



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

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**Statement to the Fairfax County School Board – FY 2013 Advertised Budget
January 30, 2012**

Good evening, Chairman Strauss, members of the board, and Superintendent Dale. I'm Janey George, Co-President of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area. I speak on behalf of the League members throughout Fairfax County.

The League notes that the budget is based again this year on an increase in the County transfer that is higher than the guidance from the County. We have no indication of where the cuts will be made if the proposed County – and state – support levels do not materialize. This budget practice limits the ability of Fairfax County citizens to make meaningful suggestions for budget amendments.

The budget states (on pages 6 and 40) that ALL programs are impacted by compensation adjustments and that 88% of the budget is for employee compensation. We believe the increases needed for the projected 3,900-student increase and class size adjustments provide only part of the budget picture. Since the League supports citizen participation in the decision-making process, we recommend that the Board ask for a work session that includes a comprehensive discussion of all budget items relating to student and teacher time. This would include the proposed: \$5 million for “Extended learning time for students,”; \$3.3 million for extended time for teachers; and \$900 thousand to add foreign language classes and Foreign Language Immersion programs. The work session should also cover two items the League supports: a minimum daily 20-minute recess period, and adoption of later start times for middle and high schools.

We applaud the inclusion of information about the different school funds and reserves and a more complete discussion of the use of carryover in establishing budget levels. However, to provide a more transparent budget, the League believes that the issue of “unbudgeted carryover” needs to be addressed. The statement on page 149 shows that there is more than \$50 million of unbudgeted carryover each year. This amount would offset the increase in the requested County transfer over the guidance level.

The Superintendent proposes a two percent increase in the COLA as well as a Step Increase. The League recognizes the good work of FCPS staff whose compensation has not kept up with the cost of living and supports this proposal.

The League appreciates the effort you have made to maintain a high-quality educational system while facing the challenges of increasing student enrollment, changing demographics, and reduced financial support from the Commonwealth. We also commend the budget decision to create a fiscally responsible Virginia Retirement System (VRS) reserve.

We urge you to schedule the previously mentioned work session and continue community meetings on school budget issues. These allow Fairfax County citizens to be better-informed participants in discussions of school issues and may address some of their concerns about budget allocations. We also encourage you to limit the advertised budget increase over FY 2012 to one reflecting a five percent increase in the County transfer and ask County residents to express their concerns about areas of the budget they believe may be underfunded at that level.

Thank you.