



Republican Party of Virginia

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January 16, 2015

U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics  
220 Hart Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

VIA FACSIMILE

Dear Chairman Isakson and Vice Chairwoman Boxer:

The Republican Party of Virginia hereby files a formal complaint against Senator Mark R. Warner for an apparent violation of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, a Federal crime that carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

### **FACTS**

In June 2014, Senator Warner was made aware that Virginia state Senator Phillip Puckett, a member of Senator Warner's political party, planned to resign his seat. Puckett's departure from the Senate of Virginia would shift the balance of power in the state Senate away from Senator's Warner's party and effectively end the consideration of a major policy supported by Senator Warner, the expansion of Medicaid under Obamacare.

On June 6, Senator Warner called Senator Puckett's son, Joseph, and discussed job possibilities for Puckett's daughter, Martha Ketron. Ketron had long been in line for a judgeship, but was barred under Senate of Virginia anti-nepotism rules that prohibit the appointment of relatives of sitting Senators to judicial posts. Puckett's resignation would clear the way for his daughter's appointment.

According to multiple media accounts, Warner called Puckett's son Joseph Puckett and "suggested a post for Ketron at CGI, at high-tech firm Warner helped lure to Southwest Virginia when he was governor a decade ago," in an effort to entice Senator Puckett to remain in the Senate of Virginia.

Senator Warner has admitted to having the conversation with Joseph Puckett. Speaking during a debate in 2014, he said: "When I heard that Phillip was considering resigning from the Senate, I reached out to his son, Joseph, to find out what was going on. During that conversation, we brainstormed about possible opportunities for [Joseph Puckett's] sister."

## ANALYSIS

Warner's conversation with Joseph Puckett is likely a violation of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007.

Title 227 of the Act expressly forbids members from threatening or offering to take official action, or from influencing or threatening or offering to influence an official act of another, in an attempt to influence, solely on the basis of partisan political affiliation, an employment practice or decision of a private entity.

Senator Warner has declined to answer questions about the details of his interactions with Senator Puckett's son, stating only that he was "brainstorming" ideas for "helping" Ketron. The mere offer to use Warner's official influence in any way to secure a job for Ketron violates both the spirit and the letter of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007.

Therefore, the Senate Select Committee on Ethics should fully examine this matter. If the committee finds that Senator Warner has acted in violation of the law, it should refer the matter to prosecutors for further action.

I look forward to hearing your response to this complaint.

Sincerely,



Pat Mullins, Chairman  
Republican Party of Virginia