



Limits Campaign Contributions Patron: Senator Chap Petersen

SB803

KEY PROVISIONS:

- The provisions of this bill **limit contributions** from persons (including corporations), campaigns or political committees to candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General or the General Assembly **to \$20,000 in any one election cycle.**
- All direct or indirect contributions made by persons, campaigns and political committees to benefit a candidate shall be deemed to be contributions from such persons to a candidate.
- These limits **do not apply to contributions a candidate makes to their own campaign**, contributions from the candidate's direct family; or a political party to the candidate.
- **Any loan to a campaign shall be deemed to be a contribution from the maker and the guarantor of the loan** and is subject to the contribution limits, except if the loan is made by the candidate to his own campaign committee or is a standard bank loan. All loans must be by written and signed agreement.
- Civil penalties for knowingly **accepting a contribution in excess of the limits shall be subject to penalties of up to two times the amount** by which the contribution exceeds the limits.
- Any person who knowingly for the purpose of evading contribution limits **subdivides contributions into small amounts** shall be subject to a similar civil penalty.

WHY VIRGINIA NEEDS THIS BILL:

- **Virginia has NO dollar limits** on any type of campaign donations, unlike 45 other states.
- **The cost of our elections in Virginia rises exponentially every year** and [election costs in Virginia are among the highest in the country](#). In 2019, candidates in 30 state legislative races spent more than \$1 million, with five contests that year exceeding \$4 million. **Six of the state's 10 most expensive House races of all time occurred in 2021.**
- **Lack of limits has marginalized the voices of Virginia's small donors**; contributions of over \$20,000 in the last Governor's race accounted for 2/3 of all Virginia contributions. The majority of donors, 83% of them, contribute \$500 or less to candidates, yet their contributions account for only 7 percent of total contributions.
- **Virginia ranks poorly on campaign finance laws.** Just this year, the non-partisan [Coalition for Integrity](#) ranked **Virginia 43 out of 51 jurisdictions** in their [State Campaign Finance Index](#).
- **Legislators are forced to spend more and more time fundraising**, reducing their time dedicated to listening to and representing their constituents.
- Many well-established incumbents are protected by a reliable wealthy donor base and **the high cost of running for office precludes talented new candidates from running**, unless they have significant personal financial resources to invest in their own campaign.
- **The public's confidence in government has eroded.** Virginians increasingly perceive that their legislators engage in "pay-to-play" politics and have failed to pass common sense campaign finance reform legislation year-after-year.



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