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HOUSE BILL NO. 1761

Offered January 13, 2025

Prefiled January 5, 2025

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 9.3 of Title 24.2 an article numbered 3.1, consisting of a section numbered 24.2-948.6, relating to campaign finance; public campaign financing; counties and cities may establish for certain offices.

Patrons—Simon, Bennett-Parker, Cousins, Maldonado, Shin and Tran

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 9.3 of Title 24.2 an article numbered 3.1, consisting of a section numbered 24.2-948.6, as follows:

*Article 3.1.**Public Campaign Financing.***§ 24.2-948.6. System of public campaign financing.**

A. Subject to the provisions of this section, the governing body of a county or city may establish, by ordinance, a system of public campaign financing for elected local offices. The ordinance shall specify the criteria for use in determining whether a candidate is eligible for public campaign financing.

B. A system of public campaign financing established in a county or city pursuant to this section shall:

1. Provide for the participation of candidates in public campaign financing on a strictly voluntary basis. Candidates who do not choose to participate in the system of public campaign financing shall not be regulated except as otherwise provided by law.

2. Prohibit the use of public campaign financing for any campaign except a campaign for an elected local office.

3. Require a candidate who accepts public campaign financing to (i) designate a campaign depository solely for the campaign of the elected local office and (ii) use funds from that campaign depository only for the campaign of the elected local office for which it was designated.

4. Prohibit a candidate who accepts public campaign financing from transferring funds (i) to the campaign depository designated for the campaign of the elected local office from any other campaign depository designated for the candidate and (ii) from the campaign depository designated for the campaign of the elected local office to any other campaign depository.

C. The governing body of a county or city that establishes a system of public campaign financing shall provide for a public election fund for elected local offices. Such fund shall be administered by the treasurer of the county or city.

D. A system of public campaign financing established pursuant to this section may provide for more stringent regulation of the campaign finance activity by candidates participating in the system of public campaign financing than provided by this chapter including regulations regarding contributions, expenditures, and reporting requirements, and may impose civil penalties for violations.

E. Any system of public campaign financing established pursuant to this section shall be subject to regulation and oversight by the State Board to ensure conformity and compliance with state law and policy to the extent practicable.