



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

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### **LWVFA Testimony to Fairfax Delegation to the Virginia General Assembly, January 5, 2008**

Good morning, and thank you for holding this hearing. 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 350 members living in Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax.

I want to talk to you today about the following issues of concern to Fairfax Area League members. These are among the issues we would like to see the General Assembly address:

- Establish a politically balanced and independent Reapportionment Commission for decennial redistricting, that would work with the Virginia Department of Legislative Services to submit a plan to the legislature complying with state and federal law, but focusing on natural and jurisdictional boundaries and communities of interest, not on protecting incumbents or enhancing partisan advantage. We believe this is the best route to competitive districts and responsive government. The League especially commends and thanks Delegates Brian Moran and Ken Plum who have consistently worked to reform redistricting processes, not only last year, but in many previous sessions.
- Support dedicated, stable and reliable funding for balanced transportation needs in the Commonwealth and for the Metro system. The League commends the General Assembly for making good progress in 2007 on transportation funding for Northern Virginia, but believes not all funding sources are stable or adequate..
- Provide incentives for energy conservation and use of alternative fuels. Global warming presents the very real potential of wiping out progress on environmental protection. Funds for additional clean up of municipal and agricultural waste running into the state's rivers and the Chesapeake Bay continue to be vitally needed.
- Provide the legislative changes and financial support needed to truly reform the state's mental health system into an accountable system that meets the needs of those in crisis but also provides preventive care to avert crises.
- Support the state's criminal justice system with adequate funding for indigent defense and adequate salaries for state court employees who work in Northern Virginia. The League commends the General Assembly for making some progress in achieving adequate salaries for court staff and adequate compensation for indigent defenders, but funding isn't sufficient, particularly for felony representation in juvenile court. All of us want to see a competent, fair and efficient justice system.
- Provide more child care subsidies for low income working parents. Day care subsidies are a cost-effective means to help low income parents join the workforce, thereby enabling welfare-to-work programs to actually work. Subsidies for quality day care also result in greater school readiness for low-income preschoolers. Waiting lists in Fairfax County and statewide continue to grow longer as low wage working parents struggle to find adequate child care while they provide for their families.
- End the House of Delegates' so-called Rule 18 that permits subcommittees to consider and kill proposed legislation without a recorded vote of the delegates. Not only did this rule hinder tracking legislation by the General Assembly's Legislative Information System last year, it clearly is a violation of open government principles and was used to kill much legislation favored by Northern Virginians.

- Provide adequate funding for mandated programs and capital costs of public schools. Needs of public schools include funding to meet increasing requirements of state and federal testing programs, renovation of older buildings, and the growing importance of after-school programs and programs for at-risk youth and gang prevention.

As most of you know, The League of Women Voters has an annual day in Richmond during each Session, where Leaguers from all over Virginia visit their General Assembly members. This year, it will be January 30th. Fairfax League members look forward to seeing many of you then; and we promise to keep you informed of our concerns as the legislative session progresses. We also invite you to attend the Women's Legislative Roundtable, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Virginia in the General Assembly Building on Wednesday mornings, beginning January 16. Most of us don't get to Richmond every week, but we'll be there on January 30<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you.

Jane Hilder , Action Chair speaking for  
Mary Grace Lintz , Acting President,  
and all the members of LWVFA

January 5, 2008