



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
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LWVFA testimony to the Fairfax Delegation to the Virginia General Assembly

Good morning. I am Janey George, President of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area, speaking on behalf of our members and supporters in Fairfax County and Fairfax City. We thank you for the privilege of speaking to you this morning.

Our legislative priority is that Virginia adopt a nonpartisan redistricting plan for its General Assembly and Congressional seats.

League leaders have testified at public hearings on redistricting across Virginia that we believe the voters should choose their representatives and not the other way around. The future of incumbents should be decided at the ballot box and not through the redistricting process.

While one of the effects of partisan gerrymandering is a decrease in voter turnout, another is its contribution to the increasing polarization in legislative bodies, including the Virginia General Assembly. As noted in the League's redistricting study, "with little reason to fear voters, representatives increasingly cater to party insiders and donors rather than to the political center. . . ; bipartisan compromise around moderate policies takes a backseat to party loyalty, resulting in historic levels of polarization." The gerrymandered districts established in 2001 increased the election of candidates who have been unwilling to compromise on legislation, the budget and-- especially important for our region-- transportation issues and funding.

We'd like to thank all of you who have supported nonpartisan redistricting and the Senate which actually passed such legislation during the last two sessions.

In its 2011 session, we hope the General Assembly will approve legislation that facilitates voting and increases governmental transparency, including the following proposed legislation:

- HB1401 and 1402 which would allow no-excuse absentee voting;
- HJ497 and SJ 284 – Constitutional Amendment which restores voting rights to felons once they have completed all requirements of their sentence, probation or parole; and
- HB778 proposed last session by Delegates Keam and LeMunyon which provided for electronically available recorded subcommittee, committee and floor votes on all legislation for members of the General Assembly.

We strongly encourage the General Assembly to establish a dedicated, stable and reliable funding source for the balanced transportation needs in the Commonwealth. This is going to take money; we realize it and are willing to pay. An improved transportation network would attract businesses to our area, provide jobs and make us more competitive in the future.

The League believes in efficient and effective government that is adequately financed. We support many elements of the Fairfax County Legislative program— especially:

- Funding of core services – schools, transportation, and rebalancing state and local funding resources and responsibilities; and local authority for taxation and land use. The League has long supported the diversification of revenue sources allowed to counties and other local jurisdictions so that property taxes do not make up such a large portion of local revenues.
- Funding of public safety, court system and employees, jails, and juvenile justice. We also support increased funding for indigent defense.

Finally, the League is alarmed about possible further funding cuts for sexual and domestic violence services. Over the past year, there has been a 22% increase in the number of adults and children receiving services and a 22% increase in the number of nights of emergency shelter needed. We must continue to assure that sufficient services are available for the victims of sexual and domestic violence.

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 19th. League members from all over the Commonwealth also go to Richmond to visit their representatives at least once a year. We look forward to seeing many of you on February 2nd. Thank you.