



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup>  
OF THE FAIRFAX AREA EDUCATION FUND

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Testimony of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area regarding the proposed FCPS FY 2011 Budget, January 25, 2010.

Good evening Chairperson Smith, Superintendent Dale, and School Board members. I am Sarah Mayhew, speaking on behalf of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area for President Jane E. George, who cannot attend tonight. The League of Women Voters is a strong supporter of public education and we know you face a tough challenge in coping with increased enrollment and a reduction in the proposed revenue for the School Operating Fund. We acknowledge that resources are probably not available to prevent many of the proposed program cuts. We looked to see if there were any places that specific funds could be freed up to eliminate some of the proposed cuts, but cannot determine this given the way that the FCPS budget materials are structured.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible. Although FCPS provides voluminous budget materials to the public, they do not provide a clear picture of the whole budget. We get information about some trees but not the forest. The League is also concerned that the budget does not explain the expenditures planned under the funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).. We believe that all expenditures should be grouped together and explained in terms that the public can understand.

One example, under the Project Excel program, sixteen schools gave elementary students a full day on Monday. Most paid teachers, instructional assistants, librarians and counselors an extra seven percent salary for working an extra half hour each day after students went home to compensate for the lost Monday afternoon planning time. These schools also had additional resource teachers. Last year's budget eliminated the resource teachers, but other staff retained their additional pay and contract time, funded by the ARRA with a new program name: Extended Learning.

According to comments made by Deputy Division Superintendent Richard Moniuszko at the January 9, 2010, budget work session, the principals at the schools that currently have full day Mondays recommended keeping the program for FY 2011 with a reduction of the additional

salary from seven to four percent. We oppose this proposal for using funding provided by ARRA to give just some teachers, librarians, counselors, and instructional assistants a salary supplement. The money used for salary supplements should instead be used, to save or create jobs for teachers according to the Virginia Department of Education first principle guiding the distribution and expenditure of ARRA funds that they “must be spent quickly to save and create jobs.”<sup>1</sup>

We support maintaining the full day Monday schedule in the schools that currently have this benefit by substituting a less expensive program model. Many of these have been proposed in past years by groups such as the Time and Learning Task Force, a 35-member group representing broad and diverse constituencies across Fairfax County. This task force presented options in 1996 for providing a full-day on Monday for students and additional resource teachers for all schools, providing classroom teachers with larger blocks of planning time during the student day. Its proposals appeared more economical than the \$5.7 million cost of the Extended Learning program that affects only one-tenth of the elementary schools.

We do not think that decisions affecting the FCPS budget should be made by the small group of principals of schools who already have extra funding. We are further concerned that the budget itself does not explain the tentative decisions for the future of the Extended Learning Program mentioned at the January 9 work session. Is it still the best program for those select schools only given demographic changes since they were selected? If the budget is the only opportunity for the public to comment on these plans, surely the plans themselves should be explained in the budget.

We would like to note that if school budget constraints require the imposition of some activity fees in order to maintain the basic school program, the League is not opposed to charging legally permissible fees if adequate provisions are made to provide for and encourage the participation in activities by those unable to pay the fee.

The League understands that many required expenditures are not yet set and that the actual level of available resources depends on actions of the General Assembly. Thus, we anticipate that there will be many changes between now and May, and look forward to addressing you again at that time.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight, and for your continuing efforts to provide a consistently good education to a diverse student population.

Sarah Mayhew

For Jane E. George, LWVFA President

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school\\_finance/arra/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/arra/index.shtml)