

**For Immediate Release:**

**Maryland Senate Committee to Consider a Voters’ “Right to Know”  
on March 1, 2018**

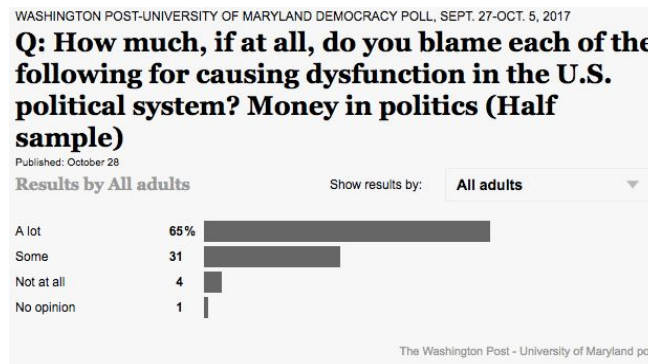
*Measure Would Bring to the November Ballot the ‘Right’ for Marylanders to Know the Sources  
of Money behind State Elections*

**Producer note:** Ann Ravel, former Chair of the FEC and measure architect, will testify in Annapolis on Thurs. and is available for interviews.

**Annapolis, MD - February 27, 2018**—On March 1, 2018, the Maryland Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee will consider a measure that would amend the state constitution and establish a “right” for the people of Maryland to know who is spending money to influence their state elections. If passed by the General Assembly, [SB 1035](#), sponsored by Senator Will Smith, will refer to the November 6, 2018 Maryland state ballot a question giving voters the chance to decide whether the “right to know” should be added to Maryland’s Declaration of Rights.

“This landmark measure is a unique opportunity for Marylanders to stand up to the undue influence of dark money,” said Ann Ravel, a steering committee member for Voters’ Right to Know and former Chair of the Federal Election Commission and California Fair Political Practices Commission. “If passed, Marylanders will gain a groundbreaking new right to know who’s really behind the money being spent to influence their decisions at the ballot box, giving them the power they need to vote confidently in their own interest.”

A recent University of Maryland / Washington Post [Democracy Poll](#) shows that 65% of Americans assign “a lot” of blame to money in politics “for causing dysfunction in the U.S. political system” and 96% assign at least some blame.



Maryland's Right to Know Amendment would give the people of Maryland a constitutional right to access information about the amount of money spent to influence candidate elections and ballot measures in a timely manner. If enacted, it would serve as a critical foundation to ensure a rigorous qualitative standard of disclosure is always being met, even as technology continues to evolve and campaign practices change.

"There will always be some new channel by which special interests attempt to influence our elections with money," said Senator Will Smith, sponsor of SB 1035. "The key is to ensure that spending is always fully transparent to voters. Political spending that happens in secret is a direct threat to the integrity of our democracy. It should be the right of Marylanders to know the sources of money behind campaign messages that seek to persuade them, independent of any particular method or medium of communication."

A national survey by Voters' Right to Know of 3,600 voters, including a representative sample of Maryland voters, revealed that: only 38% say they know who funds political advertisements; 81% support the idea of a "Right to Know" who is spending money to influence our elections; and 31% say that having a "Right to Know" would make them more likely to vote in the upcoming election.

"Special interests use dark money to buy election results and policies that favor them, often at great cost to ordinary Marylanders," said Jim Heerwagen, President of Voters' Right to Know. "This new constitutional right is the foundation of a regime of effective disclosure laws and enforcement that will expose secret money. It is designed to keep the people of Maryland in control of their government in the face of evolving media platforms and campaign practices."

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**About Voters Right to Know** (VRTK), a 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organization, is a first-of-its-kind legal and political project designed to catalyze the advancement of effective transparency policy across the United States, including a constitutional right to know the money behind elections and lawmaking. For more about VRTK visit: <http://vrtk.org>.