Fairfax County
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
2019 Advocacy Agenda

Fairfax County NAACP
Unit 7066
P. O. Box 394,
Fairfax, VA 22038-0394
571-418-2717
Excomm@fairfaxnaaccp.org
Fairfax County Residents:

One year after the branch celebrated its 100th year in Fairfax County, overt and institutionalized racism remain a significant obstacle in our nation. In 2018, hate crimes rose 50 percent locally. Now, maybe more than ever, leadership and a clear vision for equity are needed. The friction caused by demographic changes witnessed in our communities in recent years has manifested itself in several ways including battles over immigration reform, education reform, criminal justice reform, and the struggle to expand affordable housing, Fairfax NAACP has been at the forefront of these issues and will continue to advocate for reform in the years ahead.

Founded on Feb. 12. 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or the NAACP, is the nation’s oldest, largest and most widely recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization. We have over a half-million members and supporters throughout the United States and the world. In Fairfax County we have over 400 active members and almost 2,000 friends and allies. Our mission is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination by ensuring the removal of barriers of racial discrimination through a democratic process.

As we enter 2019, the NAACP plans to follow up on our award-winning year. In 2018, the branch won the Thalheimer Award in recognition of its programming. This year we have more members, a larger leadership team, and plan to continue our educational programming. Additionally, we will continue to advocate on behalf of marginalized communities. We are consistently reminded that the opposition to progress is non-partisan. Therefore, it falls to organizations like the NAACP to have clarity of purpose and push for change even when that may be unpopular.

Our 2019 Legislative Agenda will challenge the county to live up to its ideals in the school system; create a criminal justice system that serves as a model; and encourage economic development and affordable housing for all people in Fairfax County. Also Fairfax County NAACP will work collaboratively with the Virginia State NAACP on policies and legislation on a variety of issues that are vital to the success and prosperity for all - particularly communities of color.

Sincerely,

Kofi Annan

President, Fairfax County NAACP
Criminal Justice

In 2018 the Criminal Justice Committee (CJC) had some significant accomplishments. We successfully lobbied to change the School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding to improve officer training and reduce the chances that students will be necessarily funneled into the school to prison pipeline. We toured the Adult Detention Center, and were briefed on the efforts to divert mentally challenged individuals that come into contact with the justice system. We advocated for the adoption of police body-worn cameras (BWC) by the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD), and helped draft the BWC policy. The pilot program was completed in the Fall of 2018 and we will advocate for its full implementation in 2019. We hosted another Cops vs. Kids (Blue vs Gold) basketball game. The event featured kids from across the county playing against members of the FCPD. The event brought together the community in the hope of increasing trust and communication with the police.

In 2019 the CJC will seek to build on these efforts to broaden the scope of our advocacy in the following ways:

1. **School to prison pipeline**
   a. Work with the Education Committee to identify and address areas where systematic discrimination is affecting children color in Fairfax County Public Schools
   b. Work with the FCPS and FCPD to ensure the changes made to the School Resource Officer (SRO) policies are having a positive impact.
   c. Advocate for the SRO program to be assigned a separate crime analyst to track SRO arrests and other activity.
   d. Investigate if SROs cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and work to eliminate such cooperation.

2. **Use of Force**
   a. Intensify efforts to identify the root causes for the discrepancy in how Use of Force (UoF) is applied by FCPD against African Americans; Advocate for outside organization like the Center for the Study of Social Policy to be contracted by the FCPD to study the discrepancy.
   b. Advocate for Sheriff’s Department to publish their UoF data, including the statistical breakdown by race and ethnicity.

3. **Hate Crimes**
   a. Advocate for County officials to devise a strategic plan to address the 50% increase in hate crimes

4. **Prosecutorial Reform**
   a. Advocate for an end to cash bail
   b. Advocate for the decriminalization of marijuana use

5. **Diversity of FCPD**
   a. Contribute to ongoing FCPD efforts to improve diversity of the department.

According to both the FCPD 2015 and 2016 data, approximately 40% of all the UoF cases involved African American residents. This statistic is especially alarming considering that the county’s African American population is only roughly 9% of the total population.
The department was roughly 15% percent minority in 2013 and it remains the same today.

b. Advocate for FCPD to embark on more targeted efforts to address the trust deficit between African American community and FCPD

6. **Oversight and Accountability**
   a. Advocate for Civilian Review Panel (CRP) and Independent Police Auditor (IPA) to have increased power to investigate Use of Force incidents;
      i. Advocate for Board of Supervisors to draft/support legislation to grant CRP investigative authority
   b. Advocate for Sheriff Department to submit the department to the CRP and IPA.
   c. Advocate for the Police Body Worn Camera program to be fully adopted and implemented county-wide in 2018.
   d. Advocate for Board of Supervisors to make it mandatory for FCPD officers to inform everyone they arrest or issue citations about CRP or IPA

7. **Alternatives to Incarceration**
   a. Ensure County works to collect and publish diversity data demonstrating that minorities have equitable access to the Diversion First program
   b. Support Restorative Justice/Alternative Accountability Program
Health

African Americans continue to have the highest incidence, prevalence and mortality rates from chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity, and issues like HIV/AIDS continue to overwhelm the Black community more so than any other racial or ethnic group. African Americans and Hispanics have the highest rates of hospitalization due to diabetes-related symptoms in Fairfax County. The NAACP Health Committee will continue to look for ways to educate the community on ways to achieve a healthy lifestyle. In addition, the committee will focus on four issues noted below. We will simultaneously advocate for local elected officials to support CHIP, Medicaid expansion, and greater support for mental health resources.

1. Gun Violence
   a. Look for ways to keep our schools, workplaces, and homes safe from gun violence.

2. Suicide Prevention
   a. Work with the Youth Council to host a Youth Suicide Prevention and education seminar to discuss the warning signs and available community resources.

3. Equity in Healthcare
   a. Work to focus on Women’s Health, including closing the gap on maternal mortality rates for African American women.

4. Health Fair
   a. Implement second annual Health Fair.
Political Action

In 2017 the Political Action Committee (PAC) organized a several programs primarily focused on educating the residents of Fairfax County on who was running for office and where they stood on the issues that are pertinent to them. We hosted a Public School Board Candidate Forum, Coffee talk with House of Delegate Candidates, 2017 Pre-Primary Candidate Forum which included a both a gubernatorial and lieutenant governor candidate forum, and a forum on local immigration enforcement efforts. In 2018 the PAC will focus on exploring ways to build on the efforts started in 2017. We will do more to turn our education into action, and increase our advocacy efforts. We will continue to highlight the importance of voting in all elections, but also stress the importance of participating in other efforts to communicate resident concerns.

1. **Voter Registration and Get Out the Vote (GOTV)**
   a. Develop and provide training/informational opportunities throughout the year to inform and encourage active participation in the electoral process. Upon request, the PAC will coordinate with committees to make sure registration opportunities are available at their events as well.
   b. Conduct Phone-banking

2. **Voting Rights Infringement**
   a. Support No-Excuse Absentee Voting. We support efforts to repeal excused-based absentee voting laws.
   b. Support the Right to Vote. We believe all citizens should be able to vote regardless of their criminal history. We will advocate for the repeal of current discriminatory limits on the right to vote; and insert an affirmative right to vote in Virginia that cannot be abridged by law.
   c. Work to reduce deceptive practices in polling locations

3. **Voter Education**
   a. Host a candidate forum for (which candidates?)
      i. Senators
      ii. House of Representatives
      iii. Board of Supervisors
      iv. House of Delegates
      v. Town Council (Clifton, Herndon, Vienna)

4. **LGBTQ Advocacy**
   a. Work collaboratively with the Legal Redress Committee, Education Committee and outside organizations such as Equality Virginia, and FCPS Pride to reduce discrimination at the workplace and in schools.
5. Redistricting
   a. Support fair bi-partisan redistricting efforts that do not disenfranchise minority communities.
Economic Development

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) recognizes that Fairfax County experiences significant economic disparity, where African Americans often do not have the same opportunities to proper. The EDC will work to ensure local elected officials address the challenging economic realities facing our county including poverty, lack of quality jobs and disproportionate high unemployment, entrepreneurship and investing in the community and group economics. In 2019 the EDC will work to enhance the capacity of African Americans and other underserved groups through financial economic education; individual and community asset building initiatives; diversity and inclusion in business hiring, career advancement and procurement.

1. **Employment**
   a. Co-host a job fair partnering with Opportunities and Resources.

2. **Financial Economic Education**
   a. Host a discussion panel on Group Economics/Investment Groups and the “Buying Back the Block” initiative to combat gentrification.

3. **Entrepreneurship**
   a. Advocate for the legalization of marijuana, work with the Legal Redress committee on drafting a letter to distribute to the BoS and State Representatives.
   b. Host a discussion panel on the legalization of marijuana with other advocates and small business owners in the cannabis industry.
Education

One of the top campaigns for the education committee during 2019 will be renaming Robert E. Lee High School. The naming of the high school stands as a monument to the county’s efforts to resist integration. For far too long, lack of political will and courage has allowed elected officials, the school system, and others to either ignore or deny the history of this school. With the changing of JEB Stuart, it is time for Robert E. Lee to go.

Although this will be the primary campaign, the committee will still pursue its education, tracking, and advocacy of other issues. We want candidates to grapple with how to bring universal pre-K to Fairfax. We want equity in decision making and evaluation processes, especially when related to discipline of both teachers and students and hiring practices. We further want equity in opportunities for advancement and self-improvement of both teachers and students, to include opportunities within the advanced academics program and opportunities for employment promotions and advancement. Similar to last year, we will continue to seek partners interested in creating an equitable Fairfax and pursuing an anti-racist agenda. We look forward to partnering with stakeholders from unions, advocacy organizations, and throughout the community.

1. Advocate Changing the Name of Robert E. Lee High School
   a. Educate the public about the ugly history of the name and why having this high school is an affront to any person of color and out of step with the values professed by this county.
   b. Make this a campaign issue for all elected officials.
   c. Pressure the school board to rename the school or justify their lack of action in public.

2. Address Segregation within Advanced Academics Program (AAP)
   a. Work with School Board and partner organizations to address racial inequities in admission to AAP program.
   b. Educate community on AAP appeals process through outreach programs.

3. Address Disparities with FCPS in the areas of hiring, discipline, and education.
   a. Create opportunities for educators to express concerns related to differences in discipline or hiring.
   b. Track impact of new hiring system implemented last year.
   c. Meet with FCPS administrators about pattern of complaints received.
   d. Track and rate specific parts of FCPS curriculum.
   e. Track disciplinary action taken for subjective offenses.

4. Universal Pre-K
a. Advocate for adoption of universal Pre-K within FCPS.
b. Advocate for expansion of spaces for pre-K.

5. **Protecting Students**
   a. Advocate for holistic approach to incidents of racial bullying from either students or faculty.
Housing
As Fairfax County changes from suburban to more urban with greater diversity and plans for denser business districts linked by public transit, it faces a critical need for affordable housing at many levels, but especially for families who make less than 60 percent of the median area income and for the most vulnerable residents. As real estate values and rents increase and low-wage salaries remain constant, many families must pay half of more of their income for housing, leaving little for other necessities.

Fairfax County has adopted the OneFairfax policy that recognizes that the most enduring economic growth comes when all residents prosper. All policy decisions must be justified as equitable to residents of all races, ethnicities, and incomes.

Stable affordable housing is the platform education, health care, community building, and economic development. Yet Fairfax County’s affordable housing efforts are woefully underfunded compared with other jurisdictions. Neighboring Alexandria and Arlington have lost 80–90 percent of their affordable housing and Fairfax must act before it is too late to build and preserve affordable housing for the most vulnerable, for low-wage workers, and for middle-income professionals such as teachers and civil servants. Recommendations are coming out this spring from affordable housing groups that we will consider.

1. Encourage public pressure for county funding and action on affordable housing
   a. Called on the Board of Supervisors to restore the half penny that was cut from the Penny for Affordable Housing Fund\(^1\) in the FY 2020 budget.
   b. Partner with other housing and social justice groups to hold a large meeting and subsequent smaller regional meetings to build a coalition that will testify at county budget hearings and other events to pressure officials to act.
   c. At the launch meeting at First Baptist Church of Vienna on March 14, 2019, we will seek support from related groups from the areas of health, education, immigrant rights, climate resiliency, unions, and so on that support affordable housing as a secondary issue. Our aim is to educate, inspire, and motivate a coalition that will testify at county and local hearings to demand affordable housing and will respond to calls from advocates who follow county actions on budgeting and rulemaking regarding affordable housing. As of January 31, we had seven co-sponsors and are getting more.
   d. Subsequent meetings will be planned for Herndon, South County, Culmore and other areas.
   e. Encourage groups to testify at district budget hearings and the county budget hearings April 9-13 and to use other means to influence policymakers.
   f. Encourage groups to participate in surveys and community meetings on the strategic plan to ensure that affordable housing is a central element.

2. Educate and influence county candidates to support more affordable housing

\(^1\) The Penny for Affordable Housing Fund was established in 2006 to preserve and promote building of affordable housing. Until 2009, the Board of Supervisors dedicated revenue commensurate with the value of one cent from the real estate tax rate to the fund. In 2010, during the recession and along with other budget cuts, the board reduced the amount to a half penny. The full amount has not been restored. In 2017 the value of a penny on the real estate tax rate was $25 million. Adding money to the Penny Fund does not directly necessitate a real estate tax increase.
a. Meet with all primary candidates for county board in the next couple months to go over our housing policy and ask for their commitment to affordable housing.
b. Provide information to candidates and questions on affordable housing and candidate forum sponsors.

3. **Influence state legislators to provide housing funds to Fairfax County, pass tenants’ rights laws, amend the proffer laws, and raise the minimum wage.**
   a. We sent proposals to all Fairfax County legislators at the beginning of the 2019 session.
b. Make proposals to the county legislative committee in the fall and directly to Fairfax County legislators in the fall and again during the 2020 session.

4. **Model community listening sessions in neighborhoods faced with gentrification.**
   a. Co-sponsor a Community Listening Initiative with affordable housing, community, and faith-based groups in the Hybla Valley area of Mt Vernon-Lee districts in the first quarter of 2019.
b. Publicize the results to the county and local developers as a first step and a model for other areas.

5. **Push the county to conduct fair housing tests on rental housing and real estate and mortgage companies as recommended by the *Impediments to Fair Housing Choice* report of 2017.**
   a. Call on the Board of Supervisors to fund these tests in the FY2020 budget.
b. Meet with the Ken Saunders of the chief equity officer, the director of the Fairfax County Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs, and the Fairfax County Human Rights Commission.

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