



Watchdog of the Taxpayer's Dollar Since 1956

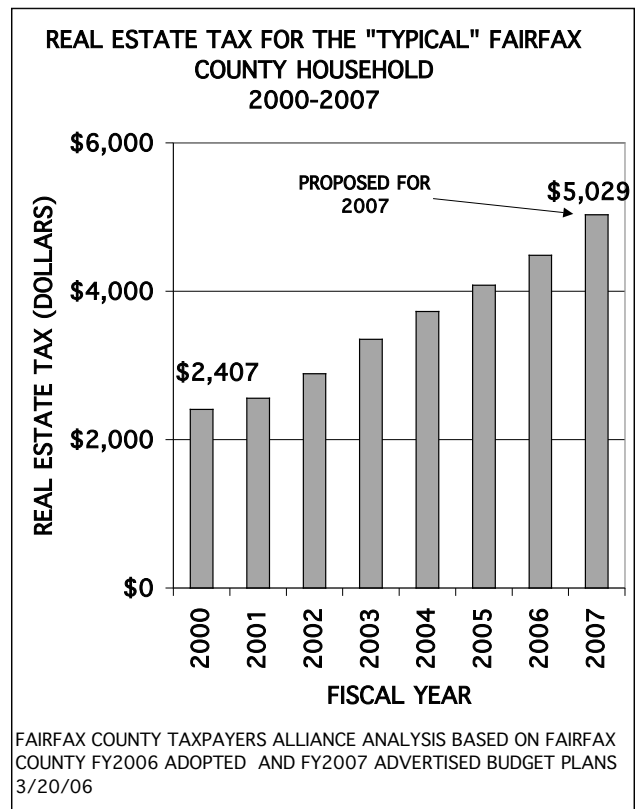
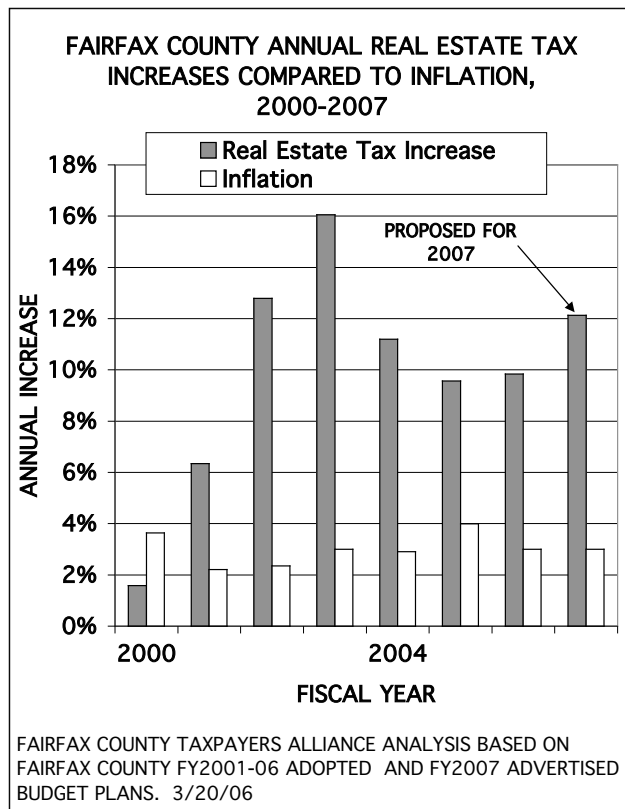
The Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance Bulletin

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www.fcta.org

Spring 2006

Homeowners face another 10% tax hike Real estate taxes double in seven years



Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance and
NorthernVirginiaGOP.com

Taxpayer Rally Protest out-of-control taxes!

Monday, April 3, 6:30–7:30 p.m. in front of the Fairfax County Gov't Ctr
Just before the Board of Supervisors 7:00 p.m. Budget Public Hearing
12000 Government Center Pkwy Fairfax VA 22035 (near Fair Oaks Mall)
Questions? Email rally@fcta.org or phone (703) 642-5567

=====>See article on page 4.<=====

FCTA testimony to the Fairfax County School Board regarding the FY2007 school budget

Background: For several years, the FCTA has testified at the Fairfax County School Board budget hearings. The following is testimony presented at this year’s hearing, on February 2, 2006. Testimony from previous years is posted on www.fcta.org, under the “Testimony” link.

Members of the Board and Dr. Dale:

Good evening. My name is Arthur Purves. I address you as president of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance.

Last April the school board representative from Sully District wrote to an FCTA board member that the proposed FY2006 budget increase was “a 2.0 percent increase over the current year’s budget estimate and is below the rate of inflation.”

Now , a year later that alleged two percent or \$50 million increase has become a 14 percent increase and the \$50 million has become \$254 million.

Can you be trusted?

This is an expensive school system. For decades your inflation-adjusted budget has been increasing nine times faster than enrollment. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) staff has been increasing four times faster than enrollment. The Superintendent justifies this as the price of

academic excellence and cites last year’s record-high SAT scores as evidence.

Why is it, however, that in the 2006 Washington Area Boards of Education (WABE) Guide, FCPS is the only school district that does not report the percent of seniors taking the SAT (see below)? In 1997, 89 percent of FCPS seniors took the SATs. That had decreased to 79 percent in the 2005 WABE Guide. In the 2006 Guide, is FCPS trying to cover up an even greater decline in SAT participation?

FCPS claims to be the “Education Empire,” the best in the nation. But is it the best in Virginia?

Schoolmatters.com, a school-rating website provided by Standard and Poors and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation identifies the top-performing school districts in each state. Their analysis considers both test scores and demographics and lists 16 top school districts in Virginia. Fairfax County is not one of them.

FCPS boasts that 89 percent of its graduates go on to post-secondary education. The school district, however, has no estimate of what percentage of its graduates earn four-year college degrees. The State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) reports that 68 percent of freshmen at four-year colleges will graduate within six years. SCHEV

School Division	Average Math	Average Verbal	Total	Percent of Seniors Taking Tests
Alexandria City	481	482	963	65.5%
Arlington County	544	541	1,085	72.0%
Fairfax County	565	549	1,114	unavailable
Falls Church City	582	585	1,167	84.0%
Loudoun County	539	534	1,073	78.0%
Manassas City	514	513	1,027	44.0%
Montgomery County	560	541	1,101	78.5%
Prince George's County	435	442	877	55.0%
Prince William County	503	509	1,012	69.0%

numbers suggest that 45 percent of freshmen at two-year colleges eventually earn four-year degrees.

Therefore it appears that while 90 percent of graduates go on to post-secondary education, under 60 percent of FCPS graduates will earn four-year college degrees. This analysis is posted on the

FCTA website, www.fcta.org.

In conclusion, your claims of academic excellence are incomplete and do not justify the property tax hikes required to support your soaring budget.

Thank you

Are Fairfax County teachers leaving due to low salaries? School surveys say “No”

A refrain heard from tax-hike advocates is that we must increase teacher pay to prevent loss of teachers to nearby counties that might be paying higher salaries.

Is this true?

As part of the Fairfax County Public Schools annual budget process, school administrators answer

questions from school board members and in some cases from members of the community. The school system now posts budget question responses on the school website.

Last year’s first question, from the McLean Citizens Association, addressed the issue of teacher flight due to low pay. Here is the exact wording of the question and the answer from the school website:

Information Requested By: McLean Citizen’s Association

Answer Prepared By: Kevin North

Date Prepared: January 4, 2005

Question:

Previous budgets have indicated that FCPS is losing teachers to nearby districts because of lower pay in Fairfax County. For either the 2002-03 or 2003-04 school year or both (depending on what information has been assembled), how many teachers left FCPS to teach in nearby jurisdictions and indicated that the reason they left FCPS was for higher pay? In addition to retirements, how many teachers left FCPS during the same time period?

Response:

The Department of Human Resources does a snapshot of employee data on October 31 of each year. For the period of November 1, 2002, through October 31, 2003, there were 1,515 teacher separations; of that, 296 were due to retirement. Based upon exit survey data for which we received a 45 percent return rate, 19 employees self-reported that they were going to a nearby jurisdiction, they did not specify salary as the reason. For the period of November 1, 2003, through October 31, 2004, there were 1,767 teacher separations, of that, 337 were due to retirement. Based upon exit survey data for which we received a 47 percent return rate, 13 employees self-reported that they were going to a nearby jurisdiction; but again, they did not specify salary as the reason. Based upon the responses to the exit survey data from the same timeframe, the largest percentage of employees left because they were moving from the area, with 46 percent as of October 2003, and 49 percent as of October 2004.

Visit the FCTA website, at www.fcta.org

Posted on www.fcta.org are FCTA Bulletins, testimony at public hearings, press releases, graphs documenting soaring government spending, the current Virginia budget (675 pages itemizing \$66 billion in spending), and links to other tax-related websites.

Taxpayers or Unions?

Whom will the Supervisors see at the budget hearings?

At 6:30 p.m. on Monday, April 3, the FCTA is co-sponsoring a taxpayer rally in front of the Fairfax County Government Center before the start of the Supervisors' budget hearing at 7 p.m.

We have held these rallies for several years and get about 30 participants. Most years, the teachers' union also holds a rally for higher taxes and gets about 300 participants.

Likewise, at all public hearings, advocates for higher taxes outnumber taxpayers 10-to-1.

Taxpayer apathy not only encourages the Supervisors to raise taxes, it discourages anti-tax

candidates from running.

If half the households receiving this Bulletin came to our rally, we could outnumber the unions.

The FCTA can write about government waste. However, to get the Supervisors to actually cut their tax hike, we need you to take a few hours one day a year to come to this rally.

The teachers' union will be there. TV and newspaper cameras will be watching, as will the Supervisors.

Please do all you can to be there too, and bring a friend.

An FCTA member speaks up

Letter addressed to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors:

Gerald Connolly,
Chairman
Sharon Bulova

Catherine Hudgins
Joan DuBois
Dana Kauffman

Penelope Gross
Gerry Hyland
Linda Smyth

Elaine McConnell
Michael Frey

My wife and I are retired. We purchased our home in Vienna in 1974, raised our family of six children and planned to remain here in our old age. But your taxation policies are forcing us out of our home. You have raised real estate taxes 85% in six years, and now our tax bill is approaching twice what our mortgage payment was. There is no honest way you can defend this immoral practice.

When we complained at a public hearing last year we were told that Fairfax is a world-class county and requires increased taxation to fund its many social and growth programs. That may be admirable, but not so at the expense of driving out those who have worked and saved for a home and who are on fixed incomes. And your tax relief program is totally unrealistic.

There is little evidence that you have truly addressed this serious situation. You place great emphasis on a long list of social programs, but little on the needs of the property owner who pays 60%

of the county tax bill. For example, I was told by the county that my antiquated septic system would be replaced by a modern county sewage system. That was 32 years ago. I'm still waiting. And I can't imagine why, if it were important to you, that you haven't worked with the state to do something about Lawyers Road, which serves my home. It has high-volume traffic but is a patchwork of pot-holes with two creeks that flood when it rains hard and the road has to be closed. World class? I don't think so. But it is indicative of the county's priority for spending the skyrocketing taxes you have heaped on the property owner.

I sincerely believe the Board of Supervisors has a moral obligation to address this serious inequity and reduce the tax rate for property owners, many of whom are being systematically and inevitably forced out of their hard-earned homes.

Richard C. Kirkland
Vienna

FCTA testimony to the Fairfax County Delegation to the Virginia General Assembly

“There is no need to raise taxes for transportation.”

Background: Each January, on the first or second Saturday, state delegates and senators with constituents in Fairfax County hold an all-day public hearing at the in the Supervisors’ Boardroom at the Fairfax County Government Center.

For several years, the FCTA president has been among the few anti-tax speakers at this hearing. Here is the FCTA testimony from this year’s hearing, held January 7, 2006.

Previous years’ testimony is posted on the FCTA website, www.fcta.org, under the “Testimony” link.

Distinguished Members of the General Assembly:

My name is Arthur Purves. I address you as president of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance.

There is no need to raise taxes for transportation.

Despite recent tax hikes and soaring tax revenues, state Senator John Chichester, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, tells us that we cannot divert existing taxes to transportation because most of these revenues are needed for public education, courts and prisons, and Medicaid, all of which are outpacing the growth of population and inflation.

What he does not say is that public school-spending has been increasing ten times faster than enrollment, even after adjusting for inflation. Public-school staff has been increasing seven times faster than enrollment. The result? According to the National Assessment of Education Progress, 65 percent of Virginia school children score below grade level.

Because of the public schools’ century-old hostility to phonics, low-income children do not learn to read, thus making them dependent of government welfare. Before the Civil War, it was illegal to teach a slave to read because the ability to read, it was thought, would empower an individual to be

independent. Not much has changed. Slavery destroyed families at the auction block. Today welfare destroys families by incentivizing out-of-wedlock births with free housing, food, childcare, and healthcare. It is government schools and government welfare that turn our vulnerable youth into felons and feeds Virginia’s prison population, which is growing four times faster than overall population. Government has become the modern-day plantation.

High medical inflation is in part due to the government takeover of healthcare through Medicaid and, at the federal level, Medicare. These single-payer systems destroy market restraints, increase administrative costs, and encourage fraud. Their high cost is the major cause of the federal deficits, putting us at the mercy of the Japanese and Chinese, who are buying an increasing percentage of our debt.

Medicaid was supposed to provide long-term care to the poor, but with the right lawyer, well-to-do families can qualify.

We do support Medicaid funding for the disabled. However the overdue refurbishing of the state mental health system could have been funded long ago but for the excessive funding of government schools and welfare, which demand more taxes every year.

The problem of course is that no income taxes and almost no sales taxes are spent on transportation. Instead they fund the growing problems created by welfare, the government takeover of healthcare, and the education empire. The transportation solution is to acknowledge the damage caused by social spending and to let transportation compete against social spending for income taxes and all sales taxes.

Thank you.

**The Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance
P.O. Box 356
Fairfax, Va. 22038**

www.fcta.org

Have you renewed your membership for 2006? Please renew if the date on your mailing label is before April 1, 2006.

The Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance supports less government spending, borrowing, and taxes. We monitor both the Fairfax County and Virginia state budgets and publish press releases, email alerts, and maintain a website, www.fcta.org. We also provide speakers to community groups. To demonstrate support for our goals we need dues-paying members. Please take the time now to return this membership form along with your dues and, if possible, a contribution. Thank you.

- Please renew my membership in FCTA (dues \$15 for 12 months)**
- Please enroll me as a new member of the FCTA (dues \$15 for 12 months)**
- I'm enclosing an extra contribution of \$_____**
- I would like to volunteer. Please contact me.**

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To receive FCTA press releases and tax alerts, please provide your email address.