

# Draft 2015 Recommendations for Commission Consideration

---

- **Personal Use of Campaign Funds** – Under current Virginia law, personal use of campaign funds is only prohibited upon the closure of the campaign account. The Commission recommends that the law be amended to apply the personal use prohibition both before and after a campaign account is closed.
- **Special Session Fundraising** – The Commission recommends that Virginia’s ban on fundraising by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and state lawmakers during the regular General Assembly session be extended to cover special sessions lasting more than one day and the veto override session.
- **Legislator Compensation** – The Commission believes that Virginia lawmakers should receive adequate compensation in order to promote diversity in the legislature. Further, the Commission favors a compensation system that increases transparency by clearly separating compensation from funding intended for legislative staff and office expenses. To achieve those goals, the Commission recommends the following:
  - Existing funds designated as legislative compensation should be combined with the existing allowance designated for staff and office expenses, with the sum established as the full and true salary for lawmakers.
  - Additional staff and office expense funds should be provided to each legislator, with a requirement that any unspent dollars be returned to the Treasury.
  - The amount of the new staff and office expenses should begin at \$15,000 annually and increase by an amount equal to the inflation adjustment employed by the Virginia Retirement System for cost of living adjustments. VRS employs the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U), published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and updated each July 1.
- **Judicial Selection** – The Commission recommends the following changes to Virginia's procedures for selecting judges in order to ensure the selection of highly qualified candidates while increasing transparency and minimizing political considerations.

- The current procedure under which the Virginia State Bar evaluates candidates for the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court should also be applied to candidates for circuit, general district and juvenile and domestic relations courts.
- The evaluation of circuit, general district and juvenile and domestic relations court candidates should be conducted by bar committees in each of the state's judicial circuits under the auspices of the Virginia State Bar.
- The current procedure employed in Fairfax County by the county bar and by the county's legislative delegation should be utilized in judicial circuits across the state as candidates for the circuit, general district and juvenile and domestic relations district courts are evaluated.
- **Align Budget Cycle to Gubernatorial Terms** – The Commission recommends that the state budget cycle be aligned with gubernatorial terms to ensure that governors have the greatest possible opportunity to propose and execute budgets and in turn be held accountable for state budget policymaking. Under the current procedure, outgoing governors develop and submit a new biennial budget less than one month prior to leaving office, and incoming governors have limited time and flexibility to recommend amendments to the budget that will be in place for the first one-half of their gubernatorial term. Specifically, the Commission recommends that the Code of Virginia be amended to provide that following the next gubernatorial election the outgoing governor will develop and submit a budget for one year only. Thereafter, budgeting shall return to a biennial basis.
- **Funding for Governor-elect Transition Office** – The Commission recommends that governors-elect receive for the transition prior to their taking office funding adequate to lease facilities, hire staff and satisfy expenses necessary to effective transition planning and policy development. The public interest will be advanced by public funding of crucial transition activities rather than having the Governor-elect rely on volunteers who may have interests divergent from the public interest.
- **Gift Disclosure Filings for Registrars and Electoral Board Members** – The Commission recommends that local registrars and electoral board members be required to file gift disclosure forms to promote transparency and ensure the integrity of the electoral process and of procurement decisions related to voting machines and other purchases.

