



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE FAIRFAX AREA

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LWVFA FY 2014 Budget Testimony to the Board of Supervisors
April 11, 2013

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

I am happy to tell you that we in the League of Women Voters see many things in the new advertised budget that we like, for example:

- **1.095 real estate tax rate.** The League of Women Voters endorses this rate. Because Fairfax County offers real estate tax relief for its most vulnerable residents, we believe the 2014 tax rate will better support basic services during this period when the state and federal governments are reducing their funding to Fairfax County. We are happy to pay this rate, because we realize that it supports services that benefit our communities.

The League has long supported revenue diversification that would help provide property tax relief. We again urge you to consider adoption of a meals tax and the imposition or increase in fees on services to achieve this.

We applaud your decision to set up the Bi-Partisan Election Process Improvement Commission to recommend ways to avoid long lines in future elections. We endorse their recommendations, and approve of the financial latitude that is in the budget to implement them.

We also commend County Executive Edward Long for maintaining budget levels for certain important functions of the County government. We urge you to follow his lead, and **not** impose budget cuts on these agencies:

- **Office of Elections.** This budget supports our right to vote in two important areas: First, Equipment Purchases – We are pleased to see that the 2014 budget level could provide a down payment on new voting machines and Electronic Poll Books, both of which speed up the voting process. We also notice and support the \$6M proposed for equipment purchases in the 2015 budget that will allow the Office of Elections to continue these upgrades before the 2016 Presidential Election. Second, Staffing – We support continued funding of the six satellite voting locations and the budget level needed to hire and train enough seasonal staff in advance of peak in-person absentee voter demand.
- **Sheriff's Office.** We oppose further cuts in the Sheriff's Office and agree with Mr. Long that the Deputy presence in Civil Court should not be eliminated to save money. 99,717 civil hearings each year deal with such cases as mental commitments, visitation rights, divorce hearings and contract disputes. We believe that the Deputy presence in these emotionally charged hearings is necessary to protect public safety.

But we are concerned about one budget category that has been cut in the past:

- **Library Hours.** Public school students whose families do not have a home computer depend on public libraries for internet access to complete homework assignments. 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 ensure that students whose working parents must drive them to the library will have enough time to do assigned research.

Again we endorse the new real estate tax rate, propose the use of available additional resources, and support continued funding of the valuable functions of the Office of Elections, the Sheriff's Office and Libraries. We encourage you to maintain current funding levels for these agencies.

Thank you.