



## 2024-2025 Statewide 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 2024 and 2025 funding and endorsement process for candidates for Virginia’s Executive Branch. 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.** Responses and/or questions about this form should be emailed to [endorsements@cleanvirginia.org](mailto:endorsements@cleanvirginia.org). More information about Clean Virginia, our core issues and our mission can be found on our website: [www.cleanvirginia.org](http://www.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: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Candidate Contact Information**

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Campaign Manager’s Contact Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION II - Regulated Utility Monopolies and Campaign Contributions**

Virginia's investor-owned public utilities, Dominion Energy and Appalachian Power Company, are unique from other corporations in that they are granted monopolies by the state to provide a public service. In exchange for monopoly status, these utilities are regulated by the Virginia legislature and the State Corporation (SCC). Together, the legislature and the SCC are responsible for setting fair profit levels for the utilities and protecting captive customers from price gouging and monopolistic overreach.

Because of this structure, it is an inherent conflict of interest for Virginia's 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 public trust in the democratic process. Recognizing this, nearly half the country bans campaign contributions from utility monopolies.<sup>1</sup>

Clean Virginia believes banning contributions from public utilities to legislators accomplishes the following:

- Limits utility monopolies' attempts to shape legislation that prioritizes utility shareholders' profits over the public interest;
- Prevents utilities from using ratepayers' money to influence election outcomes;
- Restores public trust in Virginia's elected officials by eliminating a conflict of interest. Clean Virginia believes that by removing utility money from Virginia politics, utility companies, lawmakers and regulators can exchange necessary information without bias.

**1. Do you accept campaign contributions from Virginia's utility monopolies Dominion Energy and Appalachian Power Company or more than \$5,000 per year from one of their employed lobbyists or C-Suite executives?<sup>2</sup>**

**Yes   No**

**Comments:**

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<sup>1</sup>"Summary Campaign Contribution Limits: Overview," National Conference of State Legislatures, October 4, 2019, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/campaign-contribution-limits-overview>

<sup>2</sup> \*Clean Virginia's capped standard for individual contributions recognizes that identifying and refunding small donations from dozens of lobbyists and C-Suite executives, some of whom are constituents, creates an undue burden on campaigns.

## SECTION II (continued)

### 2. Do you own any personal stocks, bonds, or investments in Dominion Energy or Appalachian Power?

Yes No

Comments:

## SECTION III - Utility Regulation

Virginia's current regulatory structure for electric utility monopolies keeps energy bills high<sup>3</sup>, stifles innovation and incentivizes utilities to invest in costly new infrastructure regardless of whether it benefits customers. Over the past few years, a broad bipartisan coalition of legislators, consumer advocates, business interests, and environmental groups have pursued legislation that would protect Virginia's utility customers from overcharges and ensure a transition to clean energy is cost-effective and affordable for all. This coalition has seen several successes, including:

- The bipartisan passage of House Bill 528 in 2020 introduced by former Delegate and current Senator Suhas Subramanyam. This legislation **returned \$330 million in refunds to Dominion Energy customers and forced a rate reduction of \$50 million**, which was the maximum allowed by law at that time (Dominion had overcharged customers by over \$1 billion between 2017 and 2020<sup>4</sup>).
- The 2023 passage of the bipartisan Affordable Energy Act (House Bill 1604 and Senate Bill 1321, introduced by former Senator Jennifer McClellan, Senator Creigh Deeds, and Delegates Rip Sullivan and Lee Ware) combined with the heavily amended rate reform bill House Bill 1770 / Senate Bill 1265 **restored critical SCC oversight and will save customers an estimated \$4 billion.**

The passage of these bills marked a watershed moment in the mission to reform Virginia's energy system into one built for the 21st century. Underlying structural flaws in the regulatory system remain, flaws that incentivize utilities to neglect cost-saving tools to cut pollution like energy efficiency in favor of building expensive infrastructure with a generous rate of return from customers. It is imperative that the General Assembly update Virginia's regulatory system into one that can create a sustainable clean energy system powered by affordability, reliability and efficiency.

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<sup>3</sup>2022 average monthly bill- residential. Energy Information Administration. 2022.

[https://www.eia.gov/electricity/sales\\_revenue\\_price/pdf/table\\_5A.pdf](https://www.eia.gov/electricity/sales_revenue_price/pdf/table_5A.pdf).

<sup>4</sup>Commission Staff Testimony, PUR-2021-00058. October 5, 2021.

[https://scc.virginia.gov/docketsearch/DOCS/5y\\_v01!.PDF](https://scc.virginia.gov/docketsearch/DOCS/5y_v01!.PDF)

### **SECTION III (continued)**

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

**Yes    No**

**Comments:**

- 2. Virginia's transition to clean energy will benefit customers with lower prices, increased reliability, and cleaner air and water as long as the interests of investor-owned utilities are balanced with the needs of consumers. Do you support efforts to improve the energy planning process in Virginia to increase transparency and meaningful stakeholder participation?**

**Yes    No**

**Comments:**

- 3. Do you support efforts to create better incentive structures for Virginia's utility monopolies so that utility profits are linked to optimal performance outcomes, including cost savings for customers and lowering pollution?**

**Yes    No**

**Comments:**

## **SECTION IV - Minimizing Harm from the Energy Industry**

Historically, marginalized communities have shouldered unfair negative environmental and economic costs from our energy economy. In Virginia, industrial infrastructure and pollution sources have often been sited in socioeconomically depressed areas. Recent examples, including the proposed Chesterfield gas plant and Union Hill compressor station, have highlighted the need to proactively protect vulnerable communities in the Commonwealth. Similarly, high energy costs greatly impact low-income communities and communities of color. On average, Virginia households spent a greater share of their income on energy costs than the national average, and over 75% of Virginia households spend more than 6% of monthly income on utility bills, according to a report published by the Virginia Poverty Law Center.<sup>5</sup> We must ensure that the clean energy transition benefits all Virginians, especially communities experiencing the most severe impacts of extreme weather and the regions that powered our country for over a century, like former coalfield areas of Southwest Virginia. It must also ensure energy is affordable for families, transitioning in the most cost-effective way possible.

- 1. Do you support energy and regulatory policies which ensure all people are provided protection from harmful health, social and economic effects of our energy system?**

**Yes No**

**Comments:**

- 2. Do you support the prioritization of a clean energy economy *at the lowest cost possible*, which means a primary emphasis on energy efficiency and rooftop and distributed solar?**

**Yes No**

**Comments:**

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<sup>5</sup> "Electricity Burden and the Myth of Virginia's Rate Utopia." Virginia Poverty Law Center, October 5, 2018. <https://vplc.org/electricity-burden-and-the-myth-of-virginias-rate-utopia/>.

## **SECTION V - Campaign Finance and Ethics Reform**

The Commonwealth lags behind the rest of the country in regulating campaign contributions. Virginia is **one of only five states** that has no cap on the size of campaign contributions and is one of a small handful of states that does not ban the personal use of campaign funds. Further, Virginia is one of just five states that allows unlimited corporate donations to legislators. As a result, **Virginia scored 46th out of 50 states** in the [Coalition for Integrity's 2020 S.W.A.M.P. Index](#), which measures anti-corruption measures across the nation.<sup>6</sup>

Virginia's electric utilities take advantage of lax campaign finance laws to pour millions of dollars into Virginia elections each year, including from lobbyists and political action committees (PACs).<sup>7</sup> Contributions to lawmakers in charge of regulating utilities are an inherent conflict of interest, drowning out the voices of everyday Virginians and opening the door for the utilities to regulate themselves.

- 1. Do you support legislative efforts to ban campaign contributions from utility monopolies to members and candidates of the General Assembly and Executive Branch?**

**Yes    No**

**Comments:**

- 2. Do you support legislative efforts to cap or ban campaign contributions from corporations to members and candidates of the General Assembly and Executive Branch?**

**Yes    No**

**Comments:**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.coalitionforintegrity.org/swamp2020/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.vpap.org/donors/120206-dominion-energy/>

**SECTION V (continued)**

**3. Do you support legislative efforts to limit the amount individual donors can contribute to members and candidates of the General Assembly and Executive Branch?**

**Yes    No**

**Comments:**

**4. Do you support legislative efforts to ban the personal use of campaign contributions by elected officials and candidates?**

**Yes    No**

**Comments:**

**5. What are some specific ways you think Virginia could promote more ethical governance?**

**Authorization**

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

Candidate name: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_