



# BIG MONEY OUT VA

“DEMOCRACY LOSES WHEN BIG MONEY WINS”

**PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** February 9th, 2024

**CONTACT:** Nancy Morgan, [BigMoneyOutVA](http://BigMoneyOutVA.com), (703) 362-8014, [nancyruthmorgan@gmail.com](mailto:nancyruthmorgan@gmail.com)

## Democracy Dies in Darkness in the Virginia General Assembly

### *Citizen group condemn blocking campaign finance bills from being heard*

**RICHMOND, VA** – The 2023 state elections were the most expensive election in Virginia history, one in which large donations from wealthy individuals, corporations, unions, and PACs overwhelmed small donations from regular citizens. Good governance advocates were therefore optimistic that common sense campaign finance bills proposed for the 2024 General Assembly would be fully heard and debated and finally become law, and thus help our state to overcome its pay-to-play reputation.

Yet, as the General Assembly moves toward cross-over, the time that bills move from one chamber to the other, it is clear that key legislation in our House of Delegates, Delegate Bulova's bill (HB 874) which proposes capping contributions which can go to candidates, and Delegate Marcus Simon bill (HB40) restricting personal use of campaign contributions, are dying in darkness.

Good governance groups which had rallied in Richmond on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Virginia's second Democracy Day, to support campaign finance and ethics bills fully expected both bills be heard in committee or move to the floor of the House of Delegates for a vote.

As of Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, the last day for campaign finance bills to be heard in the House Privileges and Elections committee, concerned citizens wonder why Delegate Bulova's bill (HB 874) has been held back from being heard in committee. The objective of the bill is to join 45 other states in establishing limits to the excessive movement of campaign donations going into legislative races. Polling reveals that four out of five Virginians, irrespective of party, want large donors to have less influence on our elections.

Meanwhile, the long awaited bill restricting personal use of campaign contributions patroned by Delegate Marcus Simon (HB40), after sailing through the P&E committee, has languished for weeks in the appropriations committee. This bill has been introduced every year since 1994 and basically sets clear guardrails on how legislators can use their campaign funds. Virginia is one of only 2 states without restrictions on personal use of campaign funds.

With Virginia ranking 46 out of 50 in the Coalition's for Integrity's SWAMP Index, transparency and accountability are key to building confidence in our institutions as well as our legislators. Not allowing bills to be voted on, or even heard by legislators, is an anathema to our democratic process.

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*BigMoneyOutVA is a non-partisan group which champions good governance and transparency in Virginia, while promoting increased public discourse between citizens of the Commonwealth and their legislators. We are dedicated to getting big money out of politics through campaign finance reform so as to increase the legitimacy and integrity of government and to enable our elected officials to better reflect the interests and will of all citizens of the Commonwealth.*