

# **Arlington County Civic Federation Task Force in Governance and Election Reform's (TiGER) Final Recommendations Report**

**June 8, 2022**

## **Executive Summary**

On October 20, 2020, the Arlington County Civic Federation (ACCF)<sup>1</sup> established the Task Force in Governance and Election Reform (TiGER or Task Force) to re-examine the county's governing bodies and deliver recommendations for potential structural reforms for elections and governance if any were warranted.

ACCF recognized a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve Arlington County's governance and electoral systems to help ensure that the County Board and the School Board are effective policy makers, best represent the views of our diverse communities, and promote effective citizen engagement, in view of the fact that it has been over 90 years since Arlington's form of government was established. The ACCF appointed 16 members to the Task Force that comprised both ACCF members and Arlington County community members (Task Force list attached as an appendix) and established the following principles that would help inform the work of TiGER:

- To improve the quality of our elected officials' representation and policy making;
- To improve citizen engagement and voter turnout;
- To improve our County and School Board's ability to reflect the opinion and diversity of our communities; and
- To improve the diversity of our candidates and the quality of campaigns.

TiGER began work in early 2021, and undertook research, analysis, and outreach on a range of specific issues and possible recommended changes. TiGER came to the following basic conclusion, which then formed the framework for our work.

TiGER members concluded that Arlington County is basically a well-run county with a growing, denser, and more diverse population, in an increasingly interrelated metropolitan region. However, improvements can and should be made to achieve better citizen representation and improved government accountability. In investigating ways to improve this situation, the Task Force developed the following conclusions/problem statements to guide our recommendations:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.civfed.org/>

- Arlington County's elected boards remain the same size as they were in 1930 despite a growing and more dense population, resulting in overworked elected officials, inadequate representation, and insufficient community engagement.
- Arlington County does not have sufficient political influence in the region in light of its population and geography. So many of our policy challenges are strongly influenced by our regional neighbors. Yet, Arlington County has a County Board and School Board Chair that changes each year, limiting the influence of the Chair as compared to other regional leaders.
- Arlington County's elected bodies do not adequately reflect the county's diversity, including but not limited to racial and ethnic diversity, socioeconomic diversity, and viewpoint diversity. As a result, many Arlington residents, particularly those outside the dominant or majority groups, may not feel represented, and the County Board and School Board may not benefit from the full and robust range of perspectives and experiences of Arlington residents.
- Our electoral system does not ensure proportional representation in Arlington, encourage the most qualified and most diverse candidates to run and get elected to office, or provide strong competitive races in general elections.
- Arlington County's election system's reliance on primaries and caucuses discourages candidate participation and voter turnout and presents significant barriers, including the discriminatory candidate impacts resulting from applying the Hatch Act on federal employees.
- The current system (both structures and processes) for obtaining and utilizing community input is inadequate in informing decision-makers and making many residents feel that they have been heard. Concerns have been raised regarding government transparency, accountability, and the level of authenticity in engagement processes. Substantial time requirements for participation limit the number of people able to participate.

To investigate and explore recommendations on these conclusions/problem statements, TiGER members organized into subgroups that focused on Arlington's governmental system, Arlington's method of elections, and citizen engagement issues. The latter of the three, citizen engagement issues, proved to be too large in scope to be treated adequately at this time and is not addressed in this report.

Below is the list of recommendations in the other two categories. Many of them are interrelated in terms of how they address some of the above statements. The

rest of this report includes a description of the analysis conducted for each recommendation, alternatives considered, and implementation actions needed for each of the proposed recommendations.

The recommendations addressing Arlington's form of government are:

1. Expand the County and School Boards membership from 5 to 7 members;
2. Maintain At-Large seats for the election of County and School Board members;
3. Increase the term of the Chairs of the County and School Boards from the current one-year term to a minimum of two years, with the ability to extend the term for up to another two years if fellow Board members concur;
4. Increase the salaries of County Board and School Board members to attract a wider range of candidates:
  - a. For the County Board – support the implementation of the phased increase of salaries to the statutory pay caps of \$89,951 for County Board members and \$95,734 for the Chair;
  - b. For the School Board – increase their salaries substantially over the current levels of \$25,000 for members and \$27,000 for the Chair;

The recommendations addressing Arlington's method of elections are:

5. Replace the current plurality method of electing both boards with multi-seat ranked choice (also known as proportional ranked choice) voting method.
6. Stagger the elections for both boards every two years, with one set of elections to be composed of 4 County Board seats and 3 School Board seats, followed by an election two years later to fill 3 County Board seats and 4 School Board seats, with a continued rotation biennially, maintaining 4-year terms for all County and School Board members.

It is important to note that implementation of these recommendations will require legal changes to some codes. We have detailed these in the main body of the report.

Also, as we stated above, our efforts to address recommendations for citizen/community engagement issues and reforms proved to be too large in scope. Although our recommendations address improvements in citizen

engagement, we are recommending that the ACCF consider extending this task force or charging another working group or task force to examine, discuss, debate, research and develop recommendations focused on improving citizen/community engagement.

Finally, it is important to note that we had lively, detailed discussions and debates as we explored recommendations to address our charge. While not all recommendations were unanimously supported, a majority of TiGER members supported all recommendations made in this report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSING ARLINGTON COUNTY'S FORM OF GOVERNMENT**

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: Expand the Arlington County Board and School Board members from five to seven members.**

From 26,615 people in 1930 (when Arlington switched from a system of three magisterial districts to the current system of five Board members elected at-large), Arlington is now home to 238,643 residents, or nearly nine times as many, according to the 2020 U.S. Census. Stated another way, Arlington had one County Board member per 5,323 people nearly a century ago, compared with one Board member per 47,729 today.

With resources provided courtesy of the Virginia Association of Counties ([www.VACo.org](http://www.VACo.org) - see Appendices), TiGER also examined the size of the Arlington Board relative to the 94 other counties in the Commonwealth. (TiGER did not investigate or consider the size of municipal governments in Virginia such as cities and towns, because counties are governed by separate sections of the Virginia Code.) We found the county statistics compelling, with many counties smaller than Arlington having larger County Boards, and three of the five counties larger than Arlington also having larger Boards.

Current Board size across the Commonwealth ranges from 3 to 10 members. County Boards run from a high of ten "supervisors" in Fairfax (Virginia's most populous county by far) to a low of three members in two tiny counties (Charles City County with 7,000, and Highland County with 2,300). Two small counties (Bland and Greensville) have four Board members. All other counties have at least five members. Yet Arlington, at five members, has fewer Board members than many counties a fraction of Arlington's population. For example, Accomack County, on Virginia's Eastern Shore (population 32,700) has nine supervisors. Of the 90 counties smaller than Arlington's population, many have six, seven, eight or even nine members.

Of the five Virginia counties larger than Arlington, #1 Fairfax (pop. 1.2 million) has 10 supervisors, #2 Prince William (pop. 470,000) has eight, #3 Loudoun (pop. 420,000) has nine, #4 Chesterfield (pop. 355,000) has five, and #5 Henrico (pop. 332,000) also has five.

TiGER considered board sizes of five members, seven members, and nine members. A nine-member board, with multi-seat ranked choice voting (also known as proportional ranked choice voting), can lower the threshold for election to ten percent of the electorate, which would address ACCF's guiding principle of increasing diversity. However, the Task Force ultimately concluded that nine seemed an unwieldy number of board members, a nine-member board might be more likely to result in excessive factionalism, and, by nearly doubling the size of the board in one step, could prove to be an abrupt and potentially disruptive transition.

While there was some conversation among the Task Force that a larger Board of seven members could induce longer meetings, protracted debate, and greater difficulty reaching consensus, TiGER felt that the pluses of bringing new, additional, and potentially more diverse seats to Arlington's two major government bodies far outweighed any potential disadvantages. Finally, another strong consideration for supporting this increase in board members was due to the Arlington community's expectations of visibility of and accessibility to our elected officials, in addition to the workload and liaison assignments allocated to County Board and School Board members, respectively.

Board members are responsible for making and overseeing the County policy decisions that the County Manager administers and the School Board policy decisions that the Superintendent administers, respectively. The County Board also makes land use and zoning decisions, sets real estate, personal property and other taxes, approves an annual budget and adopts the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan every two years. The School Board, on the other hand, also oversees development of and approves the 5-Year APS Strategic Plan and oversees implementation of such, ensures state educational standards of learning and mandates are met, oversees management of all school facilities and class sizes to ensure a seat for every student as the population grows and decreases, adopts the School Board annual budget and adopts a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan for the school system every two years as well. In addition, County Board members have liaison responsibilities to 82 separate groups, while School Board members have liaison responsibilities to 118 separate groups. For the County Board with 5 County Board members, that results in about 16 groups assigned to each member but with 7 members that would result in about 11-12 groups per member. For the School Board, with 5 School Board members, that

represents about 23 groups assigned to each member, but with 7 members that would result in 16 groups assigned to each member (liaison assignments for the County and School Boards are included in the Appendices).

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES:**

Expanding each Board from five to seven members will:

1—Provide the voices, values and contributions of two additional Arlington citizens to the elected bodies of Arlington County Government and Arlington Public Schools.

2— More County Board and School Board members should provide the public better and easier access to their elected officials.

3—Bring Arlington more closely in balance with the size of governing bodies relative to population in surrounding DMV localities and in counties across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

4—Allow the large and growing amount of day-to-day Board work, as well as the large and growing number of regional and local liaison responsibilities, respectively, to be divided among a greater number of Board members, thus helping to ensure that that work is adequately addressed, as well as assisting individual Board members in meeting their responsibilities and providing better work/life balance through broader sharing of responsibilities.

5—Facilitate opportunities for individual Board members to focus more deeply on certain policy areas and operational concerns, rather than being stretched so thin that only broad, general knowledge of County and APS government is feasible.

6—Increase costs modestly (relative to overall respective budgets) to the annual County Board and School Board office budgets as a result of salary, benefits and office supplies for two additional County Board and two additional School Board members. Additional office space/work stations and support staff will also be needed for each new member, consistent with the practice of each body.

➤ **LEGAL AND OTHER CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION:**

County Board—

The Code of Virginia, Chapter 7, is the state statute that governs the County Manager Plan of Government, which applies only to Arlington County.

Article 2, Section 15.2-702. County Board; membership, terms, chairman, etc. provides in

pertinent part as follows:

Under the county manager plan, all of the legislative powers of the county, however conferred or possessed by it, shall be vested in a board of FIVE members to be known as the county board (“the board”).

Accordingly, this statute would require an amendment to the Code to be passed by the Virginia General Assembly (both the State Senate and the House of Delegates) and signed by the Governor that would change the word “five” to “seven,” thus making the change mandatory upon enactment

School Board—

It appears that the change to seven board members for the School Board falls under the County Board's authority and there would be no legal code change (with one possible small exception noted in the analysis below) required to increase the Arlington County School Board to a seven-member board per The Code of Virginia<sup>2</sup>, **Title 22.1. Education » Chapter 5. School Boards; Selection, Qualification and Salaries of Members » Article 4. Selection of School Boards in School Divisions Comprised of Counties Having County Manager or County Board Form of Government » § 22.1-47. Composition of boards; appointment and terms; tie breakers**

The Code referenced above reads as follows:

*§ 22.1-47. Composition of boards; appointment and terms; tie breakers.*

*A. The school board of a school division composed of a county having a county manager plan form of government provided for in Article 2 (§ 15.2-702 et seq.) of Chapter 7 of Title 15.2 shall be composed of not less than three nor more than seven members who shall be chosen by the board of county supervisors. The exact number of members shall be determined by the board of county supervisors. Each member shall be appointed for a term of four years, provided that initial appointments may be for such terms as will stagger the expiration of terms and that appointments to fill vacancies other than by expiration of term shall be for the unexpired term. The governing body of the county may also appoint a resident of the county to cast the deciding vote in case of a tie vote of the school board as provided in § 22.1-75. Each tie breaker, if any, shall be appointed for a four-year term whether the appointment is to fill a vacancy caused by expiration of term or otherwise. Notwithstanding any contrary provisions of this section, any such county may have an elected school board pursuant to Article 4.1 (§ 22.1-47.1 et seq.).*

It is particularly important to note the last sentence of § 22.1-47.3. “*Transition from appointed to elected school board*” (under Article 4.1), which states the following: “*The requirement of subsection B of § 22.1-57.3 that the same number of members of the governing body and school board be elected at each November election shall not be applicable.*”

However, even more interesting is: § 22.1-47.4 (under Article 4.1 as well) “*Benefits, expenses, and reimbursements for the school board members of certain county.*”, where a reference to specifically a “five” member school board is made; hence, assuming that this would have to change if the Arlington County Board moved to increase the School Board to

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<sup>2</sup> <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/>

a seven-member board. (Also *Title 22.1. Education » Chapter 5. School Boards; Selection, Qualification and Salaries of Members » Article 1. General Provisions » § 22.1-32. Salary of members; F.1.*, mentions a five-member school board as it relates to the county manager plan of government.) We recommend legal consultation to provide affirmation of the above analysis.

Another Virginia Code that helps to lend context to the above is:

-Title 22.1 Education, Chapter 5., Article 4.1, § 22.1-47.3. Transition from appointed to elected school board.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: Increase the salaries of County Board and School Board members to attract a wider range of candidates.**

As of the April 2020 Census, Arlington County is an urban community with a population of 238,643 and a demographic composition of White (61.4%), Black or African American (9.7%), Hispanic (15.6%), and Asian (11%).<sup>3</sup> There are 42 schools and school programs and a projected student population for FY 2022 of 26,895.<sup>4</sup>

The scope and complexity of managing both the county and the school system are already large and continue to grow. Yet, the resources provided to attract diverse and high caliber individuals to fill the local elected positions have lagged behind. This is particularly the case for the School Board, whose members receive lower levels of financial support. Although the county has benefitted from the services of those who have served to date in each of these capacities, the number of people interested in assuming these civic services is regularly small and lacking in diversity.

Although County Board membership is officially “part time”, Board members (as noted in the prior recommendation) are responsible for making and overseeing the County policy decisions that the County Manager administers. The Board also makes land use and zoning decisions, sets real estate, personal property and other taxes, approves an annual budget and adopts the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan every two years. In addition, as already noted, Board members have liaison responsibilities to 82 separate groups. These include Standing Advisory Commissions (38), Ad Hoc Advisory groups (4), Quasi-judicial groups (7), regional bodies and their sub-bodies (15), Business Improvement Districts and Partnerships (6), Community groups (11) and miscellaneous (1). Group assignments are generally split equally among the Board members, with the Chair taking somewhat fewer. With 5 Board members, that represents about 16 groups per person; with 7 members that averages about 11 per member.

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<sup>3</sup> United States Census Bureau Quick Facts: Arlington, Virginia  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/arlingtoncountyvirginia>

<sup>4</sup> APS Quick Facts <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/APSQuickFacts-update0122.pdf>



Although School Board membership is also officially considered “part time”, Board members have a broad range of responsibilities. Those include setting system policies, appointing the Superintendent and monitoring implementation of the policies, adopting an annual budget and a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan every two years (in concert with the County Board), and maintaining links with all Arlington parents and relevant organizations pertaining to public education in Arlington, in addition to other responsibilities. As has been mentioned previously, School Board members have liaison responsibilities to 118 separate groups. These include Standing Advisory Committees (13), School Board Subcommittees (2), Individual Schools and Programs (43), and Arlington Civic Associations (60). As with the County Board, group assignments are generally split equally among the Board members, with the Chair taking fewer assignments. With 5 Board members, that represents on average 23 assignments per member; with 7 members that would average about 16-17 assignments per member. In short, all these elected positions are, or are close to being, full time jobs with broad responsibilities. Yet neither their salaries nor their staff support, particularly in the case of the School Board, is keeping pace with the scope and depth of their duties. This poses challenges for the effective management of the County and the Schools and discourages a broader range of individuals from wanting to assume those responsibilities.

As a result, we recommend that the County Board continue the phased in implementation of County Board member salary increases towards the new cap of \$89,951 for County Board members and \$95,734 for the Chair. We are pleased to see progress here in this year’s adopted budget.

We recommend that the salaries of School Board members be substantially increased over their current levels of \$25,000 for members and \$27,000 for the chair, since these levels are much too low in light of the responsibilities involved and the inequity in comparison to County Board member salaries. The maximum cap should be raised in the first year legally allowable to, at minimum, a “livable wage” matched to the area’s median income.

For both Boards, members should continue to be allowed to earn outside income, assuming the performance of the associated duties does not interfere unduly with Board responsibilities and that all applicable ethics and financial disclosure rules are followed.

County Board facts:

- Under state law, new maximum salary levels can only occur once every four years, when two members of the Board (40%) are standing for election.
- In June 2019, the County Board voted to set a new salary cap for Board members that would go into effect in January 2020 and remain the

maximum cap for at least four years. They had not voted to increase the cap since 2011.

- The County 2021 adopted budget included a 3-year phase in to reach these levels, but no increases were adopted in 2021 in light of the pandemic.
- They set the cap at 100% of the Individual Area Median Income for the Greater Washington Area, which is \$89,951 for members and \$95,734 for the Chair. The previous caps were \$57,337 and \$63,071 respectively, which were determined to be below the average salaries of jurisdictional comparators in the DC area.
- A separate vote is needed to actually increase the salary levels in a given year.
- In the County Board's adopted 2023 budget, Board members' salary increases were included.

#### School Board facts:

- Under state law, the School Board can only set new salary levels every four years, when two of the five members of the Board are standing for election.
- Establishment of the salary increase for the School Board must be made by July 1st of the year when two of the five members are to be elected in the November general election. The assumption is it would be adopted as part of the budget for the following school year.
- The last salary increase was adopted in 2016 and at the time was capped at \$25,000 by Virginia Code. That Code has since been changed.<sup>5</sup>
- School Board members are currently paid \$25,000 a year, with the Chair being paid \$27,000.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1-Salary levels that are more consistent with jobs in the DMV area will make these elected positions more attractive and accessible to a wider cross-section of residents.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.insidenova.com/news/arlington/arlington-school-board-pay-to-bump-up-in-2017/article\\_04945284-0184-11e6-a2e7-e7c65fda093c.html#:~:text=Board%20members%20in%20early%20April%20signaled%20their%20intent,Arlington%20School%20Board%20under%20the%20Code%20of%20Virginia.](https://www.insidenova.com/news/arlington/arlington-school-board-pay-to-bump-up-in-2017/article_04945284-0184-11e6-a2e7-e7c65fda093c.html#:~:text=Board%20members%20in%20early%20April%20signaled%20their%20intent,Arlington%20School%20Board%20under%20the%20Code%20of%20Virginia.;); [https://www.insidenova.com/headlines/governor-signs-bill-on-arlington-school-board-salary-levels/article\\_527befb8-0bd1-11e7-8905-1b55ac6b17cb.html](https://www.insidenova.com/headlines/governor-signs-bill-on-arlington-school-board-salary-levels/article_527befb8-0bd1-11e7-8905-1b55ac6b17cb.html)

2-It will benefit the whole county to attract and retain candidates and elected officials from a wider band of backgrounds and financial circumstances. This will be especially true for candidates for the School Board, who will be more incentivized by a “livable wage” than the current low salary levels.

3-More equitable salaries align with our county values. Equity is an important value in Arlington, and it is inequitable to pay School Board members so much less than County Board members, when all these positions are much closer to being full time than they were in earlier years.

4-There are increased budget implications for increases in salaries – (which would be increased further with 7 member boards).

➤ **LEGAL AND OTHER CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION:**

State laws regulating the level and timing of salary increases for County Board and School Board members should be eliminated. Maximum salary levels and implementation timing for each Board need to be decided by the respective Boards, based on county and school needs and supported by the annual budgets.

VA Codes<sup>2</sup> that reference salaries for respective Boards:

Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns » Chapter 14. Governing Bodies of Localities » Chapter 14. Governing Bodies of Localities » Article 1.1. Salaries

Title 22.1. Education » Chapter 5. School Boards; Selection, Qualification and Salaries of Members » Article 1. General Provisions » § 22.1-32. Salary of members

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Maintain At-Large Seats for the Election of the County Board and the School Board Members.**

TiGER considered hybrid models for electing County Board and School Board members, with two members elected at-large and five members elected in separate districts, as well as three members elected at-large and four members elected in separate districts. Strictly district models were also considered early on in discussions.

Some advantages to a hybrid system with districts that were identified during our deliberations were:

A hybrid system would combine the best features of both at large and district elections. At large members, elected by the entire County electorate, would be accountable to all County voters, while having several members elected by district may lower financial and other political barriers to entry for aspiring candidates and allow voters from particular geographic communities to more

likely be represented and potentially feel more connected and engaged with their local government officials.

Districts would decrease barriers to running, as candidates would not have to campaign across Arlington and its 200,000+ residents, but within a more limited area and one with which they may be more familiar. Districts could create a closer, more accountable relationship between elected officials and their constituencies, as residents would be able to identify which Board member specifically represents them, and Board members would represent fewer people (vs. an at-large Board, where every member is supposed to represent everyone in the County). Depending on how the districts are drawn, districts could have the potential to increase diversity by creating districts with concentrations of certain underrepresented groups. Shifting to districts would be likely to address any legal issues raised by at-large plurality voting and fend off any potential legal challenges.

However, our analysis revealed considerable disadvantages to hybrid/district options.

2021 U.S census data indicates that the four largest ethnic groups in Arlington, VA are White (61.4%), Hispanic (15.6%), Asian (11.0%), and Black or African American (9.7%).<sup>6</sup> Minority populations in Arlington are so small and are distributed throughout the County in such a way that it would be difficult to create districts that would result in enhanced diversity of representation on the Boards.

It is important to recognize that in Arlington various racial, ethnic or other underrepresented groups are not sufficiently geographically concentrated to have significant influence in district-based elections and therefore district elections may not lead to significant increases in diversity on the Boards. An extremely useful presentation of residential patterns is found at <https://statisticalatlas.com/county/Virginia/Arlington-County/Race-and-Ethnicity#data-map/tract>, which suggests the difficulty of creating districts likely to elect underrepresented group members in proportion to their fraction of the overall population, with the possible exception of a carefully drawn Latino-opportunity district in the southwest part of the County.

District lines would need to be drawn both initially and at least decennially thereafter. Drawing district boundaries requires that those doing the drawing determine the most important factors for determining districts. This may mean weighing whether to promote the concentration/representation of one racial or ethnic group over another, as well as balancing the representation of certain

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<sup>6</sup> United States Census Bureau Quick Facts: Arlington, Virginia  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/arlingtonCountyvirginia>

groups against neighborhood cohesiveness, school district boundaries, or issue-oriented concentrations. This invariably is a divisive process.

Drawing district boundaries for School Board would likely be even more challenging. Having to consider school attendance boundaries would add to the complexity. It also makes for a moving target, as school attendance boundaries change, and not necessary just decennially. Many schools would have two school board representatives.

A district-based system may also skew county governance, by focusing the attention of electeds primarily on their neighborhoods rather than benefits/costs of issues they are considering to the county as a whole. Many other district-based polities experience parochialism and an effective veto to members for matters in their district. Moving to districts would also have yet another downside: electeds at the end of the decade serve one or three years in newly drawn districts from which they were not elected. As a result, many citizens can go one or three years without having a representative. A current example at the state level is that Loudoun County voters will have no state senator until January of 2024 and here in Arlington newly drawn House District 2 will have no representation until the next elections are held. On balance, then, TiGER looked for ways to avoid or minimize the disadvantages of a hybrid/district system in Arlington while improving diversity of representation. Given that multi-seat ranked choice voting in an at-large system (see Recommendations 5 and 6) has the benefits of districts, but without the disadvantages, TiGER voted to recommend continuing the at-large election of the County Board and School Board.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1-Since candidates for elected office in Arlington County are currently elected at-large, there is no expected change in outcomes from this recommendation.

#### ➤ **LEGAL AND OTHER CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION:**

No legal or other changes would be needed to address this recommendation.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: Increase the term of Chairs of the County Board and School Board from the current one-year term to a term of a minimum of two-years, with the ability to extend the term for up to another two years if fellow Board members agree.**

TiGER concluded after group discussions that the majority of the Task Force supported the current Boards' Chair selection process. The current process elects the Chair of each Board annually by a vote of fellow Board members,

respectively. However, there were concerns expressed that the Chair of the County and School Board should be subject to a public election. Since the majority of the Task Force supported the current process of selecting Chairs for the County and School Boards, no recommendations were made to the election process of Board Chairs. The Task Force also discussed the length of terms of County Board and School Board Chairs and voted to recommend extensions of the Chair terms for both Boards. In determining this recommendation TiGER reviewed the term periods of other elected officials in areas contiguous to Arlington County and in the region.

While the Arlington County Board Chair is selected by their peers for a one-year term, other neighboring governmental entities (e.g., Fairfax County, the City of Alexandria, D.C., Montgomery County, MD, etc.) have multi-year terms and are able to wield more significant influence in regional discussions because of their longer tenure and responsibility in their roles. The shorter term for the Arlington County Board chair also limits their ability to form stronger, more meaningful partnerships and strategic relationships with fellow elected officials that could benefit Arlington County residents.

This also holds true for the Arlington School Board Chair. The School Board Chair position is also elected annually by their peers and tradition holds that board members rotate into this position, changing the Chair every year. This is not the case in other neighboring jurisdictions.

In addition, Task Force discussions noted that the Chair of the respective Boards has power over the agenda, and it helps to have a Chair who drives for consensus. Task Force members were concerned that a direct election by voters of the Chair could result in an election of an individual who was not necessarily consensus driven, or who had a very particular agenda that is not one shared by the majority of the Board, potentially causing divisiveness and strain in board work and actions.

Despite concerns about direct election of the Chair, the Task Force did explore how this might work. One option was to have the candidate with the highest number of votes automatically become Chair, and that Chair would then serve in the role for four years. However, there was concern that it should not be assumed that the highest vote getter would necessarily accept the role of Chair, because it is more work, and that it should be a role that requisite time and work is put into. In terms of a direct election of the Chair, the Task Force discussed that Arlington County is unlike many other towns/counties in Virginia in the sense that while it is not small in population, it is small geographically. Therefore, if you were to have direct election of the chair by the public, it may cause divisiveness in the election process if the Chair was running on specific issues or representing

a specific group, potentially leading to factions in the election process and ultimately on the Boards, contributing to ineffective governance.

For these reasons, the Task Force agreed to recommend indirect selection of the Chair, as is the current approach, but with a minimum of a two-year term, with possible extensions as agreed by fellow Board members. It was felt that ensuring that the Board Chair served for a minimum of two years would address at least some of the issues caused by a shorter-term limiting influence in the region.

Concerns shared about this recommendation were that direct election by the people of the Chair was preferred because the longer Chair service term being recommended had an impact on board governance and direction and therefore, voters should have a say and decide who will be elected the Chair of each Board, not other board members of the County or School Board. This was not the opinion of the majority of the Task Force; hence the recommendation.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1-Extending the length of office of the County Board and School Board chairs will facilitate the Chairs forming longer and stronger relationships with other local elected leaders, facilitating longer term projects that are regional in nature but have dividends and benefits for Arlington County, and perhaps exercising more influence in regional discussions because the role is on more of an equal footing with other elected leaders who are serving longer terms.

2-Maintaining an indirect election of the Board Chair will help to ensure that the Chair, who generally serves as the spokesperson of the Board and sets the agendas for the meetings, is generally supported by their colleagues, resulting in a more collaborative and potentially effective Board.

3-Longer terms for Board Chairs will provide easier engagement for the public as they will know who to contact and who is serving as Chair.

#### ➤ **LEGAL AND OTHER CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION:**

The following Virginia Codes<sup>2</sup> would need to be amended to allow for longer Chair terms, or the County and School Boards would need to be very intentional in having the formality of a vote for the second year of a Chair's service.

***Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns » Subtitle I. General Provisions; Charters; Other Forms and Organization of Counties » Chapter 7. County Manager Plan of Government » Article 2. General Powers; County Manager Plan » § 15.2-702. County board; membership, terms, chairman, etc.***

*Under the county manager plan all of the legislative powers of the county, however conferred or possessed by it, shall be vested in a board of five members to be known as the*

county board ("the board"). The members of the board shall be elected in the manner hereinafter provided for terms of four years. The board shall elect one of its members as chairman, who shall preside over its meetings. The chairman shall be elected by the board annually and any vacancy in the office shall be filled by the board for the unexpired term. The chairman has the same powers and duties as other members of the board with a vote but no veto and is the official head of the county. With the exception of those officers whose election is provided for by popular vote in Article VII, Section 4 of the Constitution of Virginia, board members shall be the only elective county officials. The board shall be a body corporate and as such has the right to sue and be sued in the same manner as is now provided by law for boards of supervisors.

**Title 22.1. Education » Chapter 7. General Powers and Duties of School Boards » § 22.1-76. Chairman; clerk; vice-chairman; deputy clerk; terms; compensation and bonds of clerk and deputy clerk; officers ineligible to serve as clerk and deputy clerk; approval of division superintendent's designee**

A. Except as provided in § 22.1-57.3:3, at its annual meeting each school board shall elect one of its members as chairman, shall approve a designee of the division superintendent to attend meetings of the school board in the absence or inability to attend of the superintendent and on recommendation of the division superintendent shall appoint a clerk of the school board. The school board may also elect one of its members as vice-chairman and may appoint a deputy clerk who shall be empowered to act in all matters in case of the absence or inability to act of the chairman or clerk, respectively, or as otherwise provided by resolution of the school board. The term of the chairman, clerk and any vice-chairman and deputy clerk shall be one year.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSING ARLINGTON COUNTY'S METHOD OF ELECTIONS**

### **RECOMMENDATION 5: Replace the current plurality method of electing both boards with multi-seat (also known as proportional) ranked choice voting.**

Recommendation 1 of our report discusses the positive outcomes TiGER expects from expanding the Boards memberships. As noted there, expansion by itself would not necessarily yield increased diversity and representation of currently underrepresented Arlington communities. Nor would ranked choice voting by itself necessarily have this result with the current system of maximally staggered terms.

Ranked choice voting alone, without changing the staggered terms/partisan primary system now in use, would however protect against an eccentric candidate gaining office in an election in which several more broadly acceptable candidates split the 'normal' vote. This is a plus, and it is the reason that Virginia's Republicans have used it in their recent primaries (Governor, and upcoming House of Representatives 10) and Arlington's Democrats have been



using it in their School Board Endorsement Caucuses and in their most recent special election primary for the County Board.

Ranked choice voting has other important benefits. The quality of campaigns is improved because of the drawbacks of candidate attacks. Every candidate seeks to be ranked 2nd and 3rd by their rivals' voters thereby encouraging positive campaigning and a focus on issues and concerns of voters. Ranked choice voting provides voters with more power because they can give more information regarding their candidate choices and preferences on their ballot. This method does have the consequence of necessitating more candidate research effort by voters.

The current system in Arlington County of plurality voting has challenges: candidates attack each other's character; multi-candidate elections can result in someone getting elected who is opposed by the majority of voters; voters often feel led to strategically vote so their vote won't be "wasted" on a long-shot candidate; fewer elections are competitive; and diversity of electeds is not promoted. Ranked choice voting alone, as mentioned, would address these current election problems, except for the latter.

Multi-seat (or proportional) ranked choice voting of Board members is the election system most likely to increase diversity of candidates and Board members.

As described by the nonpartisan organization FairVote which seeks better elections for all and advocates for ranked choice voting:<sup>7</sup>

"Proportional ranked choice voting is a way of electing a legislative body - like a city council, state legislature, or national Congress - that promotes majority rule and fair representation for all voters. Fair representation means that nearly all voters will help elect a candidate they support, and that different groups of voters will elect winners in proportion to their share of the votes cast.

To vote, a voter chooses their favorite candidate just like they do now. Additionally, they may rank as many or as few other candidates as they want to. Voters can honestly rank their favorite candidate first, their second-favorite candidate second, and so on, without needing to think tactically about who is most 'electable' or whether their vote will be 'wasted.' Ranking a back-up choice can never hurt the chances of a voter's

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.fairvote.org/prcv#what\\_is\\_prcv](https://www.fairvote.org/prcv#what_is_prcv)

favorite candidate winning, so there is no reason for a voter to 'bullet vote' for only one candidate.

Under proportional ranked choice voting, more than one candidate wins. Elections are jurisdiction-wide or in multi-winner districts. That way, elections are not a zero-sum game in which only one group of voters can elect a winner that supports their interests and ideals. The way votes are counted ensures that every sufficiently numerous group of voters will elect winners in proportion to their share of the votes. The majority will elect a majority of seats, but not all of the seats.”

Proportional ranked choice voting ends winner-take-all politics and lowers the threshold number of votes needed to win.

By lowering the threshold number of votes to win, it is likely easier for minority communities (racial, ethnic, or other) to elect candidates who represent them. Multi-seat ranked choice voting also allows candidates to seek support from communities of interest across the County, whether or not they are geographically concentrated. Research shows that women will win election at higher rates in multi-winner districts. Multi-seat ranked choice voting also decreases barriers to running for elections. Although seats are all technically at large, lower election thresholds mean an ability for candidates to focus campaigning on groups or specific communities of interest. This responds to two of our conclusion/problem statements noted in our executive summary.

In contrast to districts, proportional ranked choice voting allows the electorate, rather than commission/officials establishing district boundaries, to decide most important factors in determining communities of interest. That is, a voter can decide that the most important factor for their #1 vote is that there is a candidate that would support issues of importance to their specific community or perhaps shares their race or ethnicity and would better represent them. Or they could decide that a particular issue (e.g., development or environmental issues) is the most important factor in their selection of a candidate. Or that a candidate is from their geographic region of the county. Or they can decide all three of these things are important, and vote for their #1, #2, and #3 candidates based on the relative value each of these has to them. Moreover, this alignment can change from election to election – e.g., in some years, a particular issue may be the factor that voters most coalesce around while in other years, it may be geography. This is also responsive to communities of interest which are not residentially concentrated.

Multi-seat ranked choice voting dramatically lowers the threshold for election (the more seats the lower the threshold) and thus, makes more likely the election of

members of currently underrepresented communities. Because of this factor, this system is also likely to be more robust in our ability to fend off potential lawsuits with regards to minority voter/candidate representation.<sup>8</sup>

While some of the above discussion emphasizes the positives of synchronizing the terms of all Board members using multi-seat ranked choice voting, TiGER is recommending that Arlington continue to partly stagger the terms, and to elect its Boards in two tranches – 4 County Board members and 3 School Board members in one cycle and two years later in the following cycle – 3 County Board members and 4 School Board members, as noted in Recommendation 6 of this report.

Since this still leads to a multi-seat ranked choice voting scenario if coupled with our recommendation to move to ranked choice voting, this will result in a threshold of votes for election to 20 per cent in the four-person races and to 25 per cent in the three-person races instead of the 12 ½ per cent which would apply in a seven-person race. Some of the advantages which persuaded TiGER to recommend this two-tranche system over one which would be fully simultaneous are: first, it is desirable that the Boards get regular input from the residents on whether their priorities and performance are in alignment with those wanted by the citizens. Biennial elections will provide that responsive feedback (as, to some extent, does the current one at a time four-year terms system). Second, we expect that voters will have an easier time keeping track of their choices if they are choosing for fewer seats in two races than all seven in one.

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<sup>8</sup> Virginia Voter Rights Act: Text from the relevant Virginia statute:

§ 24.2-130. At-large method of election; limitations; violations; remedies.

*A. An at-large method of election, including one that combines at-large elections with district- or ward-based elections, shall not be imposed or applied by the governing body of any locality in a manner that impairs the ability of members of a protected class, as defined in § 24.2-125, to elect candidates of its choice or its ability to influence the outcome of an election, as a result of the dilution or the abridgement of the rights of voters who are members of a protected class.*

*B. A violation of subsection A is established if it is shown that racially polarized voting occurs in local elections and that this, in combination with the method of election, dilutes the voting strength of members of a protected class. For purposes of this subsection, "racially polarized voting" refers to the extent to which the candidate preferences of members of the protected class and other voters in the jurisdiction have differed in recent elections for the office at issue and other offices in which the voters have been presented with a choice between candidates who are members of the protected class and candidates who are not members of the protected class. A finding of racially polarized voting or a violation of subsection A shall not be precluded by the fact that members of a protected class are not geographically compact or concentrated in a locality. Proof of an intent on the part of voters or elected officials to discriminate against members of a protected class shall not be required to prove a violation of subsection A.*

*C. Any voter who is a member of a protected class, as defined in § 24.2-125, and who resides in a locality where a violation of this section is alleged shall be entitled to initiate a cause of action in the circuit court of the county or city in which the locality is located. In such action, the court may, in its discretion, allow a private plaintiff a reasonable attorney fee as part of the costs, if such plaintiff is the prevailing party.*

*D. Upon a finding of a violation of this section, the court shall implement appropriate remedies that are tailored to remedy the violation.*

The California Voter Rights Act, CVRA, has been invoked in a number of California jurisdictions during the last seven or eight years to force them to shift towards use of districts. The general sequence has been demand letters, city councils have responded either by shifting away from their existing at large system in response or getting forced to shift by a court.

Third, and as also noted in Recommendation 6, there was concern about the possibility of significant board turnover at one time during simultaneous elections, leaving a board with mostly or all new board members.

### **Primaries and caucuses in the context of a multi-seat ranked choice voting system:**

While we concluded during our initial deliberations that concerns regarding primaries/caucuses are worthy of further examination in optimizing our electoral processes, we did not take a stance on how to address the concerns related to primaries/caucuses. We also noted that there are legal and constitutional challenges to addressing primaries/caucuses. Some consider primaries to be problematic as the number of voters voting in a primary election is consistently much lower than the number of voters who vote in the general elections; therefore, they do not give confidence that their results reflect majority citizen preference. Multi-seat ranked choice allows a jurisdiction to consider dispensing with primaries entirely, which not only gives greater confidence in the results but also saves the jurisdictions the cost of conducting the primary. Another factor to consider when discussing party primaries/caucuses is that the Hatch Act generally prohibits federal employees from running for office in partisan elections, even as an independent. (Advisory opinions from the Office of Special Counsel make clear that an election will be considered “partisan” even if the election is formally nonpartisan - e.g., if any candidate in the race participates in a caucus or receives the endorsement or support of a political party). But the Hatch Act creates an exception for communities in the metro DC area (including Arlington) and certain other localities where there are significant numbers of federal employees. In those jurisdictions, federal employees are allowed to run in partisan elections. However, federal employees still cannot run as partisan candidates or seek the endorsement of a political party without running afoul of the Hatch Act<sup>9</sup>.

Furthermore, despite the above, it was noted that many voters (and their parties) welcome the information from a partisan primary or endorsement caucus of the parties, and partisan nomination processes have a long history in the County.

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<sup>9</sup> Because the endorsement of the Democratic party is all but required for election in Arlington, and federal employees cannot seek that endorsement, the primary/caucus system effectively excludes federal employees from being elected to office in Arlington – and (because of the difficulty of getting elected as an independent), discourages feds from running from office. From the point of view of the voter, this limits the size of the candidate pool and constrains our choice. Thus, in Arlington retention of the primary/caucus system will act to exclude a significant part of the electorate from running for office and probably has a disproportionate effect on potential candidates from underrepresented racial/ethnic minority groups. For federal employees themselves, it’s a big restriction on their ability to take part in County affairs.

Federal employees make up a significant portion of the voting age population in Arlington (It’s surprisingly difficult to get precise numbers here, but over 30,000 Arlington residents work for the Federal government and nearly all are citizens <https://www.erlichlawoffice.com/arlington-county.html>; nationally 18 percent of Federal employees are Black or African American which is about half of the 37 percent of Federal employees who are ethnic minorities.

Adoption of multi-seat ranked choice voting here would enable the County to consider moving away from primaries if it chooses to do so in the future.

In summary, TiGER voted to recommend Arlington County move to a multi-seat ranked choice voting method, also known as proportional ranked choice voting. We did not take a vote on the issue of partisan primaries and caucuses.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1-Replacing the current plurality method of electing both boards with multi-seat or proportional ranked choice voting will provide a higher chance of electing diverse candidates.

2-Multi-seat ranked choice voting is expected to engage more minority voters because it provides an incentive for more minority candidates.

3-20% and 25% thresholds for elected seats are expected to attract more voters from marginalized communities increasing voter turnout.

4-Campaigns will be less negative and less personality focused, and more positive and issue focused, since campaigns will not want to run "against" each other because they will want an opportunity to be a voter's 2<sup>nd</sup> choice candidate on the ballot.

5-Positive campaigns are expected to lead to greater voter engagement.

6-There will be no changes to primaries or caucuses; however, opportunities for reform may emerge as a consequence of moving to a multi-seat ranked choice election system.

#### ➤ **LEGAL AND OTHER CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION:**

The following code allows for ranked choice voting but states in clause B. that members of a county board of supervisors or city council may be conducted by ranked choice voting. It does not mention the School Board elections specifically. We would need to get clarity on whether the code allows for ranked choice voting for School Board elections whether explicitly written or inferred by other sections of the Virginia Code.

#### ***Title 24.2. Elections » Chapter 6. The Election » Article 4. Conduct of Election; Election Results » § 24.2-673.1. (Expires July 1, 2031) Ranked choice voting***

*A. For purposes of this section:*

*"Ranked choice voting" means a method of casting and tabulating votes in which (i) voters rank candidates in order of preference, (ii) tabulation proceeds in rounds such that in each of round either a candidate or candidates are elected or the last-place candidate is defeated, (iii) votes for voters' next-ranked candidates are transferred from elected or defeated candidates, and (iv) tabulation ends when the number of candidates elected equals the*

*number of offices to be filled. "Ranked choice voting" is known as "instant runoff voting" when electing a single office and "single transferable vote" when electing multiple offices.*

*"Ranking" means the ordinal number assigned on a ballot by a voter to a candidate to express the voter's preference for that candidate. Ranking number one is the highest ranking, ranking number two is the next-highest ranking, and so on, consecutively, up to the number of candidates indicated on the ballot.*

*B. Elections of members of a county board of supervisors or a city council may be conducted by ranked choice voting pursuant to this section. The decision to conduct an election by ranked choice voting shall be made, in consultation with the local electoral board and general registrar, by a majority vote of the board of supervisors or city council that the office being elected serves.*

*C. The State Board may promulgate regulations for the proper and efficient administration of elections determined by ranked choice voting, including (i) procedures for tabulating votes in rounds, (ii) procedures for determining winners in elections for offices to which only one candidate is being elected and to which more than one candidate is being elected, and (iii) standards for ballots pursuant to § 24.2-613, notwithstanding the provisions of subsection E of that section.*

*D. The State Board may administer or prescribe standards for a voter outreach and public information program for use by any locality conducting ranked choice voting pursuant to this section.*

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Move to staggered elections every 2 years (biennially); with the first set of elections to be held to elect 4 County Board members and 3 School Board members followed by an election two years later to elect 3 County Board members and 4 School Board members, with a continued rotation as listed biennially. Terms for each respective board member would remain 4-year terms.**

### **Length of terms for County Board and School Board members:**

Currently, Arlington holds elections every year for one member of the County Board and one member of the School Board; and every four years in the election cycle they hold elections for two members of each respective board for a total of four elections cycles to elect 5 County Board and School Board members, respectively.

TiGER considered 2-year terms for elected office. This had the advantage of increased accountability by voters. However, a majority of TiGER members were concerned with the disadvantages of electeds constantly raising money to continually run for office, and the fact that the County Board and School Board jobs take a year or two to learn well. In addition, there was a concern about voter fatigue with double the number of elected seats compared to 4-year term alternatives. Therefore, TiGER recommends that Arlington maintain its practice of 4-year terms for County and School Board members.

## **Which multi-seat ranked choice election system is best for Arlington:**

Given TiGER's Recommendation 5 for multi-seat ranked choice voting, we considered multi-seat elections with various staggered and simultaneous formulations.

*Considered 7 School Board Members and 7 County Board Members up for election simultaneously:*

If you had 10-14 seats up (5-7 for the County Board and 5-7 for the School Board), we could have 20-28 candidates to represent us in local government; this definitely provides choice. However, there were significant concerns expressed about confusion at the ballot box with having to elect such a large number of board members at one time, especially if ranked choice voting was at play.

*Considered 7 School Board Members up for election one year and 7 County Board Members up for election two years later:*

One idea we discussed was separating the elections for the County Board and the School Board, where the full County Board would be up for election during one election year and the full School Board would be up for election during the following election cycle to alleviate the large number of candidates in one election cycle. This had the attractive advantage of promoting diversity on the Boards because thresholds for electeds would be just 12.5% if we use multi-seat ranked choice voting. However, if the School Board and the County Board ran during separate elections, this would allow for County Board candidates to possibly ignore or reduce focus on school issues and vice versa. Approximately 18% of Arlington residents are 18 years old or younger.<sup>10</sup> This means that less than 18% of voters are fully invested in school issues, since you cannot vote until you are 18 and many families have more than one child. We can also assume then that about 80% of Arlington residents do not have school-aged children. Therefore, it is reasonable for us to conclude that approximately 80% of voters who likely do not have children in the school system may not concern themselves with the School Board elections, even though 47% of County tax revenue is allocated to the schools. Furthermore, we discussed how the School Board and County Board must work together as their respective policies and decisions have impacts countywide that affect both governing body policies and oversight, in addition to the entire community as a whole. It behooves voters to understand how candidates will work with the elected members of the other Board and how both sets of candidates understand county issues and school issues alike.

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<sup>10</sup> United States Census Bureau Quick Facts: Arlington, Virginia <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/arlingtoncountyvirginia>; APS Quick Facts <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/APSQuickFacts-update0122.pdf>

There was also a concern about the possibility of significant board turnover at one time during simultaneous elections, leaving a board with mostly or all new board members. A situation like this could create an imbalance of power between the Boards and the County Manager and Superintendent, respectively, as the Manager and Superintendent would be the constant leader for each system. Another concern briefly discussed was that with simultaneous elections of each Board the community only gets to weigh in on how the County and School Board are doing during elections once every four years, whether the Boards were split up or elections held together for both boards.

*Considered and Recommending 4 County Board and 3 School Board seats up during one election and two years later, 4 School Board and 3 County Board seats up for election:*

We landed on a solution which leads us to recommend biennial staggered elections with 4 County Board members and 3 School Board members being elected in the first cycle of the biennial elections, and 3 County Board members and 4 School Board members being elected in the second election cycle two years later. Elections with 4 seats will require a 20% threshold to get elected, while elections with 3 seats available will require 25% of the electorate to win office if we use multi-seat ranked choice voting. This still allows for multiple seats at any given election to increase choice and diversity in candidates and lower the threshold for election for better representation, as well as limits turnover potential for each board. This would provide some constant of institutional knowledge and experienced board members serving at any given time (we are not recommending any changes to the 4-year term of service). It also allows voters to weigh in and hold Boards accountable every two years, through votes, on how each Board is performing. This solution allows all voters to focus on both the County Board and School Board candidates at each biennial election and allows for questions from voters regarding the understanding and need for County and School Board collaboration. This does mean abandoning our current practice of electing County Board and School Board members every year.

Finally, it reduces the number of candidates for each Board that a voter must learn about (compared to other multi-seat options), while still allowing for an easier ranked choice voting allotment and process (ranking minimum of 4-5 at any given election and, if each seat is contested, a possibility of 8-10 candidates for each respective Board). It also moves us from one seat open every year to multiple seats open every two years, allowing for more choice and diverse perspectives to seek elected seats.



## EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- 1- Four-year terms for County Board and School Board Members remain the same, so no new outcomes are expected for term service.
- 2- This recommendation would also provide opportunity for more candidate choice and diversity leading to better community representation due to multi-seat elections for each board at each election cycle without overwhelming voters as they study and learn about candidates.
- 3- Running County Board seats and School Board seats at the same time will engage voters who have interest in funding and capital improvement and other areas of overlap between both boards.
- 4- This may provide relief from election fatigue as it reduces the local elections to every two years from every year.
- 5- Some Board Members will get elected with 20% of the vote, while their colleagues 2 years later get elected with 25% of the vote.

### ➤ **LEGAL AND OTHER CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THIS RECOMMENDATION**

This recommendation would require a change to our current election cycles that are prescribed by the codes noted below (and assuming we move to seven member boards a change from the General Assembly amending our County Manager Plan of Governance to allow seven-member County Board and hence a seven member School Board as noted in the legal and other changes needed section for Recommendation 1).

VA Codes that need amendments to support biennial elections:

***Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns » Subtitle I. General Provisions; Charters; Other Forms and Organization of Counties » Chapter 7. County Manager Plan of Government » Article 2. General Powers; County Manager Plan » § 15.2-705. Election of members of board; filling vacancies***

*A. In any county operating as of December 1, 1993, under the county manager plan provided for in this chapter, the members of the board shall be elected and vacancies on the board shall be filled as provided in this section. The members of the board shall be elected from the county at large.*

*B. Two board members shall be elected at the November 1995 election to succeed the members whose terms are expiring, and one member each shall be elected at the 1994, 1996, and 1997 November elections to succeed the members whose terms respectively are expiring. Thereafter at each regular November election one or more board members shall be elected to succeed the members whose terms expire on or before January 1 next succeeding such election. The members so elected shall be elected for terms of four years each, shall take office on January 1 next succeeding their election, and shall hold office until their successors are elected and qualify. The board may provide, by ordinance, for the nomination or election of candidates by instant runoff voting pursuant to § 15.2-705.1.*

**Title 22.1. Education » Chapter 5. School Boards; Selection, Qualification and Salaries of Members » Article 4.1. Popular Election of School Board in Counties with County Manager Plan of Government » § 22.1-47.3. Transition from appointed to elected school board.**

*If the change to an elected school board is approved by the voters, the appointed members of the school board in office at the time of the referendum approving the change shall continue in office for the balance of their appointed terms except that each term shall expire on the December 31 immediately succeeding the June 30 expiration date for the appointed term. In the event of a vacancy in an unexpired term of any appointed school board member, a replacement shall be elected at the next regularly scheduled general election to fill the remainder of the term. No special election shall be held, however, if the general election at which it is to be held is scheduled in the year in which the term expires.*

*At the first and each succeeding November election, one school board member shall be elected for each position on the school board occupied by an appointed member whose term expires the following December 31 until the school board is composed entirely of elected members. Successor school board members shall be elected each November for four-year terms commencing on January 1 of the year following the election. The requirement of subsection B of § 22.1-57.3 that the same number of members of the governing body and school board be elected at each November election shall not be applicable.*

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, with over a year of research, examination, public forums, debates and discussions<sup>11</sup>, TiGER strongly encourages the Arlington County Civic Federation to support and advocate for the recommendations provided in this report. TiGER believes our six recommendations collectively will improve the quality of our elected officials' representation and policy making both locally and regionally, improve citizen engagement and voter turnout, improve our County's elected Boards' ability to reflect the differing opinions and diversity of our communities, improve the quality of campaigns, and improve the diversity of our candidates, campaigns, and voters. In turn these recommendations will strengthen the quality of life and representation for all of our communities and continue Arlington County's reputation of an exemplary county and a desirable place to call home for people from all backgrounds and diverse communities.

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<sup>11</sup> Please visit the TiGER website at: <https://www.civfed.org/about-us/committees/tiger/> for fora videos, presentation materials, and additional information regarding our work.