



Testimony  
Senate Privileges & Elections Committee

February 6, 2024

SB78

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Campaign advertisements; independent expenditures, electioneering communications.

The League of Women Voters supports SB 78. Virginia currently has some of the loosest campaign finance laws in the country, and the bill advances twin campaign finance reforms that would increase transparency and reduce donors' temptation to "buy" votes with generous funding. Broadening the scope of disclaimer requirements by requiring disclosure of the sponsor's three largest contributors not only increases transparency to the electorate, which already favors restricting large donation from corporations, it also further discourages the likelihood that a candidate becomes beholden to deep-pocketed special interests. The proposed substitute would allow larger contributions before the rules apply than the similar House bill. Virginia voters are bombarded with ads during electoral campaigns, and they deserve to know who is paying for them

SB107

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Campaign finance; fundraising during special sessions prohibited.

The League of Women Voters supports SB 107. Current law wisely prohibits General Assembly members from soliciting or accepting campaign contributions during regular sessions; extending those limits to special sessions closes a gaping hole in the law. Special sessions are no longer infrequent and a sitting legislator is at no less risk of undue influence from vested interests than is a candidate - even more so as a special session

deals with specific issues in which donors have a stake. This bill will help prevent even the appearance of such influence.

### SB224

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**Voter registration; cancellation of registration by voter convicted of a felony.**

This bill is an appropriate measure in response to the erroneous cancellation of over 3400 valid voters' registrations last year. Most of those voters had been convicted of a felony but had had their rights restored; at least one was never convicted of anything. This bill requires notice and record-keeping to minimize such errors. The League of Women Voters supports SB 224.

### SB300

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**Voter registration; list maintenance activities, required identification information.**

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports SB 300 because it is imperative that Virginia diligently maintain accurate voter lists. After withdrawing from ERIC, the consortium of states that securely and accurately matched data, Virginia has embarked on a series of memoranda of understanding with a number of other states. ERIC did not share member states' voters personal identifying information, while the MOUs do. ERIC employed widely accepted national and international security protocols, while the MOUs do not address, and Virginia cannot determine, the strength of other states' security protocols. This bill would require careful data matching, record keeping and notice to ensure that eligible registered voters are not improperly removed from the list of registered voters in Virginia.

### SB326

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**Campaign finance; prohibited contributions to candidates.**

The League of Women Voters supports SB 326. The League believes that no one contributor should have undue influence on the outcome of an election and has long supported banning regulated utilities from contributing to campaigns. Data from the Virginia Public Access Project - VPAP - confirms that the last election was the most expensive on record for Virginia, and that the \$775,000 contributed by Dominion Energy, Virginia's public utility, topped the list of large donors. That figure does not include any amount given through its PAC, so could well be higher. A 2021 poll conducted by the Wason Center at Christopher Newport University showed that 56% of

respondents favor banning corporate contributions altogether, which further supports restricting utilities' abilities to influence elections.

### SB629

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Campaign finance; independent expenditure reports, electronic filing required.

The League of Women Voters supports SB 692, including the delayed effective date. The League believes that democratic government depends on the informed and active participation of its citizens. Timely access to campaign expenditure information is important to such participation, increasing voters' ability to make informed decisions. Requiring electronic filing of all campaign expenditure reports, and removing the provision that has different requirements as to where campaign reports must be filed, depending on the office the candidate is seeking, as this bill does, is a significant step toward promoting transparency through timely access, with all reports in a central location and no need to wait for some to be digitized.