

## BITING THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU

### Testimony to the Fairfax County Supervisors Budget Hearing

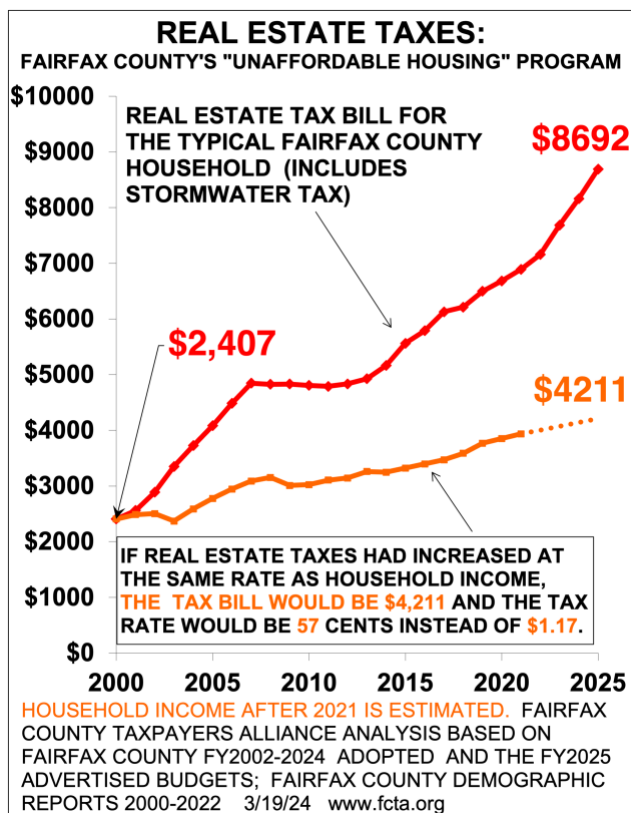
Testimony of FCTA president Arthur Purves at the April 16, 2024, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors hearing on the FY2025 Advertised Budget. Speakers representing organizations are given five minutes.

Members of the Board:

**We appreciate county and school employees.** As an election officer I've seen clean schools, dedicated teachers and administrators, and the hard work of the Office of Elections. It's unfortunate that the elaborate security measures for election day are bypassed by unrestricted absentee voting.

Before my wife passed away, the rescue squad came four times to help her. They were wonderful. My wife said, "You cannot pay the rescue squad too much!"

Similarly, **I assume that county and school unions appreciate taxpayers**, who provide \$5 billion annually. You can tax us too much. If you do, we leave.



**You are biting the hand that feeds you.** Since FY2000 real estate taxes have been increasing three times faster than household income. The FY2025 average household tax is \$8700. **It would have been \$4,500 less**, if it had increased at the same rate as household income.

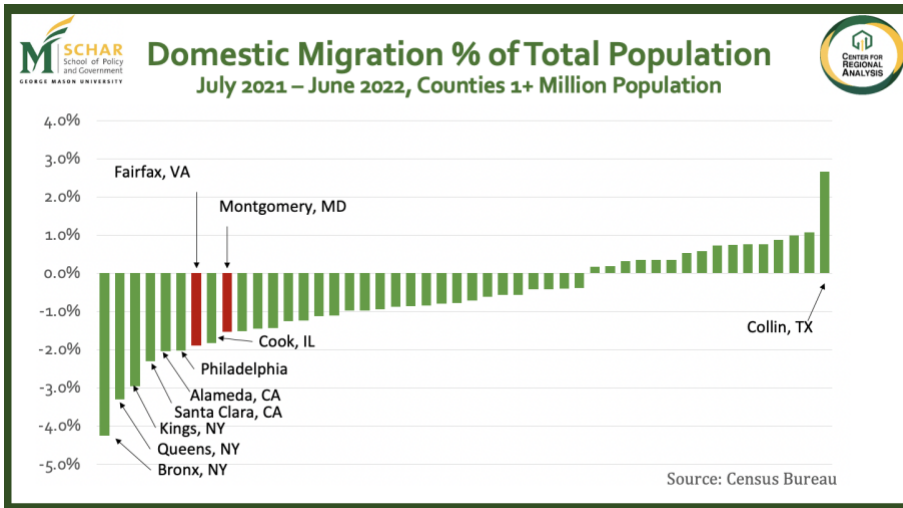
Taxpayers are leaving. According to the GMU Center for Regional Analysis, **Fairfax County ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation, between Philadelphia and Chicago, in domestic out-migration as a percent of population.** The presentation was entitled "Symptoms of a Struggling Region: A Path to Mediocrity."

The deterioration was evident in the 1980s, when according to the book, *The Fight for Fairfax*, developer Til Hazel was "convinced that public schools are failing to prepare young people for college and the world at large ..." (p.249).

**FY2025 raises and benefit rate hikes for 38,000 county and school employees will cost \$367**

**million.** The real estate and car tax hikes will raise less than that, \$309 million.

**Teachers will have had 20% in raises over three years. According to the county, inflation over those three years was 7 percent.** Non-uniformed county employees would get 17% raises and uniformed would get raises between 21 and 27 percent over three years.



We are told that these raises are necessary because county salaries are not competitive. At a recent town hall, I asked my supervisor and the director of Management and Budget what is the average Fairfax County salary. Neither of them knew.

While the school system publishes the average teacher salary, which is increasing from \$86K to \$90K, the county's budget plan does not publish average salaries anywhere

in its three-volume advertised budget. County salaries are "Fairfax Secret." However, **we estimate the average county salary to be \$95K**, including \$97K for police, and \$102K for fire and rescue.

The reason for hiring shortages is the declining birth rate. There are not enough younger workers to replace retiring Baby Boomers. Raises will not fix that.

Moreover, neither the county nor schools have provided evidence that they're losing employees *en masse* due to compensation. Most would lose salary, pensions, and job security in the private sector.

Are 20% raises due to union campaign contributions? **Democrat supervisors received \$260K in union campaign contributions** for last November.

**We recommend that you increase FY2025 spending by \$63 million instead of \$363 million by freezing salaries until:**

- 1) The school system fixes its K-3 reading and arithmetic curricula so parents don't have to teach the basics at home and so low-income children master reading and arithmetic by the crucial 3rd grade;
- 2) The county shows it is making business-friendly permitting and inspection processes and does not rely on casinos;
- 3) The county and schools provide data showing that they are losing employees to the private sector due to compensation; and
- 4) Supervisors pledge to not accept union contributions.

This still leaves \$55 million for increased pension and insurance rates.

If unions want compensation that outpaces inflation, **they should run a school system and county that increases household income faster than inflation.** Schools need to teach phonics and multiplication tables. It's critical that schools provide our increasing low-income population an escape from poverty and a chance at the American Dream.

Thank you.