



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

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**LWVFA Testimony to Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on the  
County's legislative program for the 2009 session of the General Assembly**

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA) urges you to consider reform of the redistricting process as a priority for citizens of Fairfax County as you assemble your legislative package for the 2009 Virginia General Assembly.

As you know, once a decade, members of the General Assembly convene to redraw the lines of their electoral districts. While intended to balance out population shifts in the Commonwealth, the process has always been highly partisan. A broad-based coalition that includes, among others, the League of Women Voters of Virginia, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Interfaith Center on Public Policy, the AARP, the Virginia League of Conservation Voters, and the Future of Hampton Roads, is seeking to reform this process before the next time the district lines are drawn, in 2011.

When legislators can choose their voters rather than the other way around, the record shows that legislators tend to create "safe" legislative districts and that, in turn, leads to increased polarization in the state. In the most recent races for the State Senate, 17 out of 40 candidates faced no opposition. In those races where candidates faced opposition, only nine of the races were considered "competitive," that is, resulting in a margin of fewer than 10 percentage points. In the House of Delegates races, 57 incumbents (31 Democrats and 26 Republicans) ran unopposed. Only 12 of the 100 House of Delegates races turned out to be "competitive."

We believe that this lack of competition is not healthy for democracy in general or for our state in particular. By reducing the number of "safe" seats for either party, bipartisan redistricting lessens both the likelihood of legislative gridlock and partisan bias in decision-making. We believe redistricting reform would help the Commonwealth move forward on many issues that are particularly important to Fairfax County, including transportation improvements and targeted revenue sources. We'd also like to remind the Supervisors that the 2001 redistricting resulted in law suits that delayed finalization of district and precinct lines until almost time for the fall election. This resulted in confusion in the county registrar's office and among voters, with some voters initially sent incorrect voter cards.

The League of Women Voters supports the establishment, in law, of a politically balanced and independent Reapportionment Commission. Every ten years, the Commission would prepare, with the help of the Virginia Department of Legislative Service, a redistricting plan for submission to the legislature as specified by the Virginia Constitution.

With control of the General Assembly now divided between the two political parties, we believe the time is right for the Commonwealth of Virginia to move forward with this important reform. The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area urges the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to join the growing number of organizations that are seeking this change by including redistricting reform on its list of state legislative priorities for the 2009 General Assembly session. The League stands ready to help frame the position if desired, and we thank you for consideration of our input.

Sherry Zachry, President  
League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area