

Campaign Finance Disparity in the VA House of Delegates Talking Points

Big corporate donors in Virginia tend to contribute in roughly equal measure to both Democratic and Republican candidates at the state-wide level (e.g. Governor), where Democrats frequently get elected. However, further down ballot at the district level (e.g. State Senate, House of Delegates), these donors clearly favor Republicans. This disparity helps to sustain a situation where Republicans have control of the House of Delegates and can implement gerrymandering and voter suppression to stay in power.

A. Both parties have large donors:

Some Delegates from both parties receive large donations (\$50k+) from a small group of donors:

- GOP- Republican Party of VA and Dominion Leadership Trust (PAC)
- Democrats- Democratic Party of VA and House Democratic Caucus

B. However, Republicans down ballot are clearly favored by corporations: (see chart below)-

The huge fundraising disparity is felt by Democratic Delegate candidates.

- Energy giant Dominion Energy and tobacco giant Altria donate far more to Republicans than to Democrats at the level of State Senate and House of Delegates. Some donations are >\$10k.
- Other corporate donors, such as Verizon, Comcast and Anheuser-Busch give more generously to GOP candidates than to Democratic candidates (around \$1000-\$2500). These are local races where even relatively small donations make a big difference.
- Dominion Energy has been in the press lately, as Delegate candidates refuse their funding (53 Democratic and 4 Republican candidates as of April 2017), citing concerns about the environment and the conflict of interest created by Dominion’s campaign contributions.

C. Particular concerns about the Dominion PAC:

The Dominion Leadership Trust is a PAC formed in 2002 by Bill Howell, the former Republican Speaker of the House of Delegates.

- Former Speaker Howell has been accused of using the Dominion PAC to collect “dues” from GOP Delegates seeking key committee appointments. The current chairs of all of the standing committees in the House have given large amounts to the PAC.
- The PAC has engaged in recent campaign activity against Democrats, using racist remarks.
- The PAC is the second biggest donor to GOP candidates, after the Republican Party of VA.
- The Dominion PAC is the largest donor to the Republican Party of VA.
- Donors to the Dominion PAC include Dominion Energy, Altria and Koch Industries. The largest single donor is the RSLC (Group that sought to flip state governments to Republican control in advance of the 2010 census, thus permitting gerrymandering- the REDMAP plan).

CORPORATE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS UNDERWRITE REPUBLICAN DELEGATE CANDIDATES TO DEMOCRATS BY 4:1 MARGIN - DONATIONS IN \$K

