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Report: Deregulation vote tied to campaign contributions

Lawmakers propose setting up public financing commission

by Marcus Moore | Staff Writer

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The state senators who voted to deregulate the electricity industry nine years ago still get much of their campaign contributions from the utility industry, according to a report released Thursday by Progressive Maryland and Common Cause.

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Lawmakers are considering a bill, proposed by Sen. Paul G. Pinsky (D-Dist. 22) of University Park and Del. John S. Cardin (D-Dist. 11) of Baltimore, to establish public campaign financing for General Assembly candidates. If passed, the law would take effect July 1, the beginning of fiscal 2009.

Under the proposal, the state could get revenues of $14.1 million in fiscal 2010 and annual revenues of $9.2 million. The bill would also establish a five-member Election Financing Commission to manage and supervise the public funding system.

Both versions of the bill were heard the week of Feb. 26. No action has been taken on the proposals.

Ninety-three percent of campaign money given by electric utility companies to the General Assembly went to lawmakers who voted to deregulate the electric industry, according to the report.

''This is a startling, and very troubling appearance of undue influence about who is really running Annapolis," said Ryan O'Donnell, executive director of Common Cause Maryland.