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To the Citizens of Fairfax County:

I am pleased to present to you the Fiscal Year 2008 Adopted Budget Plan. This budget continues to fund our core services despite a very challenging revenue picture, balancing the various needs of our citizens with fiscal responsibility and an overall decrease in the real estate property tax burden. The FY 2008 Budget includes an increase in General Fund spending of 0.86 percent over the *FY 2007 Revised Budget Plan*, or 3.23 percent over the FY 2007 Adopted Budget Plan, for a total General Fund disbursement of \$3.32 billion.

Real estate property assessments decreased by an average of 0.33 percent this year. Thanks to the prudent tax rate reductions totaling 34 cents the Board of Supervisors made from FY 2002 onward, despite the decrease in assessments for this year the Board was able to avoid a tax rate increase, keeping the real estate tax rate at \$0.89 per \$100 of assessed value. As a result, the average homeowner will pay less in real estate taxes for FY 2008 than they did the previous year. Coupled with the Board's previous actions, this represents real tax savings. The Board's elimination of the automobile decal and its fee last year will continue to save the average household \$58 per year. In addition, the Board's tax rate cuts from \$1.23 in FY 2002 to today's \$0.89 have saved the average homeowner a cumulative \$3,525 in taxes they otherwise would have paid.

Once again, the education of our children represents the highest priority in the FY 2008 Budget, with our school system transfer comprising 52.3 percent of the General Fund disbursements or \$1.73 billion. The County also spends an additional \$60.5 million from the County's portion of the budget on school related items like School Aged Child Care centers, including adding an additional SACC center this year, school public health nurses, after school programs, school resource officers and crossing guards.

The public safety of Fairfax County residents is also one of the high priorities addressed in the FY 2008 Budget. Thanks to our past investments in public safety, in 2006, Fairfax County experienced a decline in our violent crime rate, to a 32 year low; it was also the lowest crime rate in the U.S. of any jurisdiction our size. To continue these results, we added 8 additional patrol officers and 11 other police positions.

Continuing our commitment to the preservation of Affordable Housing, the Board again approved the one-penny dedication on the real estate tax rate towards those efforts. Begun in FY 2006, that funding has helped the County preserve nearly 1,400 affordable housing units that otherwise would have been lost, exceeding our initial four-year goal of 1,000 units.

Additionally, the County will open our fourth, and hopefully last, family shelter, the Katherine K. Hanley Family Shelter, to serve homeless families in our community.

This Board of Supervisors adopted a 20 year Environmental Plan in 2004 and the FY 2008 Budget enables us to continue our environmental efforts. The Penny for Stormwater Management has been renewed, providing \$22.7 million towards stormwater environmental improvements. In addition, the County budget provides funding in support of energy efficient and renewable energy projects, the latter which will aid our recently adopted Cool Counties initiative, designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The FY 2008 Budget maintains the Board's commitment to transportation, including support for the Fairfax Connector bus service, the Metro bus and rail system and the Virginia Railway Express. We will be implementing our Transportation Demand Management policy in highly congested areas in order to better align land use and development with our transportation infrastructure. Providing transportation opportunities for all County residents is important, and this Budget introduces a taxicab subsidy initiative for our disabled residents currently using the Metro Access program.

Additionally, the FY 2008 Budget provides for the opening of two needed libraries in Burke and Oakton; renovates two existing libraries; provides \$2 million to acquire additional open space and park land, among many other worthwhile initiatives.

Despite ever challenging fiscal restraints and declines in key sources of revenue, the Fiscal Year 2008 Budget maintains our core investments in our quality of life while decreasing the tax burden on our homeowners. Achieving such a balanced and fiscally prudent budget is a complicated and difficult task, and represents the commitment of our County staff and the Board of Supervisors, working on behalf of the citizens of Fairfax County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald E. Connolly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "G" and "E".

Gerald E. Connolly