



2022-2023 General Assembly Candidate Questionnaire

Clean Virginia is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization with an associated Political Action Committee (Clean Virginia Fund). We want Virginians to pay fair prices for clean, renewable energy and we believe that a more ethical and transparent state government is key to achieving that goal.

Along with past voting records (for incumbents) and public statements, Clean Virginia uses the information provided here to inform our 2022 and 2023 endorsement process for candidates for Virginia's General Assembly. We also hope this questionnaire will help highlight our organization's priority issues to candidates.

We ask that all candidates seeking Clean Virginia's endorsement complete the entire questionnaire. More information about Clean Virginia, our core issues and our mission can be found on our website: www.cleanvirginia.org.

Responses and/or questions about this form should be emailed to endorsements@cleanvirginia.org.

If you need additional space to complete a question, please attach your responses as a Word document. Please be advised that we consider your answers to this questionnaire public record.

SECTION I - Candidate Information

Candidate Name: _____

Office Sought: _____

District: _____

Party: _____

Name of Campaign Committee: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Website: _____

Your Contact Information

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Your Campaign Manager's Contact Information

Phone: _____

Email: _____

SECTION II

Regulated Utility Monopolies and Campaign Contributions

Privately owned public utilities are unique from other corporations in that (a) they are supposed to balance the public interest with their own profit motive and (b) they are granted monopolies by the state, in exchange for accepting state oversight. Virginia legislators and the State Corporation Commission (SCC) are responsible for protecting captive customers from monopolistic abuses by regulating utilities' operations and the prices they charge customers.

Because of this structure, there is an inherent conflict of interest for elected officials to accept campaign contributions from the utility monopolies they are responsible for regulating. Accepting utilities' contributions also creates a strong appearance of bias that undermines faith in the democratic process. Recognizing this, 25 states ban campaign contributions from utility monopolies.

Clean Virginia believes that banning contributions from public utilities to legislators:

1. Limits utility monopolies attempts to shape legislation that benefits shareholders' profits over the public interest.
2. Prevents utilities from using ratepayer's money to influence election outcomes.
3. Removes the appearance of a conflict of interest and helps restore public trust in Virginia's elected officials. Clean Virginia believes that by not accepting contributions, utility companies and lawmakers can share necessary information without an appearance of bias.

1. **Do you accept campaign contributions from Virginia utility monopolies (e.g., Dominion Energy, Appalachian Power) or more than \$1,000 from an employed lobbyist of one of these companies per year?***

Yes No

Comments:

2. **Do you own any personal stocks, bonds, or investments in regulated Virginia utility monopolies (e.g., Dominion Energy, Appalachian Power)?**

Yes No

**Clean Virginia's capped standard for individual lobbyist contributions is in recognition that identifying and refunding small donations from Dominion's dozens of lobbyists, some of whom are constituents, creates an undue burden on campaigns.*

SECTION III

Utility Regulation

Virginia’s current regulatory structure for electric utility monopolies stifles innovation, keeps energy bills high, and incentivizes utilities to invest in costly new infrastructure regardless of whether it benefits customers. Reform will help shape a clean energy system in Virginia that protects the environment and lowers prices for captive customers while maintaining reliability.

Legislation favorable to Virginia’s utility monopolies has allowed Dominion Energy to consistently overcharge Virginia customers. In 2015, the General Assembly passed a “rate freeze” that suspended the authority of the State Corporation Commission (SCC) to conduct rate reviews and left Virginians paying unnecessarily high bills. Furthermore, a legal provision enacted in 2018 prevented electricity rates from decreasing by more than \$50 million. These anti-consumer provisions allowed the monopoly to rake in more than \$1 billion of overcharges from 2017 to 2020.

In the past three years, a broad bipartisan coalition of legislators and advocates has pursued legislation that would protect Virginia’s utility customers from overcharges and ensure the clean energy transition is cost-effective and affordable for all. The movement faces an uphill battle, but has also seen meaningful successes, one of the most notable being the bipartisan passage of House Bill 528, which helped return long overdue refunds to Dominion Energy customers. Thanks to this bill, in Dominion’s 2021 rate review, the utility was forced to settle and refund \$300 million of the \$1 billion the company had overcharged. Additionally, the company settled for a rate decrease of \$50 million, which was the maximum allowed by the law at that time.

Other structural reforms have gained broad bipartisan support but have faced opposition from legislators who accept large contributions from Dominion Energy and hold powerful positions on key committees. In 2020, for example, the Fair Energy Bills Act (HB 1132) that sought to restore SCC authority to order rate reductions and issue refunds when utilities overcharge customers failed by just one vote in the Senate Commerce and Labor (C&L) Committee.

The General Assembly should put consumer protection first and stop enabling a broken regulatory system that led to billions in overcharges in only four years. A serious commitment to regulatory reform is key to creating a sustainable clean energy system that prioritizes affordability, reliability and efficiency.

- 1. Do you support efforts to reform current laws that provide outsized advantages to privately owned utility monopolies at the expense of Virginia ratepayers?**

Yes

No

Comments:

2. In order to respond to the climate crisis, Virginia must decarbonize its energy system, including electricity production, transportation and industrial activities. However, privately-owned utilities are the main actors planning this transition. Due to limited representation, consumer's interests are consistently ignored to favor utilities' shareholders. Do you support efforts to improve the energy planning process in Virginia to increase transparency, equitability and participation?

Yes No

Comments:

3. Do you support efforts to create better incentive structures for Virginia's utility monopolies so that they are financially rewarded based on performance outcomes, not how much they spend?

Yes No

Comments:

SECTION IV

Environmental and Energy Justice

Marginalized communities disproportionately shoulder the burden of harmful environmental and economic impacts of electric utility projects in Virginia. For example, dangerous and unnecessary fossil fuel infrastructure components of the failed Atlantic Coast Pipeline were proposed to run through the majority Black community of Union Hill.

Similarly, unnecessarily high energy costs greatly impact low-income residents and communities of color. On average, Virginia households experience an energy burden — the percentage of income spent on energy costs — higher than the national average. Over 75% of Virginia households have an unaffordable energy burden, spending more than 6% of monthly income on utility bills, according to a report [published by the Virginia Poverty Law Center](#). Communities of color report higher than average monthly utility bills and are more likely to have difficulty paying bills. The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy found that [Black households spend 43% more, Hispanic households spend 20% more, and Native American households spend 45% more of their income on energy costs](#) compared with white households.

As we decarbonize our energy economy, we must ensure that the clean energy transition is just and equitable for all Virginians. Clean Virginia believes the clean energy transition should prioritize investments in frontline communities and the regions with resources that fueled our previous energy economy, but not overload families already burdened with high energy bills.

- 1. Do you support the prioritization of environmental and economic justice concerns into all aspects of energy and regulatory policy in order to avoid harmful health, social, and economic effects on minority and low-income populations?**

Yes No

Comments:

- 2. As Virginia transitions to a clean energy economy, how would you support efforts to lower energy bills and alleviate the energy burden of disproportionately affected communities?**

SECTION V

Campaign Finance and Ethics Reform

The Commonwealth lags behind the rest of the country in ending legalized corruption and safeguarding the democratic process, particularly with regards to campaign finance laws. Virginia is **one of only five states** allowing unlimited contributions to political campaigns and is the virtually the only state that does not ban the personal use of campaign funds. It is one of the reasons **Virginia scored 46th out of 50 states** in the [S.W.A.M.P. report](#), which measures anti-corruption measures across the nation.

Millions of corporate dollars pour into Virginia elections each year, including from lobbyists and political action committees (PACs) that operate on behalf of corporations. While corporations have a right to represent their interests, 84% of Americans believe that unlimited corporate political spending drowns out the voices of everyday people. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 22 states prohibit corporate donations while another 22 impose limits. Virginia is among only six states with no limitations whatsoever on corporate donations.

1. **Do you support legislative efforts to ban campaign contributions to General Assembly members and candidates from regulated utility monopolies?**

Yes No

Comments:

2. **Do you support efforts to require greater oversight and transparency for lobbyists, as well as their political giving and gifts to elected officials?**

Yes No

Comments:

3. What are some specific ways you think Virginia could improve its ethical governance?

Authorization

This signature attests that the above information accurately represents the views of the candidate.

Candidate name: _____

Candidate signature: _____

Date: _____