



**House Bill 871 – Campaign Finance – Collections by Membership Entities –
Noncampaign Political Activity**

Position: Support

Maryland REALTORS® supports HB 871 which clarifies Maryland campaign law to grant membership entities additional flexibility in how they collect campaign related donations with their membership dues.

Currently, like other membership organizations, the REALTORS® charge members for a political contribution along with their membership dues. Unlike the other portion of our membership dues, political contributions to the PAC must be voluntary. The REALTORS® include disclosure language in the dues statement to make that clear and about 20-30% of our membership pays the voluntary contribution.

This summer, the REALTORS® met with the Board of Elections to discuss alternative ways to charge dues and the voluntary political contribution. The Board of Elections suggested the law should be clarified and HB 871 is the result.

This legislation will permit our organization to give our members a choice of giving the current voluntary political contribution or, if they object, to a non-campaign function of the association. Members will still be informed about their right not to contribute to campaign-related efforts.

The REALTORS® believe that more members will contribute voluntarily if they are still required to give the \$25 typically charged. We know this because we have many members that choose to give outside the dues at individual fundraisers. If HB 871 increases contributions, it will help ensure that a greater percentage of the members contribution will go toward the purpose of the contribution and less on fundraising efforts outside of the dues billing. Finally, the bill will allow organizations like ours to increase their dues but hold harmless those members already contributing a higher amount through the voluntary contribution.

HB 871 also includes language to ensure that the amount charged by a membership entity in this way cannot exceed more than 25% of the total dues charged by the entity thereby ensuring that the contributions are relatively modest in comparison with the overall dues bill.

For these reasons, we recommend a favorable report.

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