



The Virginia Integrity Bill ([HB2281](#))

Strengthening the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council

Patron: Delegate Shin

KEY PROVISIONS

- The bill expands the **authority of the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council (the Council) to investigate Virginia residents' complaints** alleging violations of State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act and the General Assembly Conflicts of Interests Act (the Acts).
- The Council **will have increased responsibility to review for accuracy, completeness, and timeliness disclosure of legislators' financials and gifts** and open investigations into any anomalies.
- **Lobbyist and state government officers and employees will also have their required disclosure forms reviewed by the Council** for accuracy and completeness and compliance with filing deadlines. Anomalies found in these forms may also be investigated by the Council.
- **Penalties** for knowing violations of the Acts **have been increased** from a misdemeanor **to a Class VI felony** violation with **increased civil penalties and fines**.
- To prevent the abuse of the ethics complaint process, the bill specifies that **only complaints based upon first-hand knowledge will be accepted** and **no investigation will be initiated within 60 days of an election or nominating event**.
- The bill also requires the Council to create a searchable electronic database for the filing of all forms and to make the **database available online to the public**.

WHY VIRGINIA NEEDS THIS BILL

- The **Coalition for Integrity's 2020 S.W.A.M.P Index ranked Virginia 46 out of 51 jurisdictions in terms of transparency and accountability**. This ranking was awarded, in part, due to Virginia's almost non-existent ethics accountability mechanism which does not have a functioning process to address resident complaints alleging conflicts of interest or ethics violations by legislators, lobbyists, or state and government officers and employees.
- In a 2021 survey, **88 percent of Virginians, irrespective of party, indicated that they support enhanced public disclosure and accountability** for legislators' use of campaign funds and lobbyist influence through campaign donations.
- **Most other states like Connecticut, Washington State, and New York have robust independent ethics enforcement mechanisms** that have led to increased transparency and accountability in state government.



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