
FAIRFAX COUNTY NAACP

ADVOCACY AGENDA

2023

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Fairfax County NAACP
2023 Advocacy Agenda

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Framing Our Agenda

As we emerge from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic we seek to pick up the pieces and continue our work toward a more equitable and humane society, guided by a framework of community-driven efforts that will advance Fairfax County along a progressive pathway toward full equality for all its citizens.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

“Our goal is to create a beloved community, and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The last several years were unprecedented and tumultuous for so many, but especially communities of color. If we fail to take heed, respond, and act accordingly, we could see a continuation of the turmoil through much of this year and beyond. The challenges of these past years also highlighted that our communities continue to struggle greatly in ways that require renewed focus, renewed energy, and new policies and laws to close gaps that have remained wide for far too long.

As the nation calls for an end to structural disparities, we have a duty to examine our own community and eliminate those barriers that continue to perpetuate and foster institutional racism. Since the root causes of the problems our communities face – inequality and injustice – are deeply connected, so must our solutions be. We are certainly at an inflection point, and we must ensure that all of our decisions are intentional, transformative, proactive, and equitable.

The membership of the Fairfax County NAACP Branch continues to grow steadily. We have more than 500 members and partners, and even more allies and supporters. Our shared mission is to achieve equity, political rights, and social inclusion by advancing policies and practices that expand human and civil rights, eliminate discrimination, and accelerate the well-being, education, and economic security of Black people and all persons of color.

Our 2023 Advocacy Agenda will work when we challenge ourselves to join together and live up to the ideals of Dr. King’s “beloved community.” Our standing committees will continue to remove systemic barriers to institute fair and equal access to quality education; a restorative criminal justice system; affordable and equitable housing; access to quality and affordable health care; a just transition to clean energy and energy efficiency; economic justice; and support for our vulnerable communities (veterans, LGBTQ+, women, etc.).

In Power and Service,



Michelle Leete

President

Fairfax County NAACP

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Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee

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The Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee will continue to address physical and mental health, housing, and employment challenges faced by veterans of all ages and will continue to monitor the efforts intended to serve veterans. In 2023, the committee will advocate to effect change and celebrate Black veterans in the following areas:

- **Disability Benefits:** The committee is focused on bringing attention to the disparity in disability awards to Black veterans. As such, we intend to :
 - Push information to our elected representatives detailing the disparity and its long-term economic impact on Black veterans and their families.
 - Partner with veteran-based nonprofits and government agencies to offer educational training to veterans regarding the disability claim process.
 - Meet with local Veterans Affairs senior officials to discuss immediate next steps being taken to address the disparity.
- **75th Anniversary of U.S. Military Integration:** To honor this important milestone in our country's military history, we plan to:
 - Host an event on July 26, 2023, commemorating the integration of military troops.
 - Invite local and federal elected officials to speak.
 - Invite Disabled American Veterans representatives to speak.
 - Invite veterans groups to host booths providing disability and other helpful information for veterans during the event.

Budget Committee

budget@fairfaxnaacp.org

Our government is responsible for serving its citizens in each and every community with fairness and equity. The Budget Committee will strive to reduce the inequities in our government's allocation of its budgetary resources. We will seek to advocate for the economically disadvantaged and people of color in our community, whose voices are often unsolicited and unheard. In 2023, the Budget Committee will focus on the following priorities:

- Obtain a greater understanding of Fairfax County's budget formulation, with the goal of advocating for program priorities at earlier stages of the budget formulation process.
- Seek greater transparency on the effectiveness of programs, via correspondence and tools such as FOIA requests, to verify compliance.
- Pursue alliances with community activists who share our vision of equitable funding allocations and distribution.

Criminal Justice Committee

justice@fairfaxnaacp.org

In 2023, the Criminal Justice Committee will advocate for improvements regarding the following issues:

- **Officer-Involved Shootings.** Due to the substantial rise in officer-involved shootings during 2022 in Fairfax County, analyze outside analysis commissioned by the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) concerning the reasons for the increase—and demand an appropriate response to reduce inappropriate uses of deadly or excessive force.
 - Continue to support families and other community members whose loved ones are victims of inappropriate uses of force.
 - With respect to foot pursuits, advocate for a more robust foot-policy restricting police use-of-force regarding, among others, fleeing community members suspected of non-violent crimes.
- **Improvements to FCPD’s Co-Responder Model.** Advocate for improvements to co-responder policies, under which mental health professionals respond to calls for service involving community members experiencing mental health crises; seek more robust and consistent role for mental health professionals in interactions with such community members—and increased funding for such personnel.
- **Data Transparency.** Continue to advocate for timely and improved release of data from FCPD so that community members can better understand how the county is being policed and any disparate effect of officers’ interactions with community members from communities of color.
 - The Committee is developing its own data dashboard with information and analyses of county policing data; the Branch’s dashboard will be provided to the community for further analysis of policing trends and concerns.
- **Additional Police Reform Priorities.** Seek implementation of many reform agenda items being developed by the Safety and Security Committee of the Board of Supervisors.
- **Commonwealth Statutory Reforms.** Begin advocacy seeking modifications to the Law Enforcement Officers Procedural Guarantee Act (commonly referred to as the “Officers’ Bill of Rights”), as well as with respect to certain procedures by which grand juries are conducted under state law.

Economic Development/Opportunity Committee economicdev@fairfaxnaacp.org

Our local government officials are responsible for ensuring that the One Fairfax policy is adhered to, particularly as it relates to the economic independence of its Black and minority residents. The Economic Development/Opportunity Committee will work to reduce the inequities in our county's career and entrepreneurial resources, while also working to minimize the negative impact of the lack of resources in these areas. We will seek to advocate for the economically disadvantaged and people of color in our community whose voices too often go unheard. In 2023, the goals of the Economic Development/Opportunities Committee are to:

- Seek alliance with community organizations with shared visions for economic empowerment for all.
- Facilitate career fairs, résumé workshops, and other economic empowerment events to help mitigate the limited county resources available for these initiatives.
- Work with county officials on how to effectively execute economic development programs for the county's most vulnerable residents

Education Committee

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The Education Committee works to ensure that all disadvantaged students and students of color are on the path to college or a successful career by ensuring access to great teachers, equitable resources, a challenging curriculum, and a representative environment. Access to quality education is both a human and a civil right. During 2023, the Education Committee plans to push forward on the following initiatives:

- Use current hiring and retention data to create a transparent, data-driven plan to increase hiring and improve retention of Black and Latinx teachers.
- Review the Advanced Academic Program to examine admissions process, goals, implementation, and accountability to identify its cost benefit as a program for educational enrichment; this includes interrogating, by pyramid, the demographic breakdown of AAP enrollment.
- Review discipline data per pyramid, to include reviewing the possible impacts of SB36, HB1461, and other punitive legislation on students of color, especially Black and Hispanic students, and reviewing the current discipline and behavior crisis in our schools while supporting comprehensive solutions to threats to students, teachers, and overall school function.
- Continue to support and promote the Structured Literacy shift that we helped initiate.
- Explore solutions to disparate outcomes in math SOLs between Black and Hispanic students and their White and Asian peers.

Environmental and Climate Justice Committee **environment@fairfaxnaacp.org**

Environmental and climate issues have a disproportionate impact on communities of color and other vulnerable groups: these are both civil and human rights issues. The Environmental and Climate Justice Committee strives to reduce harmful emissions, particularly greenhouse gases, advance energy efficiency and clean energy, and strengthen community resiliency and livable neighborhoods. In 2023, the committee will:

- Advocate for equitable and sustainable development.
- Advocate for reduction of air pollution in overburdened communities.
- Advocate to preserve current tree canopy and increase it in overdeveloped areas.
- Provide opportunities for diverse communities to connect with natural environments.

Fair and Affordable Housing Committee

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Safe and affordable housing is a human right and a necessary component of any fair and equitable community. Strong public policy is necessary to moderate housing market forces driven primarily by profit rather than human dignity. The Fair and Affordable Housing Committee advocates for innovative land use regulations, policies and funding programs that support increasing Fairfax County's low-to-moderately priced housing while addressing residential segregation and housing discrimination, renters' protections and the displacement created by gentrification. In 2023, our priorities will include:

- Furthering fair housing policies and programs by persuading Fairfax County to adopt specific actions in line with Council of Governments regional goals for affirmatively furthering fair housing initiatives.
- Enhancing tenants' rights and foster tenant organizing at affordable housing properties overseen by the county.
- Promoting equitable neighborhood development that abides by the One Fairfax policy, which supports development that benefits current residents and brings them to the decision-making table.
- Supporting affordable housing initiatives so that low-income residents can own property and build wealth.

Faith & Religious Community Committee

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The Faith & Religious Community committee strives to develop and maintain relationships with the faith community within Fairfax County in order to partner for community endeavors, educate the faith community on the mission of the NAACP and how to improve race relations, and enlist assistance from faith groups to support initiatives. In 2023, the committee will advocate to effect change in the following ways:

- Seek to meet, follow, and partner with faith and interfaith groups in Fairfax County.
- Learn which faith groups already have social justice committees or webinars. Explore ways to encourage faith groups without a social justice focus to attend other groups' educational opportunities or start their own.
- Grow positive relationships among diverse groups via volunteer days at the Harris Family Cemetery in Bull Run Regional Park and a Juneteenth event.

Legal Redress Committee

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The Legal Redress Committee seeks to assist individuals who are in legal jeopardy or who believe they are being unfairly and illegally discriminated against because of their color, creed, gender, or religious beliefs. Legal Redress advocacy seeks to limit or remove systemic barriers to equitable treatment of all citizens. In 2023, the Legal Redress Committee will advocate for the following changes to state and local policies:

- **Repealing the Virginia Police Officer Bill of Rights** that was signed into law in 2001: Its provisions provide protections far and above what average citizens would receive in similar circumstances. There can be no accountability until this bulwark from liability and responsibility has been removed.
- **Ending Qualified Immunity for Police:** No public official should be shielded from liability for their grossly negligent, reckless, or malicious actions.
- **More Robust Funding of the Public School System:** The system currently underpays staff, mental health/wellness support resources, and infrastructure. As a result, more students are in crisis and on the road to homelessness, imprisonment, or premature death. The bulk of complaints that come to the Legal Redress committee are from parents of school-age children who are being unfairly treated within the school environment.
- **Providing a Statutory Right to Counsel for Civil Cases:** Civil actions can involve a person's family dynamic and housing and employment security, which—if not protected—may cause citizens to encounter the criminal legal system whether or not they are in the commission of a "crime." Providers of legal counsel often charge fees that many citizens cannot afford; those providers currently available for complainants with limited means have to maintain solvency, and frequently have to turn away meritorious cases because they cannot afford to provide services on a contingency basis (money is awarded after a judgment/verdict, which can take a great deal of time while the legal provider has to cover all upfront costs). There needs to be a program like the public defender program (also underfunded) that allows more citizens to seek civil representation.

Political Action Committee

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Government should be accountable to the people, transparent in practice, inclusive of all people, participatory and accessible, representative of the groups it serves, and responsive to the needs of everyone. The Political Action Committee works to increase access to the democratic process through voter registration, voter education and protection, education, advocating for a participatory budgeting process, and working to repeal racially discriminatory legislation. We have an incredible opportunity to build Black political power in Fairfax County. In 2023, the Political Action Committee will advocate to effect change in the following ways:

- **Voter Empowerment Campaign:** Ensure voter empowerment through education, training, voter registration, and election participation efforts throughout the year. Our goal will be to increase the number of Black registered voters by 10% for 2023-2024. In addition to focusing on new registrations, data indicates that there is also a large percentage of Black voters who are infrequent voters or may be at risk to be removed from the voter polls.
- **Voting Rights Protection:** New voter legislation was passed that we still need to inform the community about, particularly with regard to same-day registration and “souls to the polls.” We will continue to campaign on these messages and work with our partners to dispel deceptive and/or intimidation tactics at polling locations.
- **Make A Plan To Vote Campaign | TurnOut To Win:** Research shows voters are more likely to make it to the polls if they make a plan on when, where, and how they will vote. We will encourage such planning among our membership and supporters.

Join Our Branch Today!

