

Testimony of Beth Tomasello
President, Woman's Democratic Club of Montgomery County Maryland
Montgomery County Council
Right to Vote Task Force
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I am Beth Tomasello, President of the Woman's Democratic Club of Montgomery County, Maryland.

Woman's Democratic Club, or WDC, is the largest political club in Montgomery County, with a membership of 425 politically active women and men. I would like to thank the County Council and the Right to Vote Task Force for your hard work in preparing the Right to Vote Task Force recommendations to encourage better voter participation among Montgomery County residents.

While WDC members are all Democrats with a big-D, we are also democrats with a small-d. WDC is first and foremost dedicated to ensuring a vital democracy and a fair political process and we oppose all efforts to suppress voting and support all efforts to increase voter participation, regardless of the voter's political affiliation. As our members are primarily women, we are well aware that today's women are busy. We are busy with families, work, activities that support our communities and schools, and our most precious commodity is time. The WDC Board reviewed the recommendations of the Task Force through the lens of the working mother, sometimes a single parent, sometimes holding down more than one job to support her family, to evaluate whether the recommendations of the Task Force make it easier or harder for that woman to vote. The WDC Board found that many of the recommendations of the Right to Vote Task Force will make it easier for women to vote, and the Board is therefore pleased to offer its specific endorsement of the following recommendations of the Right to Vote Task Force.

- **Recommendations 1-4:** Improvements to Online Voter Registration: Any process that allows women to register to vote from their homes or by mail makes it more likely that they will register to vote.
- **Recommendation 6-9:** Automatic Voter Registration Options: Any voter registration outreach that targets non-registrants and reaches women voters where they are already doing business, such as service encounters with Maryland State agencies, is a positive. To reach busy women, it is often necessary to go where they already are, and if they are already interacting with the state, that is the time to register them.
- **Recommendations 10-14:** Friendlier Ballot Design. Any measures that can make voting take less time will help the woman who is juggling work and children be able to vote.
- **Recommendations 15-16:** Improving Voter Registration, Ballot Access and Voting for US Military and Overseas Citizens: WDC endorses any measure that makes voting easier for the women and men who are serving their country.
- **Recommendation 17:** Supplementing Information in the Sample Ballot: Informing the busy woman about the options for voting that may be easier than in-person voting on Election Day are bound to increase the likelihood that she will vote.
- **Recommendations 18-21:** Develop smartphone apps with voter information, sample ballots, election updates: Many modern women live on their smartphones. This

recommendation meets a women where she already is and provides the information she needs to prepare to vote.

- **Recommendations 22-24:** Get out the Vote: WDC supports this measure to better target non-voters on Election Day.
- **Recommendation 5:** While this is a long-term process that cannot be implemented immediately as can some of the other recommendations, WDC supports asking the Maryland General Assembly to pass a state constitutional amendment to establish Election Day registration. This will eliminate the need for a busy woman to take two-steps to vote.

One issue that WDC would like to raise that is not addressed in the report is the closing of schools to use as polling places on Election Day. Closing schools adds to the burden placed on women who rely on schools as their primary form of child care, and many of those women will not have the day off from work. Therefore, working women have to juggle child care, work and voting on Election Day, and I think we can all guess which would be the lowest priority. We urge the Council to consider alternative sites like fire houses and libraries as polling places that would allow schools to stay open.

WDC appreciates the opportunity to testify this evening and we again thank the members of the County Council and the Right to Vote Task Force for its thoughtful and thorough examination of ways to increase voter participation in Montgomery County.