



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

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### **2018 Testimony to the Fairfax Delegation to the General Assembly**

January 6, 2018

Good morning, Senator Saslaw and members of our Delegation to the General Assembly. I am Helen Kelly, Action Director of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

You play a key role in giving us a voice in public affairs and in keeping us safe. That's why we urge you to support:

- Dedicated Funding for Metro
- Adequate Funding for Elections
- Non-Partisan Redistricting
- Background Checks for All Gun Purchases

Businesses and new college graduates are attracted to Northern Virginia because of the opportunities created by Metro. This translates into \$600M in revenue for Virginia's General Fund – enough money to pay for higher education and for the state police. Please provide funding that will allow it to maintain its infrastructure and equipment to meet the needs of our region and of the Commonwealth.

We ask you to provide realistic funding for Virginia's electoral system. This includes adequate funding for the Department of Elections staffing, systems and support of elections and for the funding that supports these services at the local level. Over the years, demands made on election offices have increased while funding has decreased. We urge you to do your part to protect our right to vote by providing adequate resources to all election offices in Virginia.

Another requirement for fair elections is nonpartisan redistricting. We strongly urge you to work toward this goal with a process that includes: 1- Specific timelines for the steps leading to a redistricting plan; 2- Full disclosure throughout the process; 3- Public hearings on the plan proposed for adoption; and 4- All meetings subject to open meeting laws. Now is the time to pass legislation that gives Virginia's voters their full voice in our elections.

In March of this year, the District Attorney of Brooklyn, New York, announced the arrest of 22 Virginia residents in the largest gun bust in Brooklyn history. Based on ATF data, Virginia ranks among the top 10 states supplying crime guns to other states. Exit Polls showed that gun policy was the second most important issue after health care in the 2017 election. Now is the time for Virginia to pass laws mandating universal background checks on all gun purchases to reduce gun trafficking and to protect all of us.