



*Commonwealth of Virginia*  
*Office of Governor Terry McAuliffe*

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**Office of the Governor**

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**Governor McAuliffe Announces 25 New Jobs in  
Grayson County**

*~Independence Lumber to Invest More Than \$5 Million to Rebuild,  
Expand Sawmill; Retain 57 Employees~*

**Company Will Source 90% of Timber from Virginia**

INDEPENDENCE – Governor Terry McAuliffe today announced in Grayson County that Independence Lumber (<http://www.indlbr.com>) is rebuilding and expanding production at its sawmill operation that was destroyed by fire in November of 2012. The company will invest more than \$5 million, retain 57 current jobs, create 25 new jobs at the site, and purchase 90 percent of its timber needs from Virginia forests. The Commonwealth of Virginia is partnering with Grayson County and Independence Lumber on this project through the Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID).

Speaking in Grayson County about today’s announcement, **Governor McAuliffe said**, “Virginia’s forestry industry supports good jobs in our rural communities, provides important market opportunities for the Commonwealth’s private forestland owners, and is a major driver of export sales through the Port of Virginia. Partnering with a company like Independence Lumber is a great way my administration can further the recovery of Virginia’s forest products industry, which was hit hard by the economic recession. Independence Lumber’s decision to rebuild this sawmill is a powerful symbol of their faith in that recovery and in Virginia more broadly. This new facility will bring much needed employment opportunities to the region’s citizens and economic vitality back to the this part of state, and more importantly, back to the Commonwealth, helping to build a new Virginia economy.”

Independence Lumber's new sawmill will produce a variety of dimensional lumber sourced from the region, including Red and White Oak, Poplar, Birch, Hickory, and Eastern White Pine. Independence's products will be sold domestically and exported into the global marketplace through the Port of Virginia.

"One of the best ways to answer the Governor's call to build a new Virginia economy is to work closely with two of the Commonwealth's top industries, agriculture and forestry, to create new economic opportunities and jobs, especially in our rural communities," said **Todd Haymore, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry**. "With 62 percent of Virginia covered by forestland and two-thirds of that being held by the private sector, the forestry industry will play an important role in creating new economic benefits throughout the state. Independence Lumber's decision to rebuild its sawmill will generate new demand for private timber owners and give our loggers new business and the opportunity to re-invest in their operations as well."

Working in partnership with Virginia and Grayson County, Independence Lumber will invest in rebuilding the destroyed sawmill and acquiring new equipment for the renovated facility. These improvements will strengthen the company's competitive position in the reviving economy and housing sector.

"The county had been working on this project to assist Independence Lumber, Inc. since 2012," said **John Brewer, Chairman of the Grayson County Board of Supervisors**. "Thanks to the creativity and pragmatism of our local economic development team, the state's willingness to support Grayson County and our business community by way of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Virginia Tobacco Commission, and the sheer resilience and determination of Independence Lumber, our citizens now have another success story of new jobs to celebrate. This project is a perfect example of how important jobs are to both Grayson County, the Commonwealth and an effective demonstration of the government's role in economic development."

"We are aggressively moving forward with our expansion project and would sincerely like to thank Jonathan Sweet and the Grayson County team, Secretary Haymore and the Virginia Tobacco Commission for their assistance in helping to make this project possible," said **Randall Eller, Owner and President of Independence Lumber, Inc.** "We would also like to thank Governor McAuliffe for his interest in our part of Virginia and are looking forward to getting production ramped up again here in Independence. Once completed, we will have added 25 new jobs to our Virginia operations. Providing quality employment opportunities is important to our company, as we are grateful to the Grayson County residents who have continued to support us during our transition. This is truly an exciting time for Independence Lumber and we are looking forward to many more years of production here in Southwest Virginia."

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) worked with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), Grayson County, and the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission to help secure the project for Virginia. Governor McAuliffe approved a \$100,000 grant from the Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) to assist Grayson County with the project. Independence Lumber is committing to purchase at least 20 million board feet of timber per year from Virginia producers, which will represent 90 percent of its annual purchases. Through the Virginia Jobs Investment Program, Independence Lumber will receive

additional funding and services to support its training and retraining activities. The company will also receive assistance from the Tobacco Region Opportunity Fund.

“On behalf of the Virginia Tobacco Commission, I want to congratulate Independence Lumber on their recent expansion that will bring 25 new jobs to Grayson County,” **said Senator Bill Carrico, (R – Galax) a Commissioner of the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission.** “Their presence in our region and their recent success is a testament to the hard work of their employees over the years. This announcement is highlighted by a capital investment of more than \$5 million, which will benefit not only Independence Lumber, but all of Grayson County. Everyone who helped make this development possible should be commended.”

**Delegate Israel O’Quinn, R-Bristol, added,** “The announcement regarding Independence Lumber is an exciting example of the positive momentum in Grayson County. I am proud to represent this incredible county in the House of Delegates and glad to see good things happening here. I appreciate the hard work of Grayson County officials as well as Secretary Todd Haymore and his office to facilitate these opportunities.”

According to a 2013 economic impact study conducted by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia, agriculture and forestry are two of Virginia’s largest industries with a combined economic impact of \$70 billion annually. Agriculture generates more than \$52 billion per annum, while forestry induces over \$17 billion. The industries also provide more than 400,000 jobs in the Commonwealth.

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Since the beginning of the McAuliffe Administration, 156 economic development deals have been closed in Virginia that will create over 13,306 jobs and \$4.25 billion in capital investment.

### **About the Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund**

*The AFID Fund was created during the 2012 session of the General Assembly and is being embraced by the McAuliffe Administration as an important tool in growing the Commonwealth’s agriculture and forestry sector and helping to make Virginia the leading exporter of agricultural and forest products on the East Coast. More information about the AFID grant, which has the flexibility to assist projects large and small throughout Virginia, can be found at <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/agribusiness/afid.shtml>.*