

President's Message: Don't Be Fooled

My letter to the editor, which appeared in the Connection newspapers, the Fairfax Times, and the Sun-Gazette, was:

County Chairman Sharon Bulova's "Bulova Byline" statement about the proposed FY2019 real estate tax hike, is misleading. When she says the proposed real estate tax rate is \$1.15, she omits the storm-water rate. When that is included the FY2019 rate will be \$1.1825 instead of \$1.15.

She states that new budget includes a 2-cent increase in the real estate tax rate, but this omits the additional tax increase due to the 2.2% increase in average residential assessments. The effective rate increase, when assessments and the additional storm-water rate increase (1/4 cent) are included, is 4.7 cents, not 2 cents.

The typical Fairfax County homeowner's real estate tax bill will increase by \$258, a 4.2% increase. Loudoun County reduced its average tax bill by \$48, a 1% decrease.

Chairman Bulova states that the tax hike fully funds the Market Rate Adjustment, Performance, Merit, and Longevity increases for county employees and states that the Market Rate Adjustment is 2.25%. She does not state the total salary increase resulting from the Performance, Merit, and Longevity increases. When those are included county employees will see average increases ranging from 4.25% to 4.50%. Likewise, the school board is funding a 2.3% step increase and other salary adjustments, but does not say what the total average raise will be when the other adjustments are included, probably 4% also.

The real estate tax hike will increase county revenues by about \$116 million. The cost of next year's county and school raises is \$139 million. Raises are the primary driver of the county's annual real estate tax hikes.

Since FY2000, the supervisors have increased real estate taxes 169%, more than three times faster than inflation, which increased 53%.

If Chairman Bulova believes that voters who defeated the 2016 \$100 million meals tax would now support a 4.2% tax hike to raise \$116 million for 4% raises, why didn't she acknowledge those numbers in her statement?

Arthur Purves, President, FCTA

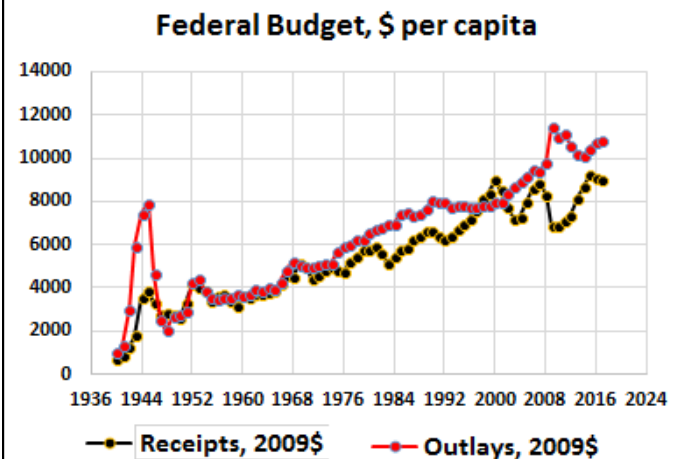
Another FCTA Success Story

The FCTA has been calling for raising the minimum retirement age of County and school employees, which ranges from 50 to 58, depending on the agency, to the retirement age of Social Security. Such a change would greatly decrease the pension costs. The county is finally considering raising the retirement age. Ask your supervisor to support Pat Herity's proposal: https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield/sites/springfield/files/assets/documents/june_2018.pdf.



The Ever-Increasing Federal Taxes

Federal expenditures (Federal taxes) have increased 3.1% per year since 1940, even after adjusting for inflation and population (see graph). Notice that there is no economy of scale — no decrease in the per capita cost as the number of people increases. During this same time period, the average household income increased only 1.6% per year. Having the taxes increase more than the household income is unsustainable. More recently, since 1984, the rates have been 1.7% in taxes and 0.9% in household income — a 90% greater tax increase than household income — still unsustainable.



After the dot-com bubble in 2000 and the Twin Tower bombings in 2001, the expenditures increased slightly more than the average rate under the Bush administration. After the housing bubble in 2008, expenditures increased dramatically under the Obama administration. Trump's first budget increased at the Bush rate. He promises that, next year, the rate will be lower.

Problems with the Pensions

Chuck McAndrew, FCTA Board member, wrote the following letter to Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and Kathy Smith, Sully District Supervisor:

My wife and I have been homeowners and taxpayers in Fairfax County since 1968. Again, we protest the increases in the overall county budget and real estate taxes. As usual, the board plans to raise the county budget and the real estate rate along with the assessment increase more than twice the inflation rate for FY 2019. The FY19 General Fund Disbursements will increase to \$4.288 billion, \$181.48 million (4.42%) over the FY2018 Adopted Budget. According to Kiplinger’s News Letter February 2018, the official consumer price index (inflation rate) increased 2.1% for calendar year 2017. With the rate increase and the real estate assessment increase, the overall increase in real estate taxes is projected to be almost an average of 5%. For the last five years, real estate taxes have increased 26% which is almost three times the inflation rate for that period.

The Educational Employees Supplementary Retirement System of Fairfax County (ERFC) is an additional supplemental plan that applies to Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) employees who are on the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) and are paid the same amount of Social Security (SS) that he or she would receive at age 66. So if a teacher retires at 55 with 30 years of service, that teacher receives 75% of his or her retirement based on the highest three years of service and includes the SS supplement as if they were already on SS until they reach the SS age. No other county or city in the metropolitan area offers this very generous ERFC system. The proposed budget for ERFC is \$94.6 million for FY 2019. This program should be phased out for those FCPS employees less than 40 years of age and terminated for all new employees.

The Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) allows employees retirement payments prior to actual retirement. DROP allows the employee to continue to work and receive their salary for a period of up to three years. During the DROP period, the pension plan accumulates the monthly benefit in an account balance identified as payable to the member only at the end of the DROP period. The monthly benefit that is credited to the DROP participant’s account balance is calculated using service and final compensation as the date of entry in DROP, and the employee does not earn service credit toward retirement trust funds during the DROP period. In FY 2017, approximately \$43.6 million in retirement benefits were paid out of the retirement trust funds as DROP lump sum payments. For FY 2019, the DROP budget is approximately \$37 million. It is time to drop the DROP!

It is time for county officials to look at the costly defined benefit retirement systems and carefully review what the Federal Government did over 30 years ago when they went to a hybrid system called the Federal Employees Retirement System. In addition, the county should raise the retirement age to 67, which is the SS age to retire, for all new employees which is the same position of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance (FCTA). Last, but certainly not least, is the *Fairfax County Unfunded Pension Liability of \$5.6 billion which seems to be ignored by the County Board.*

FCTA Watchdog Report

Excessive Pensions

The Fairfax County pension liability is now \$5.6 billion (see CAFR for 2017, Pp 136-138). There are 400,000 homes in Fairfax County, so the liability amounts to \$14,000 per household. To pay the liability will require an increase in the real-estate tax of \$1,000 for 14 years. The liability and the real-estate tax will increase unless the retirement age is increased to 65 or 70 years of age — as compared to the current 55 to 60. Without such a change, the liability per household will get worse in the future because the number of county and school employees has been increasing 1.6% per year while the population has been increasing only 0.9% per year.

Our Outrageous School Board

The Fairfax County School Board, in its Family Life Education (FLE) program from grades 4 to 12, indoctrinates our students with the unscientific idea that sex is a mental state, not a physical state. FLE teaches that if you think you are a girl then you are a girl, regardless of the sex organs your body has. You are thereby entitled to change your clothes in the girls locker room. The students are surely confused because, in biology, they learn that sex is determined by what sex organs your body has. In the case of human beings, the Board is anti-science, overruling Biology. So the Board confuses the students, then asks for more money for lesson development and facility modifications to accommodate the students it confuses. See Laura Miller’s article at

http://www.fcta.org/FxCo/Schools/2018_fcps_FLElauramiller.pdf.

The School Board pays little attention to complaints about its anti-science policies. Parents are left with just a few options: on-line schooling, home schooling, and private schooling. The other alternative is to vote the anti-science Board members out of office in 2019.

Merit Pay for Teachers

The County refuses to have a merit-pay system for teachers; however, the parents can provide merit bonuses. Although Fairfax County has no limit, neighboring districts permit gifts to teachers up to \$100 per family. In a class of 30, each contributing \$100, an outstanding teacher could get a \$3000 bonus from appreciative parents. There would be no need to have the County establish criteria. The parents could decide, either as a body or individually.

Next FCTA Board Meeting

**Tuesday, July 3, 2018
7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.**

Although only Board members may vote, all FCTA members are invited.

Location: Purves home
9350 Campbell Road (off Beulah Road), Vienna, VA
Send an email to purves@fcta.org if you want to attend

Killing Fellow Human Beings with Tax Money

Many people oppose the death penalty. Their reasons vary. Some say it is a form of torture, both during the waiting on death row and in the process itself. Some say it costs too much, that high-security prisons are cheaper. Most say killing a human being is wrong. Emotions run high on this issue so group demonstrations are common, especially at execution sites.

By the same token, many people oppose abortion. DNA testing reveals that the embryo, and later the fetus, has the DNA of a human being, a DNA that differs from that of the mother and of the father – its own DNA. It is a unique human being. It is not just a mass of cell tissue, as some have claimed. No, abortion kills not merely cells but a living, unique, fully human being. That human being is at exactly the size that it should be for that age. Our emotions are aroused on this issue when we hold an infant in our arms and realize that many tiny children like this are being killed on a daily basis. Unlike the criminals, this infant is the picture of innocence; it has done nothing wrong.

Despite the innocence, since 1973, over fifty million babies have been killed in the womb, almost eight million at the hands of Planned Parenthood. The killing of ten people by a terrorist is called a mass murder but the killing of 2,500 babies per day is called a woman's choice. Many of these abortions are **funded by our taxpayer dollars**, despite taxpayer opposition. Many politicians claim to be against abortion but merely representing what they think their constituents want – following their perception but not their poll. They wash their hands of the atrocity. They are catering to killers who will return the favor by working to have them re-elected. For these politicians, this is not a matter of principle; it is only a matter of expediency. Re-election is the goal. Blood money is the means.

The acceptability of abortion is fostered in our public schools, where abortion is taught in the FLE program without the details and without any mention of the psychological effect or moral implications. It is taught as if "this is the right thing to do" or, at least, "an acceptable thing to do." Many of our politicians were raised in this culture. They see killing innocent humans, murdering, as a private matter. Will they soon see infanticide as a private matter?

Abortion offers the most stark contrast between the two major political parties. Democrats want abortion to be readily available to everyone, even at taxpayer expense. They want more taxpayer funds sent to Planned Parenthood. They sponsor legislation to this effect. Despite what DNA shows, on May 25, 2018, Democrat AG Mark Herring ruled that the body of a baby that dies in the womb is not that of a human being. Republicans oppose abortion in most circumstances, working within the limits of what the Supreme Court has ruled, sponsoring legislation to limit abortions and stop the taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood.

The abortion issue is just one more governmental approach to a problem in society: **throw money at the symptom**. The public schools teach students how to stimulate their sex organs, including perverse ways of avoiding pregnancy, but teach nothing about the psychology of sexual intercourse. Abortion abounds. Data show that children and society benefit if they are raised by their biological mother and father. The schools should stress the dignity of the person, abstinence, the psychology of sexual intercourse, and how to be a good spouse and good parent. Doing so would be a **no-cost attack** on the root cause of abortion. The county schools give only token mentions of such topics.

Reston Congestion and Mass Transit

Despite the new, high-density real-estate development in the Reston area, Fairfax County and the Virginia Dept of Transportation (VDOT) are doing little to nothing about the existing and future congestion in the area. As FCTA's Rob Whitfield reports, on June 14, 2018, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) approved \$1.285 billion in funding for 44 regionally significant projects in its Six Year Plan. This total includes several transit projects such as \$250 million for Route 1 BRT Phases 1 and 2 and other projects that do nothing to reduce peak period congestion (e.g., \$12 million for speed bumps and a roundabout for Route 9 in Hillsboro). NVTA approved absolutely no funding towards Reston area priority projects. Reston should not rely on either VDOT or NVTA funding in the next round of funding. Except for the \$20.6 million added priority for the Rock Hill Road bridge over the Dulles Toll and Access Road, presumably as a carrot for Jeff Bezos and Amazon HQ 2, all other Fairfax County projects funded by NVTA are south of Route 50. Reston, with its high tax base, is apparently a "cash cow" for funding projects elsewhere in the County.

Funds are being diverted not only away from Reston but also from all Northern Virginia roads. Of commuters, 81% use automobiles; only 16% use mass transit. The General Assembly approved a plan to give WMATA \$154 million per year in capital funding. In the 2014, Fairfax County's \$100 million transportation bond issue, 85% of funds were for bike and pedestrian trails, which are used by only 2% of commuters.

The additional funds for mass transit come in the face of a decreasing number of Metrorail riders (30% less than the peak of a few years ago). The decrease has been attributed to low Metrorail reliability, lower gasoline costs, increased teleworking, higher car ownership, the rise of Uber and Lyft, jobs moving to the suburbs, and a shrinking federal workforce. The decrease comes as costs rise, especially maintenance and employee-benefit costs. In the near future, driverless automobiles will further reduce mass-transit usage. Contrary to the claims of the politicians, mass transit produces more greenhouse gases than the average automobile, so that claimed advantage is false.

The suburbs will continue to attract not only jobs but also people. People want their own yards where they can have parties without getting permission from the apartment managers. They like working in the yard and garden with their own hands. People crave freedom, including the freedom afforded by owning their own property.

As transportation expert Randall O'Toole has stated, mass transit is doomed. The government should so plan. Meanwhile, Reston residents and Reston workers should plan on more and more congestion as the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors continues to cram more people and more businesses into the already congested area — with no congestion relief in sight.

Fairfax County Taxpayer Alliance

P.O. Box 356, Fairfax, VA 22038

www.fcta.org

2017-2018 President: Arthur Purves

The Bulletin is the newsletter of the Fairfax County Taxpayer Alliance. It is published quarterly, with occasional special editions. The purpose is to provide information to member communities; federal, state, and local officials; and other interested persons. Articles reflect the view of their author and may be reprinted with the use of the following citation: "The *Bulletin* of the Fairfax County Taxpayer Alliance".

Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance
P.O. Box 356
Fairfax, VA 22038
www.fcta.org
alerts@fcta.org

Presorted
First Class U.S. Postage
PAID
Merrifield, VA
Permit 1337

What FCTA Has Been Doing on Our Members' Behalf

Much has transpired at FCTA since the previous bulletin. For a complete list of the reports generated since then, go to <http://www.fcta.org/Pubs/archivist.html>. The list of files will be of interest to many readers. To see only what FCTA has done, type into the search box the word *blue*. FCTA actions have the date and category in blue, so the search will result in the FCTA actions only. You will see the texts of presentations, letters to our politicians, reports on meetings, opinion articles, and research reports. Click on the title of the article and you can read the full report.

(Re)Join the FCTA and invite a friend to join too!

The Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance analyzes Fairfax County, Virginia, and Federal budgets. We publish the FCTA Bulletin, which explains budgets, exposes excesses, and offers solutions. We also maintain a website (www.fcta.org) with much commentary. **Use this form or join online at www.fcta.org. We need your help to reach more taxpayers. For additional memberships, simply enclose a check with the new member's name, address, and email.**

Current members: Please renew if the date on your mailing label is before July 1, 2018. Thank you!

2018-07-04

_____ Enclosed is my annual FCTA membership dues of \$25 (\$10 for first year for new members).

Special offer: A donor will pay the \$10 for the first year for the next 25 new members.

Mail to the return address, above.

_____ I'm enclosing an extra contribution of \$ _____

Your Comments:

_____ I would like to volunteer. Please contact me.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____