



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

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**January 9, 2010**

### **LWVFA testimony to the Fairfax Delegation to the Virginia General Assembly**

Good morning. I am Jane Hilder, Action Chair of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area, speaking on behalf of our local president and approximately 325 members in Fairfax County and Fairfax City. We thank you for the privilege of speaking to you this morning.

First, we all realize that balancing the budget is the major challenge before the General Assembly this year. We are also aware that there have been truly significant cuts made in the budget already. The League believes in efficient and effective government that is adequately financed. Almost everyone has been hurt by this recession, but some people have been hurt much more than others. As you work with the numbers, please remember these numbers represent services to and for Virginians. Look for equitable ways to add revenue as a major solution instead of only thinking of cuts to the programs – programs that affect the daily lives of our citizens.

We've already been told by one delegate that everyone agrees there will be no new taxes. But are Virginians willing to put up with the cuts to public safety, education, health care, social services, parks, highway safety and road maintenance that result from such a policy? The League supports additional revenue enhancements to maintain basic services.

That said here are some particular issues of concern to Fairfax Area League members that we would like the General Assembly to address in the 2010 Session:

- Establish a politically balanced and independent Reapportionment Commission for decennial redistricting. This is a basic good government issue. We'd like to thank all of you who have supported this idea in one form or another in the past—in at least one case for many years. We know the Senate actually passed such legislation last year. Since the new Governor claims to support redistricting reform, we're hoping he can help to push real reform through in the House.
- Expand in-person absentee voting prior to an election to all registered voters. This promotes voting participation by a larger number of voters. People will probably still be racing home from work to vote by 7 p.m. on election day, but at least it gives them another opportunity.
- Diversify the revenue sources allowed to counties and other local jurisdictions so that property taxes do not make up such a large portion of local revenues. Communities throughout the Commonwealth have been requesting flexibility.
- Establish a dedicated, stable and reliable funding source for the balanced transportation needs in the Commonwealth. Don't wait for a bridge to collapse to deal with this issue.
- Restore voting rights to felons once they have completed all requirements of their sentence. We need to incorporate all our citizens in our democracy. Evidence shows that recidivism is less among those who have served time if the ex-offenders are more integrated into society. Voting is a means of integration.
- Protect our environment by rewarding conservation and exploring use of alternative fuels while keeping pollution out of our rivers, ground water and the Chesapeake Bay.

Support the Commonwealth's criminal justice system with adequate funding for indigent defense and adequate salaries for state court employees who work in Northern Virginia. State budget cuts to local police and sheriff's departments result in increased local costs and are a danger to our residents.

We invite you to attend the Women's Legislative Roundtable, held every Wednesday morning at 8:30 in Senate Room 3 West beginning on January 20<sup>th</sup>. Once a year League members from all over the Commonwealth come to Richmond to visit their representatives. We look forward to seeing many of you on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Thank you.