To: Interested Parties
From: Michael Town, Executive Director
Re: Virginia LCV's electoral efforts in 2019
Date: Tuesday, Nov. 5

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Today, voters across Virginia are casting ballots in elections that will shape the Commonwealth for years to come. This is especially true when it comes to our environment.

For years, anti-environmental legislators who control the General Assembly have catered to large, corporate polluters and blocked efforts to address our largest environmental threat – climate change – while also stifling common-sense environmental protections. From shooting down legislative efforts to expand clean energy and reduce harmful air pollution, to advancing measures that undercut our ability to protect our coast and combat climate change, these lawmakers have set the commonwealth back significantly, put our health at risk, and have jeopardized public safety.

They deserve to be held accountable. We simply don't have time to play political games any longer. We need climate action now and voters across Virginia are demanding solutions.

With this in mind, the Virginia League of Conservation Voters ran its largest electoral program ever for legislative races in 2019. Through our Political Action Committee, we spent a record $1.5 million total on direct mail, digital advertising, radio, and grassroots organizing in more than a dozen battleground districts, as well as direct giving to candidates, efforts aimed at speaking directly to voters about what's at stake for our environment, climate action and their health on Election Day, and helping elect pro-environment majorities to the House and Senate.

The size of our program made us one of the largest progressive campaigns overall, and the largest environmental spender by far in 2019.

We do not yet know if our efforts yielded dividends, but after connecting with hundreds of thousands of voters this cycle we learned one thing: Virginians are ready for climate action and they're tired of legislators who put industry profits ahead of people.

Climate change and the environment are resonating with voters more than ever before, and if for some reason our candidates don't prevail on Election Day, it's only a matter of time until we secure the change in leadership we need at the legislature.

Mail and digital:
The core of our electoral program in 2019 was layered direct mail and digital advertising across 11 target districts (Senate Districts 7, 10, 12 and 13 and House Districts 10, 21, 51, 73, 76, 85 and 94). By itself, this program accounted for more than $1 million of our total investment. This program included 52 different mail pieces and 30 digital ads; overall, we communicated directly with 268,000 voters, sent nearly 1 million pieces of direct mail, and our digital ads had 6.5 million completed views.

The messaging for this program was informed by polling across multiple districts. What we learned is that voters care strongly about addressing the climate crisis in order to secure a healthy future for the next generation, holding corporate polluters accountable, and making sure their children have clean water to drink.

Each digital ad and mailer pivoted back to these frames, drawing a stark contrast between our endorsed candidate and their opponent.

Here are examples of the pieces:

Digital Ads	Direct Mail
Hala Ayala: House District 51	Alex Askew: House District 85
Rodney Willett: House District 73	Shelly Simonds: House District 94
Cheryl Turpin: Senate District 7	Cheryl Turpin: Senate District 7
John Bell: Senate District 13	Debra Rodman: Senate District 12

Radio:
On Oct. 25, we launched a $97,000 radio buy across multiple radio stations in metro-Richmond and Hampton Roads to support Sheila Bynum-Coleman for HD-66 (ad here), Alex Askew for HD-85 (ad here), and Clinton Jenkins for HD-76 (ad here). The ads take incumbents Speaker Kirk Cox and Delegate Chris Jones and former delegate, Rocky Holcomb, to task over their voting records on the environment and efforts to protect corporate polluters. The ads targeted an African American audience and ran through Election Day.

Direct Candidate Contributions:
Virginia LCV donated approximately $190,000 directly to 76 candidates while steering another $86,000 of contributions from donors to priority candidates. The donations were spread across 55 House of Delegates races ($132,300) and 21 state Senate races ($56,700). Nearly half of our giving went to women candidates; more than 40 percent went to candidates of color. Overall, we donated directly to 59 incumbents and 17 new candidates.

GreenRoots:
Through our $100,000 GreenRoots program, a total of seven organizers were on the ground, connecting directly with voters in one Senate District (SD-8 for Missy Cotter Smasal) and four House Districts (HD-27 for Larry Barnett, HD-66 for Sheila Bynum-Coleman, HD-73 for Rodney Willett, and HD-85 for Alex Askew).

Conclusion:
In summary, Virginia LCV ran its largest, most sophisticated campaign to date for legislative races and one that spoke directly to voters about the environment and climate change. Regardless of today's outcome, this work was invaluable in elevating the environment as a voting issue and mobilizing thousands of voters in Virginia's most important battleground districts, and in educating the public about environmental issues that impact them, their communities and their families' health and wellbeing.

Virginia LCV has laid important groundwork as we head into the 2020 legislative session, and toward 2021, when Virginians will choose a new governor, attorney general and lieutenant governor, and when all 100 seats in the House of Delegates will again be on the ballot.

The climate crisis isn't going away. We need solutions now, and Virginia LCV is committed to working with the legislature to drive progress on climate action in Virginia and holding accountable any and all lawmakers who stand in our way.