appropriations channels, it has prompted discussion among some members of Congress regarding the transparency and long-term implications of this funding approach. While some have expressed concern that the requested funds may not reflect a net increase when adjusted for inflation, the administration views this strategy as a way to provide targeted support for critical defense priorities while maintaining budget flexibility.

The release of the skinny budget officially kicks off the FY26 National Defense Authorization Act and Appropriations processes on Capitol Hill, with a more detailed budget from the administration anticipated in the weeks to come. In addition to posture hearings, which have already begun on the Hill, the various committees and subcommittees will begin putting together their respective legislative text to move the process forward, with the hopes of passing appropriations bills before the end of the fiscal year at the conclusion of September.

For more Women in Defense Greater Hampton Roads news and information, select the following icons.



Local Events

WID Hampton Roads

Hampton Roads Chamber Business Social

May 20th, 2025

A Monthly mixer offering a casual setting for cross-industry networking. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, and opportunities to connect with regional business leaders. [Sign up here.](#)



Small Business Task Force Open House

May 21st, 2025

The Virginia Peninsula Chamber is hosting an open house to the Chamber's Small Business Task Force, offering policy advocacy, subcommittees, and collaborative solutions on workforce, capital, infrastructure, and innovation. [Learn more here.](#)

AFCEA Hampton Roads May Luncheon

May 27th, 2025

Featuring CDR Robert R. Pinckney of Naval Special Warfare Tactical Communications Command TWO, this luncheon explores innovation in tactical comms. Includes networking and a plated meal. [Register here.](#)



Featured Member Spotlight



Mackenzie Coleman

Cybersecurity Professional

Two-14 Aviation

Mackenzie Coleman supports companies as they self-assess their cybersecurity compliance. Her work bridges technical insight and risk management, ensuring clients are prepared for cyber threats.

Mackenzie first got involved with WID through a recommendation from a fellow member. What began as volunteering quickly grew into deeper involvement, leading her to her current role as Communications Chair. She values how WID connects professionals across the entire Hampton Roads region, fostering meaningful introductions and expanding networks. Mackenzie encourages others to get involved, emphasizing that WID offers lasting connections and professional growth—whether you're just starting your career or decades into it.

[Connect with Mackenzie](#) to discuss cybersecurity or WID!