



Fairfax VOTER

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School Schedules are Changing

This summer the Fairfax County School Board voted provide full-day Mondays for all elementary school students, effective in September. This allows for more instructional time for students, at least 20 minutes of recess each day, and increased planning time for teachers. The 2014-15 school calendar was also changed. The new uniform elementary schedule will eliminate making up inclement weather days at the end of the school year if fewer than 13 days are missed. Although there wasn't much time for community discussion of the revised calendar this year, the school board has delayed until March 2015 a decision on the 2015-16 calendar. In this study the LWVFA Schools Committee explains the calendar issues and provides discussion questions.

No sooner did the new schedule begin this fall than the school board agreed to provide later start times for high school starting next fall. LWVFA spoke out many times in support of this important change. For high schoolers, the sun will be up as they head out the door. Find out what the data showed that led to this decision and read about the personal experience of the student representative on the school board.

Calendar

December

- 1 VOTER deadline
- 2 LWV-VA Board meeting
- 3 Women's Roundtable pre-session luncheon, Richmond
- 3 Last day for GA to act on continued legislation
- 5 LWVNCA Board meeting
- 6 **Briefing and at-large meeting**
- 8-11 Unit meetings**
- 17 Board meeting**
- 22-31 School holiday
- 31 New Year's Eve

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Presidents' Message



2014 is slipping away very quickly. Our LWVFA members have accomplished much this year. We have a new membership brochure, an updated job description document, a revitalized Facebook page, a more comprehensive website, and even a Twitter presence. We have gained members, learned more about many issues, helped inform voters in various ways, and survived another election cycle. We are proud of our Voters Guide on www.Vote411.org and published in the *Fairfax Times*. Each year our Meet and Greet the Candidates events attract a larger audience and a diversified co-sponsorship with other organizations. All this would not be possible without dedicated volunteering members. Thank you all!

We want to thank Beth Tudan, who is doing great things updating our website. Check it out! Let us know if you have suggestions to make it still more user-friendly. Are you following us on Facebook? Please "like" us and tell your friends. Do you Twitter? We want these sites to be current, with useful and pertinent information.

Our Voter Service efforts are always being evaluated. Next year will be a big year with many local and state candidates on the ballot. We need your input and help in planning for the upcoming election, and it is not too early to start. Let Sidney Johnson know if you have suggestions – places to contact, ways to interact with citizens, etc.

The program of the January 24 General Meeting will be a talk with Fairfax County School Superintendent Karen Garza. We hope you will bring friends for the presentation, ask questions, enjoy lunch in a pleasant location, and meet with other League members. There will also be time for program planning on the state (LWV-VA) and regional (LWVNCA) level. Discussions beforehand in your units will help focus our time at the General Meeting.

You will see information about LWV-VA Women's Round Table (WRT) sessions in this edition of the *Fairfax VOTER*. We encourage you to attend the Pre-session on Wednesday, Dec. 3, and the regular Wednesday gatherings during the January and February legislative session. You will learn so much about how our state government works and will have information to share with family and friends.

You have our warmest wishes for a wonderful holiday season!

Julie and Helen

In Memoriam

Leaguers will miss two long-time active members. **Nancy Brach**, who belonged to the Reston Evening unit, died in April. **Jean Auldridge**, who died October 16, was Director of Virginia CURE, an advocate for prisoners and their families in Virginia, for over 26 years. She was a member of the Mt. Vernon Day unit. **Jean Packard** also passed away on October 19. (See the companion article on page 4 of this issue.)

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2014 - 2015

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Hydraulic Fracking Unit Discussions: Continue the Ban

By Karole McKalip, Program Co-chair

Recent proposals to drill for natural gas in the George Washington National Forest using a method called hydraulic fracturing or fracking has sparked local and state discussions about the process, its regulation, and the consequences for our communities. The October unit discussions allowed our members to learn about fracking along with its positive and possible negative consequences.

The issues surrounding hydraulic fracturing are complex. The process itself involves drilling, vertically and horizontally, and using undisclosed chemicals and water to blast out the natural gas trapped in the shale. Some units wanted more specific information not only on how fracking occurs, but its effects on the land and water. Where it should occur and what its legislative oversight should be part of the overall public discussion.

Reviewing the definition of fracking and its processes led directly into its pros and cons. For many members this topic became the focus of the discussion. Proponents of this type of drilling include fuel companies, land owners with shale gas deposits, those who want the U.S. to become energy independent thereby reducing the import of foreign oil, and those who want increased job opportunities and government tax revenues. Opponents comprise environmentalists, those concerned with human health (polluted water and air), and those who live near the involved areas (traffic and noise). Other specific negatives of fracking include the possibility of earthquakes and the displacement of wildlife. Some landowners whose lands may be drilled welcome the additional income from the drilling companies, while others who have agreed to the drilling regret that they did not know enough about the consequences.

With almost complete unanimity, the units concluded that the ban on fracking in the George Washington National Forest should be continued. The risks are too great to our area's environment. The potential damage to our watershed could be irreversible. Possible destruction of the forest and animal habitat is not acceptable.

Despite the fact that fracking has been occurring for several decades now, members concluded that greater transparency about the processes involved is critical and that more effective government regulation is necessary. Legislation

from the states and localities has been the primary source of regulations, but there is a lack of uniformity in oversight. Since this process will not go away, public understanding of fracking and its consequences can contribute to better regulations. As the unit discussions concluded, further examination of other means of energy production must also proceed.

Unit Recommendations, Comments, and Conclusions

- The underground effects of fracking are not yet well understood. The mission of the EPA should be broadened beyond the existing regulations. (Briefing)
- We need LAWS-transparency BEFORE fracking. The U.S. (government) is not leading in this, but we should. (Mt. Vernon Day)
- Hydraulic fracking will continue, but we should also continue to pursue other options, including wind, nuclear, hydropower, and solar energy. (Mt Vernon Evening)
- We need a mix of energy sources to include nuclear and need to improve our system of transportation/delivery of electricity. (Springfield)
- We would like to know what all the various agencies are doing to not only enforce current regulations but stricter guidelines are probably needed. It is a problem of learning all the disadvantage of fracking as we go along and reacting instead of setting standards ahead of time. (Greenspring)
- We hope for research that finds more benign ways to get the gas and oil from shale and better ways to get energy from solar, wind, and oceans. (Fairfax/Vienna)
- There has to be a balance of all methods of drilling and the best and safest methods to implement these must be found. We must make sure that the ease of fracking does not discourage continued research and development for new energy sources. (Reston Day)
- We assume that fracking would continue. Every energy source has its pros and cons and we need to be vigilant in mitigating the negative impact of all the energy sources and to continue investing/researching in new sources. (Reston Evening)
- Fracking is here to stay, so we recommend implementing measures of regulation through local, state, and federal legislation which would:

(Cont'd Page 5, Col 1)

Long-Time Public Servant and League Member, Jean Packard Dies



Jean Packard, a 50-year member of LWVFA and a longtime advocate for environmental issues in Fairfax County, died October 21 at age 91. Elected in 1972, she was the county's first female chair of the Board of Supervisors.

She fought over-development in Fairfax County by working to protect water supplies and slow down the expansion of sewer service until treatment plants could handle the increased volume. She also helped to downzone and protect the Occoquan watershed.

On September 27, she attended the groundbreaking ceremony of what will be Occoquan Regional Park's new waterfront, which will include a learning center named after her. Packard also served on the boards of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and Soil and Water Conservation District and was president of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations. She was a national board member of the Sierra Club.

The Fred Packard Center in Annandale, where LWVFA's office is located and many League meetings are held, is named after Jean's husband.

LWVFA historian Bernice Colvard said Jean came from a newspaper family and had learned some tricks, including the ability to read upside down. "You couldn't get anything past her."

Protective Orders for Domestic Violence

By Barbara Nunes, Domestic Violence Chair

Last month we explained the preliminary protective order (PPO) process. The next step is the Protective Order itself, which is scheduled within 15 days. If an order is granted, it remains in effect for two years. A PO is a civil order intended to protect an individual and is not a criminal offense. However, if it is violated, that is a criminal offense.

In the Family Abuse Protective Order Packet prepared by J&DR Court Intake Services for the victim, definitions are given to help explain why the PO is needed. It provides a list of subjects that the petitioner may want to include and what action the petitioner would like to see ordered. This pamphlet is helpful for the victim to know what the order can and cannot do and where help can be found.

In a PO hearing, the victim and respondent will both be present. The respondent may have an attorney. The victim or petitioner is not required to have an attorney but may be represented by Legal Services Northern Virginia (LSNV), which is available to those who meet the criteria for low income, or a private attorney. The Commonwealth's Attorney's office does not assist with POs.

The respondent may request a delay, but not the petitioner. Because the criteria for PPOs and POs are different, the petitioner may need some assistance. Domestic Violence Action Center (DVAC) helps victims prepare for hearings in which the victim seeks legal counsel from LSNV.

Legislative Pre-Session Forum to be Held in Richmond on December 3

Virginia League of Women Voters will host its annual Pre-Session of their Women's Legislative Roundtable on December 3 in the Senate room 3 in the Capitol building in Richmond. The purpose of the session is to hear short presentations from various non-profit organizations about their upcoming agenda for the 2015 General Assembly session beginning in January. Also on hand will be members of the Governor's cabinet, who will review their priorities for the coming session.

The popular session will begin at 9 a.m. and will be moderated by state President, Ann Sterling. "This has been a welcome opportunity for people to obtain a heads up as to what to expect when the General assembly convenes," stated Sterling. This session is free to the public.

More information can be obtained on page 6 of this issue of the *VOTER*.

Fairfax Schools are Changing Schedules

By Virginia Fitz Shea, Phyllis Payne, Beth Tudan, Rona Ackerman, Leslie Vandivere, and Adarsh Tehran

Fairfax County Public Schools instituted full-day Mondays in the elementary schools for the 2014-15 academic year. The elementary schools' extra hours gave flexibility to change the system-wide school calendar, allowing for more built-in snow days. In 2015-16, high schools and secondary schools will have later start times, and the length of the school day at all grade levels will be the same at 6 hours and 45 minutes.

During the last eight years, LWVFA has published three studies in the *Fairfax VOTER* relating to start times and the length of the elementary school day.

In May 2010, the *VOTER* asked the question, "The FCPS Elementary School Day: Does it Allow Enough Time?"¹ On June 26, 2014, the Fairfax County School Board finally decided that the answer was "no." By a vote of 10 to 1, the school board voted to end the policy of dismissing elementary school students 2 ½ hours early every Monday.

Since June 2010, LWVFA's position has stated "Elementary school children should be provided with at least one daily period of recess of at least 20 minutes in length." The League also supported full day kindergarten, which went into effect in all elementary schools in September 2011.

The May 2006 *Fairfax Voter* program focused on "Can We Afford Later High School Start times?"² A follow up report was published in April 2007.³ In 2008, LWVFA adopted the following position:

"The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area believes that it is desirable to delay the start time for instruction at all high schools and middle schools in order to provide the best opportunity for student learning and to promote adolescent health and safety."

On October 23, 2014, the school board voted 11 to 1 in favor of establishing high school and secondary school start times between 8:00 and 8:10 a.m.

Full-Day Mondays

For the first time in over 40 years, all Fairfax County elementary school students have full-day Mondays this year. On June 26, the Fairfax County School Board voted to stop dismissing elementary school students 2.5 hours early every Monday. This has increased instructional time for students and allowed for 20 minutes of daily recess. In addition, the change will guarantee dedicated planning time for elementary teachers totaling 300 minutes per week.

Prior to the June 26 meeting, the school board held two work sessions to listen to the proposals that were presented by Interim Deputy Superintendent Dan Parris. He chaired a work group that was charged with reviewing current practices for scheduling students at the elementary, middle and high school levels and making recommendations to improve effectiveness and efficiency.



(credit: Thomas Coex/AFP/Getty Images)

Instead of having planning time on Monday afternoons, classroom teachers would have planning time when additional specialists provided instruction to their students. The agenda for the May 28 work session stated, "To accommodate covering planning time, principals can use any

added staff if needed for science, Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools (FLES) or other specialized programs."

As of November 2014, a total of 63.8 positions were allocated to schools as a result of the implementation of full-day Mondays. The allocation was primarily made as additional art/music/physical education (PE) teachers, but

schools are able to utilize the positions in alternate ways to meet their individual needs (e.g., school-based technology specialist, world language teacher, etc.) assuming they are able to provide sufficient planning time for teachers.

There were 755.2 art/music/PE teacher positions budgeted in FY 2014 for elementary schools. The FY 2015 budget includes 741.2 art/music/PE teacher positions (prior to the 63.8 positions allocated as a result of full-day Mondays). The net reduction of 14.0 positions is the result of budget reductions due to the increase in class size and needs-based staffing reductions offset by growth in these positions due to student enrollment and demographic adjustments.⁴

Foreign Language in Elementary Schools

Nine additional schools added the Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools (FLES) program. Now there are a total of 55 schools with FLES. The name of the FLES program is being changed to Language Through Content (STEAM or Science), although the FCPS website still lists it as FLES.

Previously the FLES teacher came to the classroom twice a week to team teach with the classroom teacher for 30 minutes. Now, the FLES teacher comes once a week for one hour while the classroom teacher has one extra hour of planning time. There is also an increase in the teacher/student ratio (from 1/450 to 1/600) to reduce staffing costs. The costs at 46 FLES sites will go down from \$5.6 to \$3.7 million.

Art, Music, and Physical Education

There are no changes in the regulations for music, art, or PE. Schools have the option of providing additional time in these subjects. Table 1 illustrates the added staff positions for art and physical education.

Table 1 - Staffing for Music, Art, and Phys. Ed.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>FTE*Total 2014</u>	<u>15FTE Total 2013_14</u>
PE	478.00	424.16
Art	265.13	257.57
Music	271.33	272.57

*Full-time equivalent

Recess

When elementary schedules were being constructed for this school year, a 20-minute minimum time for recess was communicated to principals. This is five minutes more than is required in a new FCPS regulation approved September 4. School Board Regulation 3218.3 Section III.h states that

there shall be “a minimum of 15 minutes of daily recess.”

There are no maximum times for recess being communicated to principals. Data is not collected centrally on the length of recess at each FCPS elementary school. These decisions are left to the individual schools.⁵

In past years, the elementary schools had only enough hours in the week to allow for 10 minutes of recess per day while still meeting state requirements for the length of the standard school day. At the June 26 school board meeting, Sandy Evans (Mason District) said, “to have only 10 minutes of recess time has been a great heartache for me for years and years.”

Evans had been assistant chairman of the School Health Advisory Committee in June 2007 when it recommended that elementary schools provide a recess period of at least 20 minutes per day (except on Mondays).

In 2006, the Virginia Board of Education adopted revised *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. These revisions added the words “and recess” to the section on the standard school day: “The standard school day for students in grades 1 through 12 shall average at least 5-1/2 hours, excluding breaks for meals *and recess*, and a minimum of three hours for kindergarten.”

According to Superintendent of Public Instruction Billy K. Cannaday, Jr., this change “clarifies that recess is not part of the instructional program and is not counted as instructional time.”

To average a 5 ½ hour school day, the weekly program hours must be 27.5. Adding a 30-minute lunch period totals 30 hours per week. At the time the clarified language explaining that recess went into effect September 7, 2006, most Fairfax County elementary school students were in school for only 30 hours and 30 minutes per week.⁶ So if the schools were following the state rules, the students would have had only six minutes of recess per day.

In 2007 Fairfax adjusted many bell schedules so that all 122 schools that had early dismissal on Mondays had 30 hours and 50 minutes per week in school, enough time to allow 10 minutes of recess per day. That is the same amount of time that was available last year for all elementary schools, since full day Mondays had been eliminated in the 16 Project Excel schools.

At the June 26 school board meeting, Daniel G. Storck (Mt. Vernon District) noted that it would be a good thing to meet state standards—“we recognized that we’ve been skating on

thin ice on that one for a long time. I'm pleased that we're finally addressing that."

Teacher Planning Time

The new uniform elementary day was implemented with new regulations/rules that provide all elementary teachers with at least 60 minutes of self-directed time four times per week *and* at least 60 minutes one time per week for collaborative team planning, equating to a total minimum planning time per week of 300 minutes.

There are no changes to Regulation 4422, which limits the number of hours that librarians and other school-based professionals can be dedicated to providing for planning time coverage.

Speaking to the school board on June 26, 2014, Steven L. Greenburg, president of the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, supported the full-day Monday plan and said, "My members appreciate that this school board will finally do something substantial to address our teachers work load, planning, and time issues. The fact that you will put these protections for them into regulation is important."

Kevin Hickerson, vice president of the Fairfax Education Association, said that FEA has advocated for and supported the stated objectives and goals of this proposal; however, he questioned whether implementing the change in September was realistic. In October 2014, FEA President Kimberly Adams launched a survey of members asking about their experiences with full-day Mondays. As of November 3, the results have not been announced.

Parent and Teacher Surveys

An earlier survey of teachers conducted in June by the school administration showed that elementary school teachers were split about whether they supported changing to full day Mondays. 9,900 emails were sent and 6,320 responses were received for a 64 percent response rate. The results were that 34 percent responded yes, while 48 percent responded no. Of the 34 percent who responded yes, roughly 74 percent preferred implementation in September 2014 while 26 percent preferred implementation in September 2015.

Elementary school parents were surveyed in two ways—through an online survey tool via email and through a phone survey for those parents who did not have an email on record. For the online survey, 100,100 emails were sent and 36,260 responses were received for a 36 percent response rate. For the phone survey, 16,500 phone calls were made and 4,885 responses were received for a 30 percent response rate.

Overall, elementary school parents were very supportive of making the change to full-day Mondays – nearly 80 percent said yes in the online survey and 85 percent in the phone survey. They were also very supportive of making the change for the 2014-15 school year— of those who responded yes to making the change, nearly 94 percent said in September 2014 in the online survey and 83 percent in the phone survey.⁷

Funding

On July 26, the school board approved the revenue and expenditure adjustments in the FY 2014 final budget review. The FY 2014 funds available totaled \$38.2 million. The board approved the recommendation for \$15.1 million in FY 2015 expenditure adjustments, including \$7.6 million for full-day Mondays.

Some critics questioned how full-day Mondays could be such a high priority when it wasn't even included in the budget that the school board approved in May. School Board Chairman Tammy Derenak Kaufax explained, "The timing of the decision after the FY 2015 budget was approved was not our normal process, but FCPS was not in compliance with state requirements to provide a minimum of 990-hours of instruction with an early release on Mondays."⁸

On September 9, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted 8-2 to give guidance to the school board in budgeting for next year to expect a possible, but no guaranteed, increase of the transfer by 3 percent plus the amount of the cost of full-day Mondays in FY 2015-16.

Calendar Revision

In conjunction with its June 26 vote for full-day Mondays, the school board also changed the 2014-15 school year calendar. On July 24 a few additional changes were made (see Table 2).

The original version of the calendar, which was approved December 5, 2013, called for 183 days in the school year. The revised calendar includes only 180 days. Fairfax chose to measure its school year in terms of the required minimum of 990 hours rather than a minimum of 180 days.

Kathy Smith (Sully District) voted against the change in the calendar and the implementation of full-day Mondays. She said she had "a little bit of heartache going from counting days to counting hours, because typically we have two or three days off a year and so now 177 days is okay....I know other school systems did it, but I wish there was a way we could still build in some days so you didn't get under 180 days for kids."

During the coming year, the school board is allowing more time to consider the next calendar. The Standard School Year Calendar will be presented as new business February 19, 2015, with a vote on March 5.

The new calendar for 2014-15 provides two weeks for Winter Break. The original 2014-15 calendar also provided two weeks, but in the past Winter Break was usually shorter. The agenda item for the school board decision notes that future calendars are projected to have two weeks for Winter Break.

The new calendar also provides for strategic planning days, which are student holidays, throughout the year. These strategic planning days are on September 29, February 2, March 12, and April 6. There are also seven teacher workdays to offer teachers time for staff meetings and professional development as well as three teacher staff development days.

Students will be released two hours early on the last day of the quarter and the day before Thanksgiving break and winter break. Students will be released two hours early on the last day of school instead of attending school for only two hours. On early release days, teachers will use the time for teacher directed time, plus job-embedded collaborative time.

Snow Days

The calendar includes 11 make-up days built into the calendar in case of inclement weather. That will prevent FCPS from having to make-up days if there are fewer than 13 inclement weather days. Over the past 30 years, the average number of snow days was 3.9 days per year. The number of snow days ranged from none (1990) to 11 (2014, 2010, 2003).



In 2011-12 there was only one inclement weather day. The school calendar originally set June 19 as the last day of school. However, in April of that year, the school board voted to

schedule the last day of school on Friday, June 15 instead. This change gave teachers two additional workdays, for a total of three workdays, after the students were dismissed for the year. In a memo sent to the school board on May 24, Superintendent Jack Dale said, FCPS would conduct training for food service workers and bus drivers. “In all cases, employees who were expecting pay for the days worked will be receiving that pay.” So, although there waere no savings

for salaries, an estimated \$104,000 was saved in fuel costs since the buses were not used June 18-19.

Table 2 - School Year Calendar 2014-15

September 2, 2014	School Begins
September 29	Student Holiday
October 13	Columbus Day Holiday - Student Holiday
October 31	First Grading Period Ends*+ Students Released 2 Hours Early
November 3-4	Student Holidays
November 26	Students Released 2 Hours Early
November 26	Thanksgiving Break
November 27-28	Students Released 2 Hours Early
December 22- January 2, 2015	Winter Break
January 19	Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday Holiday
January 29	Second Grading Period Ends*+ Students Released 2 Hours Early
January 30 – February 2	Student Holidays
February 16	George Washington's Birthday- Presidents' Day Holiday— Student Holiday
March 16	Student Holiday
March 30-April 3	Spring Break
April 6	Student Holiday
April 16	Third Grading Period Ends*+ Students Released 2 Hours Early
April 17	Student Holiday
May 25	Memorial Day Holiday - Student Holiday
June 19	Last Day of School*+N Students Released 2 Hours Early

Legend

- * Schools are open
- + Report cards are provided to parents at the end of each grading period and at the end of the school year.
- N Early release on the last official day of school

Table 3 - Makeup Day Schedule

Days Missed	Makeup Days
Up to 11	Built in, no makeup required
12	No makeup required
13	Monday, March 16
14	No makeup required
15	Monday, April 6

The Full-Day-Mondays FAQ states that, in the future, “The school year will not end early due to lack of inclement weather because we need to comply with the state regulation which requires 180 days or 990 hours of instruction.”⁹

Contract Length Adjustments

When Dan Parris presented the first version of the school calendar proposal on May 28, he noted that there may be additional savings possible due to contract length adjustments for some support groups as a result of fewer school days. In the revised version presented June 16, however, he emphasized that NO contract changes were recommended for the 2014-15 School Year. Instead the additional days would be devoted to training. There may be consideration of reducing the 2015-16 contracts to reflect the three-day reduction in the school year, for a savings of \$1.3 million. This includes

- Educational interpreters and braille transcribers,
- Public health attendants
- Bus drivers, bus driver floaters, bus driver supervisors, and bus driver attendants,
- Safety and security assistants
- Food service workers and food service managers.

Stuart Gibson, who represented Hunter Mill District on the school board from 1996 to 2011, testified against the calendar change at the June 26 school board meeting. He questioned the idea of saving “\$1.3 million next year by cutting the pay of your lowest paid employees.”

Later High School Start Times

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) will have later morning start times for high school students in September 2015. On October 23, the school board voted 11 to 1 in favor of the Blueprint for Change to establish high school and secondary school start times between 8:00 and 8:10 a.m. Currently, most of the high schools (grades 9-12) and secondary schools (grades 7-12) start at 7:20 and two start at 7:25 a.m. With this plan, most of the elementary school start times will remain as is with some changing by five or 10 minutes as happens each year. The range of start times for elementary schools will remain the same, between 8:00 and 9:20 a.m. Middle schools, which currently start between 7:25 and 8:05, will all start at 7:30 a.m. Middle schools serve students in 7th and 8th grades except in the Mason district where middle school is grades 6-8.

In April of 2012, the school board established a goal to

start high schools after 8 a.m. based on a compelling body of evidence demonstrating that delaying morning start times for adolescent students benefits health, well-being, safety and performance. Studies have shown decreases in teen depression and the need for medications, decreases in car crashes, behavior problems, discipline referrals, absenteeism, tardiness, and dropout rates.

The LWVFA has long supported the need for this change (through a consensus reached in 2007) and has testified in favor of it on numerous occasions. SLEEP in Fairfax, co-founded by Sandy Evans and Phyllis Payne, has been working to increase awareness about teen sleep needs and advocating for later middle and high school start times since 2004.

Adolescents on average require nine hours of sleep per night for optimal performance, health, and brain development. Most teens experience delayed sleep onset during puberty, and the hormones that help regulate sleep make it difficult for most teens to fall asleep before 11 p.m. or to be alert before 8 a.m. The Fairfax County Youth Survey typically finds that three-quarters of FCPS 10th graders and eighty-five percent of 12th graders report sleeping seven hours or less on an average school night, resulting in a large nightly



sleep deficit. Nearly one-third of teen students show signs of depression. Sleep plays an important role in learning and memory. Sleep debt affects teens’ ability to think, perform, and react appropriately.

FCPS hired Children’s National Medical Center (CNMC), experts in pediatric sleep and school policy, to help develop a Blueprint for Change in April 2013. CNMC worked closely with FCPS transportation experts and multiple stakeholder groups to craft a number of different options

Figure 1 - High School Start Times¹⁰

									8:00
		8:15	8:00	8:15	7:40	7:30	7:20		8:10
1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020		

A timeline of changes in Fairfax County and the scheduled change in September 2015.

for consideration by the school board and the public. In May and June of 2014, four options were presented to the community at a series of eight meetings in different geographical regions of Fairfax. People were encouraged to submit online comments on all four plans as well.

Some concerns that had been raised previously about making this change were addressed by stakeholders who collaborated with FCPS to develop resolutions to scheduling conflicts. For example, as explained in the FCPS FAQ document, there will be minimal impact on scholastic sports as many practices will start and end at the same time that they do currently. Other practices will shift slightly later. Most games and competitions will also retain their current schedules; sports that require “stacking” of successive levels sharing the same facility may have slightly later start times.

Based on input from numerous individuals and stakeholder groups, FCPS staff focused on further improvements to one of the options in the Blueprint for Change. In September, Superintendent Karen Garza recommended that the school board adopt that option with minor improvements, including moving middle school start times from 7:20 to 7:30 and making minor shifts in start times for some elementary schools. The cost for the plan is \$4.9 million and returns the number of buses in the fleet to a level similar to that in 2009. The school board opted to leave additional time for comment between the announcement of the change as new business at its September 18 board meeting and the vote (Action) on October 23.

Many school board members and Dr. Garza indicated a sincere desire to continue working to further delay the middle school start time since the research shows that children this age also benefit. According to the Fairfax County Youth Survey, 57.5 percent of 8th graders sleep eight or more hours.

Current enrollment data show that there are more than 60,000 students who start school at 7:20 a.m. in Fairfax. With

this change, students in Fairfax secondary schools will never start before 8 a.m. Students in most other pyramids will have 11 of 13 years with a schedule that starts after 8a.m. and students in Mason District, where middle schools are grades 6-8, will have start times after 8 a.m. for 10 of 13 years.

Remarks at the October 23, 2014, Meeting by Harris LaTeef, Student Representative, Fairfax County School Board

“Now... later high school-start times. I hope that I’ve made my view on this issue very clear.

“This is a change that’s going to directly impact and benefit the daily lives of my fellow students and I could not support it more. From the vast and constantly growing body of science to the many endorsements from various public and adolescent health organizations, the choice you all must make is clear. On a personal note, I implore each and every one of you to vote “yes” this evening ...but not really for me. It’s too late for the class of 2015. We’ve spent the last four long years waking up before the sun does. When we graduate this coming June, my fellow seniors and I will have endured 700 mornings where we had to wake up in an unreasonable hour. That number jumps to over a thousand if you include our time in middle school.

“We’ve had to manage heavy workloads and busy schedules with little sleep and that is definitely not a combination that is beneficial to students’ stress levels and mental wellness, issues that must remain priorities for Fairfax County Public Schools. I’m confident each board member is going to vote tonight to support our students’ health and well-being because that is really what this vote is all about. As I said a few times before, we can provide our students with a top-notch rigorously designed education but if we don’t have our physical and mental health in check, the education the county provides really has little meaning.

“Speaking in a more macro sense, it is my belief that this

is one of the most important issues the school board will address during my time as student representative. I'm honored that this issue is being decided while I'm student rep after so many years of debate. To put it in perspective, high schools in Fairfax County have been starting before 8:00 am during the entire course of my lifetime. The debate to have them start later has been raging for nearly just as long. I want to read a few quotes real quick.

- “Research studies conclude that adolescents generally are not getting enough sleep.. ..Sleep deprivation is a real issue that has had a negative impact on student learning and overall health and well-being.”
- “Teens who do not get enough sleep are at risk for automobile accidents, depressed moods and problems with peer and adult relationships.”
- “Later high school start times and middle school bell times can produce results of benefit to the entire community.”

“These quotes are not from a recent report that contributed to the new Blueprint for Change. They're from the FCPS task force on high school opening times that presented these findings to the school board back in 1998. I was in diapers. We've known that our students need more sleep for a very long time and we've known that changing start times would allow them to do just that: sleep.

“If we made a change back in 1998, the high school experience of the tens of thousands of students who have been in FCPS since then, myself included, could have been much better. I can tell you that.

Lastly, I want to address those in the audience and the community who have advocated so passionately for this change over the past several years, the advocates from SLEEP in particular.

“Your fight is not over. Yes, on the surface this is a debate on how much sleep students get, but I believe at its core, this is a debate over the health and wellness of our students. Lack of sleep is one of the many factors that affect student's well-being. I encourage you all to let your next focus be on the workload our students deal with.

“Waking up in early in the morning is very difficult especially so after having spent hours working on homework the night before. Managing the strain our students are under due to their workloads will become one of my new priorities. I hope it'll become one of yours also as well, the school board

and members of the community. Thank you for your time tonight. I congratulate those who work so hard especially Ms. Payne and Ms. Evans, to see this come to fruition. I really do thank the school board for making this change not only on my behalf but on behalf of the literally hundreds of thousands of people who are going to be benefited by this.

“In closing, to steal a quote from Dr. Garza, “The easiest thing for a leader to do is nothing,” but tonight the school board is doing something great. Thank you.”

Endnotes . . .

- 1 Retrieved from <http://www.lwv-fairfax.org/files/marchvtr-schoolsstudy.pdf>
- 2 Retrieved from <http://www.lwv-fairfax.org/files/may06progtopic-sleep.pdf>
- 3 Ackerman, R, Later Start Times for Fairfax Schools,” Retrieved from <http://www.lwv-fairfax.org/files/april07prog-laterhsstarttimes-rev3-23-07.pdf>
- 4 Reaves, Brandynn. “FOIA Response – Shea.” Message to the author. 4 Nov. 2014. E-mail.
- 5 Reaves, Brandynn. “FOIA Response – Shea.” Message to the author, 22 Oct. 2014. E-mail
- 6 Virginia Fitz Shea, testimony to the Fairfax County School Board, 26 April 2007
- 7 “Elementary School Parents Survey Results,” Retrieved from <http://www.fcps.edu/news/fulldaymondayparentsurvey.shtml>
- 8 Retrieved from <http://www.fullschooldays.org/2014/09/09/fairfax-county-public-schools-will-probably-receive-a-larger-transfer/>
- 9 Retrieved from <http://www.fcps.edu/news/fulldaymondayparentsurvey.shtml>
- 10 Shea, V. F.; Payne, P.; and Evans, S. “School Bells and Buses in Fairfax,” Retrieved from www.sleepinfairfax.org/docs/School_Bells_&_Buses_in_Fairfax.doc

Study Questions . . .

1. In past years, elementary school teachers were expected to hold conferences with parents during the first quarter, and they were often held during the two November teacher work days. Under the new calendar, these days are no longer designated for conferences. FCPS expects teachers to “take seriously the responsibility to have appropriate and adequate communication with parents throughout the year...[and] honor parent requests for conferences.” Discuss the pros and cons of this new approach to teacher conferences.

2. In 2007, the School Health Advisory Committee urged 90 minutes per week for elementary school physical education, an increase of 30 minutes. FCPS responded that this would require additional staffing and an extended school day when there was barely time for core instruction. Now that 2.5

additional hours have been added to the elementary school week, should FCPS implement a requirement for at least 90 minutes of PE?

3. For the first time, FCPS has a school calendar with 180 days instead of 183 days. If a 180-day calendar is approved for 2015-16, FCPS could save \$1.3 million with shorter contract lengths for some support staff. Do you favor adding three days to next year's calendar to have 183 days in the school year?

4. All irregular high school schedules (occasional or weekly late arrivals or early dismissals) were eliminated with the calendar change this year. Now there are six early dismissal days for the whole school system.

- As in recent years, there is a two-hour early dismissal on the day before Thanksgiving break. This year a new two-hour early dismissal was added the day before Winter Break. What are the

advantages and disadvantages of these for teachers, parents, and students?

- Do you support the new policy of dismissing students two hours early on the last day of the first three grading periods (October 31, January 29, and April 16)?
- In past years, students attended school for two hours on the last day of school. This year they have a two-hour early dismissal. Discuss.

5. The new 2014-15 calendar also has five more student holidays than the calendar that had been approved before the elimination of half-day Mondays. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having more student holiday time during the school year. Should the number of student holidays be decreased in the future?

6. What is your opinion about having two weeks for Winter Break?

Garza Named as Keynote Speaker for General Meeting in January



Dr. Karen Garza, Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools will be our speaker for the January general meeting, set for January 24 at the Fairfax Country Club." announced co-President Helen Kelly. (See further details and the registration form on the following page.)

Garza was appointed Superintendent effective July 1, 2013, coming to us from Lubbock, Texas, where she had served as Superintendent of Lubbock Independent School District (LISD) since 2009. Under her leadership, the district experienced significant gains in student achievement, while reducing the achievement gap in science, math, and social studies. She was also able to implement a strategic plan that increased graduation/completion rates.

A self-described collaborative leader, Dr. Garza designed a framework at LISD to engage students, educators, and the community in empowering people, improving educational practices, and achieving performance excellence.

Previously, she served as Chief Academic Officer for the Houston Independent School District (HISD), where she was responsible for the learning of more than 200,000 students and the management and success of more than

300 schools. She is credited with developing an educational improvement model that brought HISD from one of the lowest academically performing school districts in the state to one of the highest performing.

Dr. Garza began her career as an elementary school teacher and considers herself a lifelong learner. She has served in a number of leadership roles throughout her career, including deputy superintendent, principal, curriculum supervisor, and education specialist.

During her tenure as the Associate Executive Director for Governmental Relations for the Texas Association of School Administrators, Dr. Garza used her knowledge of school districts to represent school administrators during state legislative discussions.

She holds a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Texas at Austin. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Houston at Victoria.

Dr. Garza and her husband, Louis, have four grown children.

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools website

Domestic Violence Hotline
703-360-7273



~ You are cordially invited to attend ~



The LWV of the Fairfax Area
General Meeting
Saturday, January 24, 2015

COUNTRY CLUB OF FAIRFAX
5110 Ox Road (Route 123 & Braddock Roads)
Fairfax VA 22030
9 a.m. – Registration & coffee

9:30 a.m. LWVUS program planning at state and NCA level

10:30 a.m. Speaker: Dr Karen Garza,
Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools

11:30 – Luncheon
(Reservations required for luncheon only)

Luncheon Reservation Deadline January 16, 2014-- Cost: \$35 per person

*Menu: House Salad With Raspberry Vinaigrette, Chicken Entree,
Chef's Vegetables, Rolls and Butter, Dessert, Coffee Service*

Program is free; Luncheon, \$35 per person.

Make checks payable to: **LWVFA** and mail with reservation form to:

2015 General Meeting, 10172 Turnberry Place, Oakton, VA 22124

Name _____ Lunch @\$35 ea. _____

Phone Number & E-mail _____

Guest(s)'Name(s) _____ Lunch @\$35ea. _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

For special dietary needs or questions, call Mary at 703-319-2185

(Fracking Report cont'd from page 3)

➤ National standards need to be updated. States can develop stricter standards if they want. Members felt that the future outlook for fracking is good, would continue and that other energy sources would continue to be developed and implemented because they are getting cheaper. Whatever happens the watersheds need to be protected. Pursue research. (Chantilly/Centreville)

➤ We need to look at fracking and other specific environmental issues under the broader umbrella of climate change and we need information, legislation, enforcement, transparency and disclosure. (McLean)



The ROUND Table on Capitol SQUARE



Join us on Capitol Square in Richmond on Wednesday, December 3rd to hear first hand about the pressing issues that will come before state legislators. The day begins with The Pre-Session Women's Round Table (free) in House Room 3 followed by a luncheon meeting (\$40) and panel discussion in Senate Room 3. As always, speakers from widely diverse sectors are being invited. Speakers include non-profit advocates and members of the Governor's cabinet.

League members and guests who have attended the Round Table say this:

- "The most valuable part was the parade of organizations."
- "The most valuable part was the opportunity to hear the "wish list" of the various groups."
- "I'm new to legislative awareness and advocacy, so I think it was awesome...."
- "I think hearing from folks who are part of the administration was illuminating."
- "It gives an idea of what might actually be priorities and likely to get signed if passed by the GA."
- "...nice to find information on issues and partner with like-minded groups to support their legislative efforts."
- "I was impressed with how much was accomplished in so little time."
- "Comments of the agencies and directors gave me a clearer picture of how difficult the work of legislators is..."
- "I was just curious the first time I attended but now it is a "must do!"
- "I can see how important our voice in the League is."
- "It was a good pre-session and the LUNCH, as usual, was excellent!"

MORNING: 9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. Free and Open to the Public - House Room 3

Speakers: Non-Profit Representatives & Governor's Cabinet Members

Topic: Legislation in the 2015 General Assembly

LUNCHEON: 12:15 P.M. - 3:00 P.M. Capitol Building, Senate Room 3;

Topics: Breaking New Ground -. Virginia's New Department of Elections

Improving Virginia's Election Management

For more information visit our website www.lwv-va.org or contact: cnogg@comcast.net

**Parking and Directions and Features:

<http://viriniageneralassembly.gov/viriniastatecapitol.php?secid=7&activesec=1#!hb=1&mainContentTabs=1&content=1,includes/contentTemplate.php%3Ftid%3D44%26ctype%3Db%26cid%3D23>

Luncheon Reservation Form: Limit of 85 Persons; Deadline: November 25. No Refunds.

Please Print: Name _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Number of Reservations _____

League or organization _____ Vegan choice needed? _____

Add names on back of this form as needed. Detach and mail completed form with your \$40 check made payable to: LWV of Virginia - Address: LWV-VA c/o Elaine Head, 507 Monticello Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060

This Month's Unit Meeting Locations

Topic: Fairfax County School Schedule Changes

Members and visitors are encouraged to attend any meeting convenient for them, including the "At Large Meeting" and briefing on Saturdays when a briefing is listed. As of November 1, 2014, the locations were correct; please use phone numbers to verify sites and advise of your intent to attend. Some meetings at restaurants may need reservations.

Saturday, December 6

10 a.m. At-Large Unit and Briefing

Packard Center
4026 Hummer Road
Annandale 22003
Contact: Judy, 703-725-9401_

7:45 p.m. Mt. Vernon Evening (MVE)

Paul Spring Retirement Community
Mt. Vernon Room
7116 Fort Hunt Road
Alexandria 22307
Contact: Jane, 703-960-6820

7:30 p.m. Reston Evening (RE)

Reston Art Gallery at Heron House
Lake Anne Village Center
Reston 20190
Contact: Lucy, 703-757-5893

Monday, December 8

1:30 p.m. Greenspring (GSP)

Hunters Crossing Classroom
Spring Village Drive
Springfield 22150
Contact: Kay, 703-644-2670

Wednesday, December 10

9:30 a.m. Mt. Vernon Day (MVD)

Mt. Vernon Dist. Government Center
2511 Parkers Lane
Alexandria 22306
Contact: Gail, 703-360-6561

Thursday, December 11

9 a.m. Reston Day (RD)

2271 Cedar Cove Ct
Reston 20191
Contact: Barbara 703-620-0349

9:30 a.m. Springfield (SPF) Packard Center.

(inside Annandale Community Park)
4026 Hummer Road
Annandale 22003
Contact: Nancy 703-256-6570
or Peg 703-256-9420

Tuesday, December 9

10 a.m. Centreville-Chantilly (CCD)

Sully District Gov. Center
4900 Stonecroft Blvd.
Chantilly 20151
Contact: Leslie, 571-213-6384

9:30 a.m. McLean Day (McL)

Star Nut Café
1445 Laughlin Ave.
McLean 22101
Contact: Sharone 703-734-1048
or Adarsh 703-356-8368

1 p.m. Fairfax/Vienna (FX-V)

Oakton Regional Library
10304 Lynhaven Pl.
Oakton 22124
Contact: Bobby, 703-938-1486 or
Liz, 703-281-3380

10 a.m. Fairfax Station (FXS)

7902 Bracksford Ct.
Fairfax Station 22039
Contact: Lois 703-690-0908

January Meetings:

No Unit Meetings - Sign up for General Meeting



The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA)
 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403
 703-658-9150. Web address: www.lwv-fairfax.org

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December, 2014
Julie Jones, Co-President
Helen Kelly, Co-President
Ron Page, Editor
Liz Brooke, Coordinator

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the public to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any citizen of voting age, male or female, may become a member.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office, or political parties, and any use of the League of Women Voters name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.

LWVFA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Dues year is July 1 through June 30. Current dues year ends June 30, 2015.)

Membership Category: Individual \$65 ____ ; Household (2 persons-1 VOTER) \$90 ____ ; Donation \$ ____
 Student \$32.50 ____ ; (Coll. Attending _____)

Membership is: New ____ ; Renewal ____ ; Reinstate ____ ; Subsidy Requested ____

We value membership. A subsidy fund is available, check block above and include whatever you can afford.

Dues are not tax deductible. Tax-deductible donations must be written on a separate check payable to LWVFA Ed. Fund.

Please Print Clearly!

Name _____ **Unit** _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip + 4** _____

Phone (H) _____ **(M)** _____ **E-Mail** _____

Thank you for checking off your interests:

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> County Govt | <input type="checkbox"/> Voting Procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Schools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Libraries | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Judicial Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Water | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence |

Mail to: LWVFA, 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403