

## **A Resolution to Restrict Political Contributions from Public Service Corporations**

**Whereas**, Man-made greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas are the chief cause of climate change, according to the overwhelming majority of climate scientists. Scientists also agree that climate change is accelerating at an unprecedented rate and that we are running out of time to avert catastrophic consequences to our planet.

**Whereas**, because greenhouse gases from fossil fuels, primarily carbon dioxide and methane, stay in the atmosphere for up to thousands of years, the decisions we make today will affect humanity for many centuries to come. Fighting global warming requires both steep reductions in fossil fuel consumption within the next two decades and increased investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

**Whereas**, after China, the U.S. leads the world in global warming pollution from fossil fuels, yet we still lack mandatory reductions on fossil fuel emissions in many sectors. Virginia ranks near the bottom in renewable energy capacity compared with other states, and lacks a mandatory Renewable Portfolio Standard. Specifically, Virginia ranks 37th among the United States in renewable energy production and 42nd among all states in number of solar PV systems installed.

**And Whereas**, in recent years, efforts to improve Virginia's commitment to renewable energy, to oppose new pipelines, and restrict offshore drilling have failed in the General Assembly. This is at least in part because monopolies like Dominion Resources and Appalachian Power – which oppose these measures – have an undue influence on the political process.

**Therefore be it resolved** that all elected officials should be making decisions about the environment without monetary influence from the fossil fuel industry, and we urge all members of the Virginia General Assembly to reject campaign contributions from public service corporations, we support legislation prohibiting any candidate to the General Assembly or statewide office from soliciting or accepting campaign contributions from a public service corporation, and we urge Virginia's state and local elected officials to establish the fight against climate change as a top legislative priority in accordance with Virginia's constitutional mandate to "protect [Virginia's] atmosphere, lands and waters from pollution, impairment or destruction."

1. In the code of Virginia, regulated monopolies like Dominion and Appalachian Power are called public service corporations. A list of public service corporations can be found in § 56-1 of the Code of Virginia. Utilities in Virginia (such as Dominion, Appalachian Power and Virginia Natural Gas) are regulated by the Corporation Commission under laws adopted by the General Assembly. The Commissioners are appointed by the General Assembly.

2. In 2015 alone, Dominion contributed a total of \$665,484, with \$375,984 going to Republicans and \$282,249 going to Democrats, according to the nonpartisan Virginia Public Access Project.

3. This year, for the first time, nearly 60 non-incumbent House of Delegates candidates have signed a pledge to never accept contributions from Dominion or Appalachian Power, and 13 of those candidates (all Democrats) were elected to the General Assembly. In addition our Lt. Governor Elect, Justin Fairfax, has pledged also not to accept contributions from publically regulated utilities.

[http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/more-than-democrats-running-forvirginia-house-pledge-to-refuse/article\\_d6dd1acf-0fa6-51f2-a562beed33409999.html](http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/more-than-democrats-running-forvirginia-house-pledge-to-refuse/article_d6dd1acf-0fa6-51f2-a562beed33409999.html)

4. Sen. Chap Peterson introduced a bill, SB 1593, last session to do just this.

<http://bluevirginia.us/2017/01/sen-chap-petersen-proposes>