

# Falls Church News-Press

## From the Front Row: Kaye Kory's Richmond Report

Kaye Kory

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The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area hosted a House of Delegates Candidate Forum on Monday. Questions were emailed or phoned in by the public. They covered a broad range of topics, all important to consider before voting. Here is a sample of the questions and my answers:

1. Several bills recommending methods for redistricting reform were proposed in 2016 [and 2017] and tabled in Committee. How can we get these bills out of Committee so that the entire House can vote on them?

We desperately need redistricting reform in order to empower all voters. Our gerrymandered state has a General Assembly that does not reflect statewide election results, denying many voters a voice and resulting in a Congressional delegation that is not representative of Virginia.

A Constitutional Amendment is the most effective legislative solution, but we face the stubborn problem of getting a bill out of Committee. There is only one way to solve that problem — by electing new Delegates and changing the House membership. The only way to elect new Delegates is to vote for new Delegates. Pretty simple. Our mantra should be “VOTE, VOTE, VOTE!”

2. Do you think Virginia needs no-excuse absentee voting? Yes. At minimum Virginia needs an opt-out motor voter system, universal absentee in-person voting, extended poll hours, a broadened emergency voting policy, and a fail-safe online registration system. I believe Virginia must increase voter access! Every year we hear bills from the majority party that will make voting more difficult — ranging from requiring a driver's license ID to requiring proof of citizenship to limiting the days for absentee in-person voting. Voter registration is also targeted by legislation from the majority party. I have patroned, supported and voted for many bills which make voting more accessible. Again: “VOTE, VOTE, VOTE!”

3. Do you think we should maintain the ban on uranium mining? Yes.

4. Do you support expanding background checks to cover all gun sales? Yes. I also support prohibiting gun-carrying at demonstrations. For years I have filed bills banning guns from school property and have faced overwhelming NRA opposition whether the bill requires guns to be locked in a case when on school grounds, or bans all guns from all school property. Magazine size should be regulated and the one-gun-a-month law reinstated. The NYC police tell us that most of the illegal guns they confiscate come from Virginia!

5. How can we provide steady dedicated revenue for Metro? A dedicated revenue source requires agreement among the states sharing Metro service — an often elusive decision. First we must

ensure that Metro is safe and accessible; then we look at revenue models from other states: a regional sales tax; special taxes in certain business zones where most employees use Metro; and incremental property tax based on the rising value of property adjacent to Metro stations, are among our options. A safe and well-funded Metro is key to this area's economic development and environmental health.

6. Do you support the end of DACA? No, I do not. As Chair of the New Americans Caucus, I have long worked for immigrant rights including in-state tuition for DACA students. I strongly support the efforts of our Attorney General, Mark Herring, Governor McAuliffe and our Lt. Governor, Ralph Northam, to prevent the elimination of DACA. Those with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status are vetted more stringently than you or I ever would be before given authorization to work, to drive and to attend our universities. Ending this program is not only cruel and heartless, but is a terrible economic decision. According to the very conservative Cato Institute, deporting DACA status holders would cost over \$60 billion and result in a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth over the next decade. The Institute on Taxation and Economic policy estimates that there are 1.3 million young people enrolled in or eligible for DACA status who pay \$2 billion in state and local taxes each year. There is no rational justification for ending DACA – only irrational justifications rooted in discrimination.

More questions were posed at the forum. However, these are a fair representation of the concerns brought to us. The next forum is 7 p.m. on Oct. 12 at Hayfield High School.