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OF VIRGINIA

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**2010 Session of the General Assembly
Women's Roundtable Report**

Legislative Forum

*meets every Wednesday during session 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. 3rd floor conference room West
Notes by Amy Burgett of Richmond*

February 24, 2010

Olga Hernandez, President of the LWV-VA, and moderator of the WRT welcomed attendees to the forum.

Ruth Ann Walker Legislative Affairs Director, Behavioral Health & Development Services she spoke about their focus.

Anne Sterling, Legislative Coordinator for LWV-VA, noted that the focus is on the budget. Both Senate & House will vote on their own budgets tomorrow, and if they are not compatible, conferees will be named to work out a conciliation budget for the biennium. She emphasized that the Governor and leadership in the GA have made a firm commitment not to extend the session.

Delegate Vivian Watts (D-Fairfax) noted the difficult task ahead for legislators, as they have received the Governor's budget only this past Sunday. She expressed concern about the budget process.

- In response to a question about the Attorney General's challenge of the federal global warming policy, she noted that Virginia elected representatives seem much more inclined to view federal assumptions as an incursion on VA's state rights, and we may see more of this type of action.
- Del. Watts credited Del. Robin Abbott with an eloquent defense of Medicaid waivers for disabilities on the House floor as she spoke of her own son.

Ben Greenberg, Virginia Organizing Project

- Asked for support of SB606, the Saslaw substitute bill concerning Car Title Loans. He explained that it is a reasonable compromise, offering significant consumer protections, while still allowing higher interest rates. He would like it supported in its current form, without amendments, as it is consistent with the "payday loan" legislation that passed the GA last year. Mr. Greenberg provided a handout of talking points.
- Opposition to HB392, which raises the threshold for disclosure of water damaged automobiles from \$1000.00 to \$5000.00. A handout was provided.

Senator "Chap" Petersen (D-Fairfax) shared his view of the budget: he would like to maintain core services, and raise fees not taxes. He regretted the reduction in Medicaid reimbursement, and hoped that future GAs would restore reimbursement funding to current levels. He has sponsored legislation to help homeowners get loans for clean energy,

SB110, "**Clean energy financing**. Gives localities the authority to, in order to secure loans for the initial acquisition and installation of clean energy improvements, place liens equal in value to the loan against any property where such clean energy systems are being installed. Further allows the locality to bundle the loans for transfer to private lenders in such a manner that would allow the liens to remain in full force to secure the loans."

Delegate Robert Tata (R-Virginia Beach) joined the forum to speak briefly about the good work done by the League, regretting the erosion of civic-minded groups that were integral to communities after WWII. He also spoke to the difficult budget decisions ahead.

Delegate Adam P. Ebbin, (D-Arlington) was introduced and welcomed. He is following legislation now in the Senate on human trafficking that would allow seizure of autos used in the commission of abduction or in transport for prostitution. He noted that he sponsored some legislation that failed,

- HB 1115 Virginia Waterways Clean Up and Consumer Choice Act; paper and plastic bag fee.
- HB 1111 Allow Title I public schools to start before Labor Day, if deemed extra educational time needed.

Delegate Timothy Hugo (D-Centreville) suggested that 2010 is a tough year for the budget. He noted that a reformulation of school funding formula would benefit Northern Virginia localities. He expressed concern for the Medicaid mental health waivers, which were frozen in the House, but did survive the Senate.

WRT adjourned at 9:40 am.