

Why. The votes are in and [70-80% of Americans](#), irrespective of their party affiliations, agree that the most damaging development in U.S. elections since the Supreme Court's ruling in favor of Citizens United in 2010 has been the almost unlimited capacity of special interests to influence the outcome of what should be fair elections. [87% of business owners](#) feel that our campaign finance system is broken.

Money in Virginia Politics. In swing states, such as Virginia, where the power and influence of huge donations can determine electoral outcomes, the cost of elections has jumped almost twofold in the last decade. In 2011, the Senate and House of Delegates' campaigns together raised **\$68.7 million**, whereas total contributions in 2019 jumped to **\$121.5 million**, with nearly **\$25 million** coming from **outside the state**. **Virginia is one of the only five states which have no limitations on individual and public/private sector political contributions.** In fact, because of the weak campaign finance legal structure in our Commonwealth, Virginia ranks among the [lowest of all the fifty states](#) in both transparency of and accountability for campaign finance contributions and expenditures, and ethical enforcement.

Interested in taking action to get money out of politics? Join our non-partisan Virginia chapter of [American Promise](#) which aims to get money out of politics by making Virginia the 22st state to pass a **resolution** recommending an amendment to the U.S. Constitution; and, 2) pass **campaign finance laws** in the Virginia Assembly

Entry points for action. Our strategy focuses on building a **People-Driven Grassroots Movement** which is **nonpartisan** and **bottoms up**. It builds on engagement with other grassroots organizations around the state through the following activities:

American Promise is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to end the domination of our political system by the money of the powerful few. We support the passage of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution which would allow Congress to legislate campaign finance rules. Such an amendment would negate the 2010 *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling which equated people with corporations and money with free speech. It opened the door to undisclosed billions of dollars being pumped into our elections.

- Listening Sessions with MOC, State Reps, Other Elected Officials
- Pledges
- Lobbying Days

Legislative Action

- Letters to the Editor
- Editorials
- Video Testimonials
- Social Media Campaign

Media Engagement

- Presentations
- Business Engagement
- Grassroots Orgs
- Event Tabling
- Local Resolutions

Community Outreach

What You Can Do.

- Sign a **petition** asking senior officials in the VA General Assembly to support campaign finance reform legislation.
- Send a **letter**, through our letter-writing platform, to your state Senator and Delegate
- Email us at americanpromiseva@gmail.org to learn about other ways you can get involved to limit the influence of outside spending from special interests, corporations, and the wealthy.
- Check us out at our [Website](#), [Twitter](#), or [Facebook](#).

Why Should People Care about Money in Politics? It affects most of our policies. Big money in politics has contributed to unacceptably high rates of poverty, racial injustice, unprotected Covid-19 exposure in the workplace, opioid addiction, environmental degradation, an over reliance on private prisons, and neglect of our public schools. Today, the unfettered role of big money in politics nationally and here in Virginia has led to:

- **High poverty rates and growing income equality.** 40% of people in Virginia are [poor or low-income](#)—a total of 3.3 million residents. From 1979 to 2012, [income](#) for the top 1% grew by 200%, while income for the bottom 99% only grew by 25%.
- **Felon disenfranchisement.** More than 508,000 residents cannot vote, including 22% of the Black population in Virginia. Nearly two thirds of the over 37,000 people [imprisoned](#) as of 2017 are people of color, and Black residents of Virginia are [incarcerated](#) at 5 times the rate of Whites.
- **Inequitable transfers from the federal government.** From 2008 to 2014, VA law enforcement received at least \$30.4 million in [excess federal military equipment](#) while only about \$8 million was received in [SNAP benefits, leaving many Virginia households struggling to put food on the table.](#)
- **Access to health care and education.** 710,000 people in Virginia were [uninsured](#) as of 2018 (Medicaid expansion legislation passed in 2020 helps address this issue). Fifty-seven percent of fourth graders are [not proficient in reading](#), and 60% of eighth graders are [not proficient in math](#) as of 2017.
- **An energy policy that caters to special interests over average Virginians.** *Dominion Energy*, the State's largest electric utilities provider, enjoys a near monopoly. It donates to both political parties, spending more than \$2 million in the 2018 congressional races and \$1 million in the 2019 General Assembly race.

Virginia Money Out of Politics Unity Statement:

“Not in numbers but in unity that our great strength lies.” Thomas Paine

The influence of big money, greatly exacerbated by the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling in 2010, is undermining the very legitimacy of our government. Now, wealthy donors and special interests are free to spend without limits and politicians increasingly rely on a reduced number of large donors. As a result, our public policies can often represent the desires of special interests, not the interests of average Americans.

In Virginia, this is particularly problematic because we are one of only five states which has no limitations on campaign finance contributions and no restrictions on politicians or their relatives spending campaign funds on personal expenses.

The stakes could not be higher. Now is the time to stand united in demanding a government that is responsive to the will of the people.

We support passing and enforcing strong campaign finance reforms in Virginia that help guarantee a democracy responsive to the people.