

20102811D

**HOUSE BILL NO. 848**

Offered January 8, 2020

Prefiled January 7, 2020

A *BILL to amend and reenact §§ 24.2-948.4, 24.2-949.9, 24.2-950.9, 24.2-951.9, and 24.2-952.7 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 9.3 of Title 24.2 a section numbered 24.2-945.3, relating to unlawful conversion of political contributions to personal use; penalty.*

Patrons—Simon and Lopez

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

1. That §§ 24.2-948.4, 24.2-949.9, 24.2-950.9, 24.2-951.9, and 24.2-952.7 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 9.3 of Title 24.2 a section numbered 24.2-945.3 as follows:

**§ 24.2-945.3. Unlawful conversion of contributions to personal use; penalty.**

A. It is unlawful for any person to convert any moneys, securities, or like intangible personal property that has been contributed to a candidate, a campaign committee, or a political committee to his personal use or the personal use of any other person.

B. For purposes of this section, a contribution shall be considered to be converted to personal use if the contribution, in whole or in part, is used to fulfill any commitment, obligation, or expense that would exist irrespective of a person's seeking, holding, or maintaining public office or carrying out the ordinary activities of a political committee, including:

1. Any residential or household items, including mortgage, rent, or utility payments;

2. Clothing or other personal items, other than items of de minimis value that are used in the campaign or for committee purposes;

3. Automobile or other transportation expenses that are incurred for purposes not related to seeking, holding, or maintaining public office or the primary purpose of a political committee; and

4. Travel expenses, including lodging and meals, that are incurred for purposes not related to seeking, holding, or maintaining public office or the primary purpose of a political committee.

For purposes of this section, "personal use" does not include the ordinary and necessary expenses incurred in connection with the duties as a candidate or officeholder or the activities of the political committee.

C. Any person who violates any provision of this section is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

D. The State Board shall furnish, upon the request of any person or committee covered by this chapter, formal advisory opinions regarding the permitted and prohibited uses of contributions. Formal advisory opinions are public record and shall be published on the website of the Department of Elections. No person shall be prosecuted or penalized for a violation of this section if the alleged violation resulted from his good faith reliance on a formal advisory opinion of the State Board, provided that the opinion was made after his full disclosure of the facts.

**§ 24.2-948.4. Final report requirement; disbursement of surplus funds.**

A. A final report shall be filed by every campaign committee which sets forth (i) all receipts and disbursements not previously reported, (ii) an accounting of the retirement of all debts, and (iii) the disposition of all surplus funds as provided in subsection D. The final report shall include a termination statement, signed by the candidate, that all reporting for the campaign committee is complete and final. Once a campaign committee's final report has been filed, no further report relating to that election shall be required.

B. A final report shall be required when (i) a candidate no longer seeks election to the same office in a successive election, (ii) a candidate seeks election to a different office, or (iii) the candidate is deceased.

C. If the candidate is deceased, the final report shall be filed and signed by the treasurer. If the candidate was serving as his own treasurer, his executor shall file and sign the final report. Any excess contributed funds shall be disposed of pursuant to the provisions of subsection D.

D. Amounts received by a candidate or his campaign committee as contributions that are in excess of the amount necessary to defray his campaign expenditures may be disposed of only by one or any combination of the following: (i) transferring the excess for use in a succeeding election or to retire the deficit in a preceding election; (ii) returning the excess to a contributor in an amount not to exceed the contributor's original contribution; (iii) donating the excess to any organization described in § 170(c) of

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59 the Internal Revenue Code; (iv) contributing the excess to one or more candidates or to any political  
60 committee that has filed a statement of organization pursuant to this chapter; (v) contributing the excess  
61 to any political party committee; and (vi) defraying any ordinary, nonreimbursed expense related to his  
62 elective office. It shall be unlawful for any person to convert any contributed moneys, securities, or like  
63 intangible personal property to his personal use or to the use of a member of the candidate's "immediate  
64 family" as that term is defined in § 30-101.

65 **§ 24.2-949.9. Final report requirement; disbursement of surplus funds.**

66 A. Any political action committee that, after having filed a statement of organization, disbands or  
67 determines it will no longer receive contributions or make expenditures during the calendar year in an  
68 aggregate amount exceeding \$200 shall so notify the State Board. A final report shall be filed by the  
69 committee that sets forth (i) all receipts and disbursements not previously reported, (ii) an accounting of  
70 the retirement of all debts, and (iii) the disposition of the committee's surplus funds. This final report  
71 shall include a termination statement, signed by the treasurer or other principal officer listed on the  
72 statement of organization, that all reporting for the committee is complete and final.

73 B. Amounts received by a political action committee as contributions may be disposed of only by  
74 one or any combination of the following: (i) transferring the excess to an affiliated organization of the  
75 committee; (ii) returning the excess to a contributor in an amount not to exceed the contributor's original  
76 contribution; (iii) donating the excess to any organization described in § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue  
77 Code; (iv) contributing the excess to one or more candidates or to any political committee that has filed  
78 a statement of organization pursuant to this chapter; (v) contributing the excess to any political party  
79 committee; and (vi) defraying any ordinary, nonreimbursed expense related to the political action  
80 committee. It shall be unlawful for any person to convert any contributed moneys, securities, or like  
81 intangible personal property to his personal use or to the use of a member of the "immediate family," as  
82 that term is defined in § 30-101, of the committee's treasurer or chief executive.

83 **§ 24.2-950.9. Final report requirement; transfer of surplus funds.**

84 A. Any political party committee that, after having filed a statement of organization, disbands or  
85 determines it will no longer receive contributions or make expenditures during the calendar year in an  
86 aggregate amount exceeding \$200 shall so notify the State Board. A final report shall be filed by the  
87 committee that sets forth (i) all receipts and disbursements not previously reported, (ii) an accounting of  
88 the retirement of all debts, and (iii) the disposition of the committee's surplus funds. This final report  
89 shall include a termination statement, signed by the treasurer or other principal officer listed on the  
90 statement of organization, that all reporting for the committee is complete and final.

91 B. Amounts received by a political party committee as contributions may be disposed of only by one  
92 or any combination of the following: (i) transferring the excess to an affiliated organization of the  
93 committee; (ii) returning the excess to a contributor in an amount not to exceed the contributor's original  
94 contribution; (iii) donating the excess to any organization described in § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue  
95 Code; (iv) contributing the excess to one or more candidates or to any political committee that has filed  
96 a statement of organization pursuant to this chapter; (v) contributing the excess to any political party  
97 committee; and (vi) defraying any ordinary, nonreimbursed expense related to the political party  
98 committee. It shall be unlawful for any person to convert any contributed moneys, securities, or like  
99 intangible personal property to his personal use or to the use of a member of the "immediate family," as  
100 that term is defined in § 30-101, of the committee's treasurer or chief executive.

101 **§ 24.2-951.9. Final report requirement; disbursement of surplus funds.**

102 A. Any referendum committee that disbands after having filed a statement of organization shall so  
103 notify the State Board. A final report shall be filed by the committee that sets forth (i) all receipts and  
104 disbursements not previously reported, (ii) an accounting of the retirement of all debts, and (iii) the  
105 disposition of the committee's surplus funds. This final report shall include a termination statement,  
106 signed by the treasurer or other principal officer listed on the statement of organization, that all reporting  
107 for the committee is complete and final.

108 B. Amounts received by a referendum committee as contributions may be disposed of only by one or  
109 any combination of the following: (i) transferring the excess to an affiliated organization of the  
110 committee; (ii) returning the excess to a contributor in an amount not to exceed the contributor's original  
111 contribution; (iii) donating the excess to any organization described in § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue  
112 Code; (iv) contributing the excess to one or more candidates or to any political committee that has filed  
113 a statement of organization pursuant to this chapter; (v) contributing the excess to any political  
114 committee; and (vi) defraying any ordinary, nonreimbursed expense related to the referendum committee.  
115 It shall be unlawful for any person to convert any contributed moneys, securities, or like intangible  
116 personal property to his personal use or to the use of a member of the "immediate family," as that term  
117 is defined in § 30-101, of the committee's treasurer or chief executive.

118 **§ 24.2-952.7. Final report requirement; disbursement of surplus funds.**

119 A. Any inaugural committee that, after having filed a statement of organization, disbands shall so  
120 notify the State Board. A final report shall be filed by the committee that sets forth (i) all receipts and

disbursements not previously reported, (ii) an accounting of the retirement of all debts, and (iii) the disposition of the committee's surplus funds. This final report shall include a termination statement, signed by the treasurer or other principal officer listed on the statement of organization, that all reporting for the committee is complete and final.

B. It shall be unlawful for any person to disburse any funds or receipts of an inaugural committee which are in excess of the amount necessary to defray expenditures for inaugural activities other than by one or any combination of the following: (i) returning the excess to a contributor in an amount not to exceed the contributor's original contribution or (ii) making one or more charitable contributions as defined in § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code. ~~It shall be unlawful for any person to convert any contributed moneys, securities, or like intangible personal property to his personal use or to the use of a member of the "immediate family," as that term is defined in § 30-101, of the committee's treasurer or chief executive.~~