



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF THE FAIRFAX AREA**

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**LWVFA FY 2015 Budget Testimony to the Board of Supervisors**

April 9, 2014

Good evening, Chairman Bulova and members of the Board of Supervisors. I am Helen Kelly, Co-President of the League of Women Voters, speaking on behalf of our members and supporters in Fairfax County and Fairfax City. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

We commend you for maintaining Fairfax County's AAA bond rating, even in this challenging economy. We support the two-cent increase in the real estate tax and are happy to pay it. We also support a meals tax as a means of diversifying revenue sources available to the County. Twenty-five percent of the income from this tax would be paid by visitors – not by residents.

Even with these additional resources, we understand that you will probably have to make further cuts to the budget, and that they will be painful.

However, we urge you to not to cut funding for these budget categories:

- **Office of Elections** – We approve of the funding level in the 2015 Advertised Budget plus the \$6M for voting equipment in the 2016 reserve fund. Therefore, we oppose any proposals to reduce personnel and operating expenses. This funding is essential to purchase the necessary voting equipment, to allow time to train on it and to successfully manage the 2016 – and all elections – as one would expect of the largest and wealthiest county in the Commonwealth. This is also the only way to prevent the long lines we experienced in the 2012 election.
- **Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court** – Stronger Together is a visitation program for children and families who have experienced Domestic Violence. It provides a safe, secure place for children to visit with the non-custodial parent. This program is crucial for everyone, especially in cases where the victims of Domestic Violence are ordered by the court to continue visitation or exchange with the offender. Stronger Together also helps families going through high-stress divorces. Cuts to this program would negatively affect other County agencies, including the police. Before the start of such programs, people were murdered during these visits.
- **Schools** – Increasing the FCPS transfer from 2% to 3% would net our public schools about \$17M requiring less than a one-cent increase in the tax rate. We anticipate that the new FCPS Program Audit Manager will seek economies to provide some expense reductions and savings. We ask for this increase because school enrollment continues to rise. Some of our members remember the time when the County was building a classroom a day – and paid the taxes to support teachers' salaries and school construction. This resulted in quality schools that bring businesses and people to Fairfax County. We should not endanger that reputation now.

- **Libraries** – enhance the quality of life in our community, by providing books, research material, online resources and personnel who can help patrons find the materials they need. They should receive more – not less – funding. Libraries also provide an *educational* safety net for students with no computer at home. We urge you to ensure as many libraries as possible are open on Saturdays and Sundays. If necessary, we suggest forfeiting some morning weekday hours to make this possible. Maintaining weekend hours will mean that students whose working parents must drive them to the library will have enough time to do their homework.

Again, we urge you to fully fund the Office of Elections and the Stronger Together program, to increase the FCPS transfer to 3%, and to increase library funding for both personnel and materials. Supporting these services will help guarantee our constitutional right to vote, and will protect families in crisis. A slight increase in school funding will give Fairfax County students the education they deserve, and additional library funding will enhance our quality of life by providing information on any subject and free internet access for students and job-seekers from families who cannot afford a computer.