

**FAIRFAX COUNTY FEDERATION OF CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS
STATEMENT TO THE
FAIRFAX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
April 10, 2002**

Advertised FY 2003 Fiscal Plan

Good evening, Madam Chairman and members of the Board. I am Art Wells, President of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations, and am privileged to present to you the Federation's positions on the advertised County budget for the coming year as well as two resolutions regarding the draft Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2003-2007.

Federation members, the Board and the membership have spent considerable time reviewing both the school and the County budgets for the coming fiscal year. Superintendent Domenech shared his time with our Board in presenting the FCPS proposed FY 2003 budget. I addressed the School Board at its public hearing and members of our Education Committee participated in the FCPS public meetings last week regarding possible reductions necessitated by the decrease in state aid complicated by the continuing increase in student population, the challenge to prepare students to pass the SOL exams, and an increase in summer school enrollments. We commend Superintendent Domenech and his staff for inviting the public to help analyze where budget cuts might be made and for formulating a list of possible specific program and staff reductions should they be necessary.

Both Chairman Hanley and County Executive Griffin were very generous with their time briefing the Federation membership on County issues and the draft County budget, spending several hours with us and answering any questions presented to them. You will note that our position on the budget addresses macro issues rather than smaller specific issues. But first, we congratulate you and staff on the national recognition the County received for various programs, including financial management.

Briefly stated, our bottom line is:

- Schools – We recommend sharing the school transfer shortage equally between the schools and the County, reducing the County portion of the budget through line item or across-the-board reduction and perhaps using some of the “rainy day” funds.

- Salary Structure – We believe that there should be parity in budgeted average salary percentage increases for non-instructional County and FCPS employees and that instructional personnel salaries should be established at regionally competitive levels. Further, we recommend that the County Executive and the Division Superintendent should work toward unification and/or coordination of salary scales and personnel policies.
- Pay for Performance – Again this year, we withhold judgment on the advisability of converting to a Pay for Performance system until there has been more experience, but we do feel that the current rating bloat must be corrected.
- Programs – We agree that “staying the course” with most programs is reasonable, however, we are disappointed that there is no method for earmarking revenues for a stormwater management system to prevent further deterioration of our stream valleys and to improve the quality of our surface waters. We also regret that there is minimal funding for trails and sidewalks, especially for access to transit facilities.
- Real Estate Tax Rate – This is the second year of double-digit residential real property tax assessment. While this is creating concern among many homeowners, we recognize that the County has little choice but to maintain the current tax rate because there are no alternative funding sources available at this time. Even maintaining the current tax rate will require significant reductions in the County and/or school budgets. We recognize that the County Executive has recently asked County agencies to identify where reductions can be made so the Board can have more flexibility in making budget decisions, such as whether it will be possible to reduce the tax rate, provide additional funding to schools, or other fiscal solutions.
- Tax Structure – Still concerned about the increasing percentage of General Fund revenues derived from property taxes, we urge you to push for legislative overhaul of the archaic state-local tax structure. This has been under study for too long without corrective action. We will support you and any initiative by the Governor or General Assembly to rectify the current situation. In the interest of local autonomy we recommend consideration of legislative authorization to local governments to levy a piggy-back income tax.

We are also providing you a resolution passed by the membership regarding our concern about the dramatic increase in funding needed for projects related to expansion of the Judicial Center. We are disappointed that the cost of renovating the Jennings building is now projected at \$25 million and the cost of renovating the old courthouse used by the Juvenile Court is projected to cost \$10 million. The court expansion program shortfall of \$44 million is rather alarming. We are concerned about the possibility of making up some of this shortfall from public safety projects when there are many such projects waiting for funding. Finally, we ask whether any savings have been realized from value engineering of the expansion program.

Lastly, we are providing a resolution passed by the membership supporting a park bond referendum in November 2002 for the purpose of acquiring parkland. Since land available for this purpose is quickly disappearing, we feel that all bond proceeds be used for acquisition. The park bond referendum in 2004 could include funding for park improvements. We also support some bond funding

for the Regional Park Authority so they can obtain land in Fairfax County to extend their park properties.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our views on the draft budget and CIP. We do not envy you the difficult decisions you will have to make.