



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

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The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA) is a nonpartisan volunteer organization with over 350 members. We have been working to support democracy for 75 years in Fairfax County. We support voter registration and voter education, hold Candidate Forums, and provide fact-based, nonpartisan materials and information to Fairfax area residents free of charge.

Our League supports the 2023 Fairfax County Legislative Program. We are especially supportive of the positions on elections, funding for K-12 public schools including opposition to diverting funding to support non-public options, transportation, libraries, local property tax exemptions, affordable housing, behavioral health and human services, dangerous weapons, and funding of courts.

The following issues are high priorities for the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area.

Elections

LWVFA supports legislation to promote equitable and efficient participation in elections, including facilitating voting by mail, providing for extended polling hours state-wide, and expanding the use of drop boxes. Adequate state funding for election administration, voting equipment, and systems modernization and security is essential to this effort. We also support efforts to provide expanded flexibility during emergencies, allowing local election officials to prevent any potential disruptions to election administration.

We are concerned about the potential unanticipated consequences of recent changes in election law (§ 24.2-124.1 to the Code of Virginia, the so-called “Zuckerberg Rule”) which we believe should be amended or repealed. As a nonpartisan organization with a long history of volunteer support for voter education and registrations, we are active in helping people register to vote, including seniors in Fairfax County Public Schools, older citizens in retirement communities, and new citizens in naturalization ceremonies. We are concerned that the “Zuckerberg rule” could be interpreted to limit these nonpartisan activities by the LWVFA.

We support Fairfax County’s advocacy for:

- Legislation intended to enhance security regarding elections; *however, this must be carefully analyzed to ensure it strikes a balance between maintaining the integrity of elections and not discouraging the exercise of the franchise.*
- Support of increased state investments in voting equipment, systems modernization/security, and election administration, including training for local electoral board members, registrars, and elections officials.
- Local input in the design and procurement of the new state election system. This is critical to ensuring its success.

In addition, we believe that:

- All decisions by election offices at state and local levels must remain fully transparent.
- Training of all election officers and officials must emphasize nonpartisanship as a fundamental principle.

K-12 Public School Funding

Public education funding in the Commonwealth is a joint responsibility of both state and local governments, so it is essential that the state fully and appropriately meet its Constitutional responsibility to adequately fund K-12 education for all Virginia students. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth continues to allow the gap between state funding and the actual costs of providing a high-quality education to expand.

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area supports the County's concerns regarding education funding inequities that disadvantage students in our area. We need Standards of Quality (SOQ) that reflect the true local costs of providing a high-quality public education and that provide adequate and appropriate state funding to implement these standards, including in high cost of living areas like Northern Virginia. We oppose Policies which divert K-12 education funding away from local public schools and toward non-public options, and structural cuts or formula/policy changes which impose unfunded mandates on localities, further weakening the partnership between the state and localities.

Global Climate Change/Environmental Sustainability Initiatives

LWV-FA encourages the legislature to advance measures that will address climate challenges and support a transition to cleaner, sustainable energy sources.

Affordable Housing

We support state funding and actions to increase the availability of affordable, accessible, and integrated housing options and prevent homelessness, including expanded investments in tools and programs to address affordable housing needs, particularly in high cost-of-living areas like Northern Virginia, and to mitigate evictions resulting from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also support retaining existing local land use authority, allowing localities to craft solutions that are appropriate for their communities, including innovative ideas and solutions that require the flexibility and agility to respond to changing conditions and circumstances as opportunities present themselves. We encourage the legislature to prioritize funding for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, as well as increasing the funding cap that each development can request. This is essential to create and preserve affordable housing and reduce homelessness in Northern Virginia, where housing affordability poses substantial challenges for the economic competitiveness of the region.

Behavioral Health

The League has long been a voice in the fight for resources for behavioral health. We firmly support sustainable funding that is allocated based on localities' needs and population size, for public safety and mental health services that connect people who encounter the criminal justice system for nonviolent offenses to treatment. We also support sufficient state funding for

intensive community resources, such as Assertive Community Treatment and Discharge Assistance Planning, and intensive residential services, to alleviate the state hospital bed crisis and allow individuals to transition safely and expediently from psychiatric hospitals to community care.

We are pleased that the Fairfax Board of Supervisors supported women's rights through passing the CEDAW resolution. We hope that the Fairfax Delegation will support and protect women's rights including reproductive health rights for all Virginians.

Overall, we urge our legislators to enact legislation with sufficient supporting resources that improves the quality of life for all Virginians. Democracy and our freedoms cannot be sustained unless elections are fair, and we endorse the fight for laws that ensure fair and equitable access to voting.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

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