

**Resolution to Study an Increase in the Compensation of Members of the Virginia
General Assembly**

Sponsored by Boyd Walker

Whereas a general goal of the Democratic Party is to be inclusive to everyone and provide people from all backgrounds and financial status the opportunity to run for office should they choose;

Whereas our elected Representatives in Richmond are paid a base salary of \$17,640 in the House of Delegates and \$18,000 in the State Senate (excluding per diem, office allowance, healthcare, and travel expenses);

Whereas, although the General Assembly was in session for 60 days and had a special session for an additional 84 days in 2020, constituent service, community advocacy, and officeholder duties are year-round responsibilities for which representatives are not adequately compensated;

Whereas the publicly advertised base salary of Delegates and Senators might discourage people from even considering running for these positions;

Whereas higher pay will allow middle and working-class people, women, and disadvantaged minority groups to more readily run for elected office, ensuring a legislature that is more reflective of Virginia in its entirety;

Whereas tight official budgets regularly result in legislators purchasing office space and equipment with donor-supplied campaign funds and other non-transparent sources of money;

Whereas, while lobbyists represent their firms' interests full-time at salaries far exceeding those of legislators, our public representatives have to carefully budget their finances so they can serve the people's interest, make a living, and/or support families;

Whereas more highly-paid public elected officials would be less susceptible to gifts, free dinners, and other benefits lobbyists may offer, to curry favor with legislators; and (1)

Whereas, even though the cost of living varies across the state, each legislator is being paid to be in Richmond and consequently should be paid an equal salary and per diem. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved that the Alexandria Democratic Committee calls on the Virginia General Assembly—

- 1) To study an increase in the salary and compensation packages of Virginia legislators and how such an increase would impact fairness, opportunity, gender and racial

diversity, and clean governance, including an examination of how legislator pay in Virginia compares with other states and where Virginia places on national rankings of ethics and transparency; and

- 2) To consider increasing the pay of state legislators to a level and in a manner—
 - a) that allows them to be paid fairly for the amount of time they dedicate to serving their constituents;
 - b) such that the public and potential candidates in the Commonwealth have a comprehensive and transparent understanding of legislator pay and compensation; and
 - c) that reduces the illegitimate influence of donors and lobbyists on legislators.

Sources:

1. Total Compensation and conflicts of interest:
<https://www.dailypress.com/government/dp-nws-virginiaway-overview-20141116-story.html> Del. Manila Loupassi: “I make a good living, but guys who aren't as lucky, it turns 'em into beggars. ... They're looking around every night for someone to take them out to eat.”