

Understanding your Legislator

Before meeting or talking to legislator--Look up your legislator, see where they get their money? Grassroots, corporate? How has their donation history changed? Does their donor base match their voting record? Use this resource link:

Virginia Public Access Project https://www.vpap.org/candidates/304662/top_donors/

Research Example #1: State Senator for District 10, Ghazala Hasmi.

1. Use **Virginia Public Access Project** to learn more. This nonprofit's mission is:
To elevate public understanding of politics and government by organizing and presenting information in ways that are easily accessible and free of partisan bias.

VPAP is fiercely nonpartisan. We do not lobby or take positions on issues. Our singular focus is to give Virginians information they need to make their own decisions. We were founded in 1997 with one simple premise: If Virginia's campaign finance system relies upon disclosure, citizens should have the right to know who is giving to whom. Since then, we have expanded our focus to include related topics such as election results, lobbying, the legislative process and redistricting.



(Senator Hashmi, in striped jacket, on GCV Lobby Day, 2020, along with Hylah Boyd, Cabell West and other conservation groups.)

Research reveals Senator Hashmi has received in the past donations of at least \$10,000 or more from

- VA League of Conservation Voters (one of her top three donors)
- NextGen Climate Action
- Clean Virginia Fund
- Green Advocacy Project

She has many grassroots donations as well as donations from other state elected legislators and Congressional elected legislators. She serves on the Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee so she is an important official for our efforts. Other info: she is highly educated (doctorate), the first elected Muslim in VA, an immigrant, she has declined to take gifts or donations from Dominion, and has never missed a floor vote as a legislator.

Research Example #2: Congressman Don McEachin

1. Use **Open Secrets** to learn about his donor base:

<https://www.opensecrets.org/about/>



This nonprofit's mission is:

To produce and disseminate peerless data and analysis on money in politics, to inform and engage Americans, and to champion transparency, and to expose disproportionate or undue influence on public policy.

Research reveals McEachin's top two donors are Altria and Dominion. His top industry supporters are attorneys and law firms. He is a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Natural Resources Committee.

2. Another tool to use is **GovTrack**:

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members>



This organization is supported by advertising and crowdsourcing and its mission is *is to help Americans participate in their government. We make information about the United States Congress accessible, understandable, and actionable for public use. We do this by putting the information in context, tracking new developments on issues our users care about, and helping our users take action to make a meaningful difference.... We believe that transparency and education are crucial for achieving equity in rights and representation for all Americans.*

Over a third of the bills McEachin sponsors are for Environmental Protection. He has served in the House since 2017. He missed 10% of floor votes due to a major illness.