



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

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### **FY 2019 Budget Testimony to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors April 11, 2018**

Good afternoon Chairman Bulova and members of the Board of Supervisors. I am Helen Kelly, Action Director of the League of Women Voters. On behalf of our members, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

We support the new property tax rate because it gives you more flexibility in meeting unexpected challenges. And we applaud your increased contributions to the reserve funds to satisfy the bond rating agencies. As taxpayers, we appreciate your efforts to preserve the County's AAA bond rating.

Of the many worthwhile items in the advertised budget, I will address Diversion First, Gang Prevention, the Opioid Task Force, the South County Police Station and the Office of Elections.

**Diversion First** – We continue to support your incremental staffing of this effort to get low-risk offenders help for mental, emotional or substance abuse problems, rather than keeping them in jail.

**Gang Prevention** - We support your planned budget increase to add one full-time position in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Review to increase the County's Gang Prevention ability. We applaud adding this position because of rising gang activity in our region, Gangs are responsible for human and sex trafficking, murder and other violent crimes. Their presence poses a danger to all of us – children, teens and adults alike.

We support formation of the **Opioid Task Force** to combat this increasing problem through prevention, treatment and harm reduction. We also support adding five full-time positions to man the County's response to this nationwide epidemic. The League believes that effective in-patient and out-patient treatment should be available to all people battling addiction. We hope this new task force will make that vision a reality.

We applaud the multi-agency coordination in Diversion First and in the Gang Prevention efforts. We expect the Opioid Task Force to follow the same pattern. One of the League's good government principles is cooperation among different government agencies. In the cases of Diversion First, Gang Prevention and the Opioid Task Force this collaboration can help prevent violence in our community and offer early intervention for children at risk.

**South County Police Station** – We applaud your efforts over the years to hire and train personnel to staff this new station. We support the 17 new positions added in the new advertised budget and the additional 33 positions to be added through 2021. As population moves from one region to another, we support giving residents the services they need, and those services include police.

**Office of Elections** – We thank you for supporting our right to vote by using technology to secure our elections and for hiring as General Registrar Cameron Sasnett, whose technical expertise will help protect us from cyber attacks.

While the Office of Elections is working to reduce its operating costs, they anticipate a deficit of \$88,464 at the end of 2018. As they continue to cut costs, we urge you to fund them at a level that maintains election efficiency and integrity.

We are grateful for your ability to meet new challenges like the Opioid Epidemic and increased Gang Activity in our area. We appreciate the multi-agency coordination in Diversion First, in gang prevention and expect the same from the Opioid Task Force. We agree with moving more police resources to the South County Police Station where they are needed most. And we support giving the Office of Elections enough funding to efficiently administer elections and to protect our votes from malicious cyber attacks.