



## Meet The Candidate: Ilya Shapiro For Falls Church School Board

*Candidates running for Falls Church City School Board explain why voters should choose them in the Nov. 2 election.*

Mark Hand

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In addition to voting for statewide offices in Virginia, residents of the City of Falls Church will be voting for candidates to fill seats on the city council and school board in this fall's election.

As part of our 2021 election coverage, Patch has asked each of the candidates in Falls Church to fill out a questionnaire to describe why they think they're the best person to fill the job they're running for.

This questionnaire was completed by Ilya Shapiro, a lawyer who serves as a vice president of the Cato Institute and director of the think tank's Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies. Shapiro is running for Falls Church City School Board.

Four seats are opening up on the school board in November due to a mix of resignations and incumbents passing on reelection.

In Virginia, school board positions are officially nonpartisan, meaning none of the candidates running for Falls Church City School Board will have party affiliations next to their names on the ballot.

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Let's go!

In-person early voting began at Falls Church City Hall at 300 Park Avenue on Sept. 17. In-person voting will be available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Residents can also vote in person on two Saturdays: Oct. 23 and 30 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

On Nov. 2, election day, the polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Learn more about Shapiro and why he is running for Falls Church City School Board in 2021:

### **Candidate**

Ilya Shapiro

**Age (as of Election Day)**

44

**Position sought (mayor, city council, school board, etc.)**

Falls Church City School Board

**Family**

Kristin, Justice Department lawyer, president of Dulin Cooperative Preschool

Jacob, 5, kindergartener at Mt. Daniel Elementary

Charlie, 3, preschooler at Dulin

**Does anyone in your family work in politics or government?**

My wife Kristin works for the U.S. Department of Justice in the Office of Legal Counsel.

**Education**

A.B., Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs

M.Sc. in International Relations, London School of Economics

J.D., University of Chicago Law School

**Occupation**

Cato Institute - vice president since 2021, Director of the Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies since 2019, Senior Fellow since 2007

Patton Boggs LLP 2006-07

Cleary Gottlieb LLP 2004-06

Law clerk to Judge E. Grady Jolly 2003-04

**Previous or Current Elected or Appointed Office**

Virginia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019-2023

**Campaign website**

<https://shapiro4fallschurch.org/meetilya>

**Why are you seeking elective office?**

This is my first time running for office. My wife and I moved here in 2014 to give the kids we hoped to have the best educational opportunities possible. I dearly want that to be the case for all kids. I'm running for school board to maintain our excellent public schools while improving the board's accountability and responsiveness.

**The single most pressing issue facing our (board, district, etc.) is \_\_\_\_\_, and this is what I intend to do about it.**

Accountability. That means responsiveness and representation: I want to represent community members and respond to your concerns. Accountability means transparency: if elected, I will explain all my votes and other official decisions online.

**What are the critical differences between you and the other candidates seeking this post?**

I won't go along with groupthink or the path of least resistance, but will apply independent analysis, bringing a fresh perspective that our board lacks.

**If you are a challenger, in what way has the current board or officeholder failed the community (or district or constituency)**

The current board has lost the community's confidence, going against public opinion and not being responsive to the concerns of parents and non-parents alike. That's why there are no incumbents running this fall.

**How do you think local officials performed in responding to the coronavirus? What if anything would you have done differently?**

We were toward the bottom of the league nationally — not even counting private schools — always a step behind best practices. At a time when parents were most concerned about education loss and getting back to in-person school, the board repeatedly deferred to the superintendent and instead debated whether to change school names — and proceeded to do so against the super-majoritarian weight of public opinion. Those mistaken priorities are why I'm running, and the theme of my campaign is accountability.

**Describe the other issues that define your campaign platform.**

I'm running for school board to ensure that the Little City maintains excellent schools while providing accountability, responsiveness, transparency, and diversity of thought.

**What accomplishments in your past would you cite as evidence you can handle this job?**

As a constitutional lawyer, I have unique experience understanding how legal policy can make a significant impact in people's lives. My professional background, including filing Supreme Court briefs and testifying before congressional and state legislative committees, has made me familiar with complex questions in education law, which will help Falls Church navigate state and federal regulations. I make a living debating and advocating in front of powerful people, so won't shy away from difficult situations.

**The best advice ever shared with me was:**

Be true to yourself; you're the only person who has to live with you your entire life.

**What else would you like voters to know about yourself and your positions?**

Diversity of background, experience, and thought add richness to our community. Having immigrated twice — from Russia to Canada, then to the U.S. — I appreciate what our country offers and am committed to extending those opportunities to all. I was an ESL learner and now speak Spanish in addition to Russian, so understand the linguistic and cultural challenges many face.