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## **Cut-price voter lists “fairer” for underdog candidates, coalition says**

**LEXINGTON, VA**—Virginia Fair Elections (VFE), a coalition dedicated to ensuring free, fair, and secure elections in the Commonwealth, today issued a cautious welcome to the decision by the Virginia Department of Elections<sup>1</sup> to end the anti-democratic practice of making voter lists prohibitively expensive for candidates, political parties and researchers. A price reduction of 90% will take effect starting July 1, 2025.

Dr. Clara Belle Wheeler, VFE cabinet member, said "Those organizations and campaigns who are eligible to acquire the registered voter lists, monthly updates, and voting records should be unencumbered by high expense. This reduction in excessive charges should have been done years ago. The voters need to know how their fees have been used over the past and future years. The records of those voters no longer registered to vote in Virginia need to remain as part of the permanent voting records."

Virginia Fair Elections has campaigned for years for voter lists to be made available for free to those who have a legal entitlement to them. Until this price cut, Virginia was the 5<sup>th</sup>-most expensive state in the nation, according to analysis<sup>2</sup> by Ballotpedia.

While VFE will continue to advocate for the lists to be made free, they welcome the transformation that this decision will cause. Lynn Taylor also pointed out that the previous system disadvantaged underdog candidates, and favored those with big money to spend. “It’s just not a level playing field,” she said. “There are already huge hurdles in the way of ‘outsiders’ in primary races, independent candidates, and third-party candidates. This is a problem both in Virginia and across the United States; to also effectively use price as a mechanism to prevent underdog candidates from being able to campaign effectively was fundamentally wrong.”

For more information on VFE’s position or to request an interview with Dr. Clara Belle Wheeler or Lynn Taylor, please email [media@virginiainstitute.org](mailto:media@virginiainstitute.org).

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1 – <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/news-releases/elect-reduces-cost-of-voter-lists-by-90-percent.html>

2 - [https://ballotpedia.org/Availability\\_of\\_state\\_voter\\_files?utm](https://ballotpedia.org/Availability_of_state_voter_files?utm)