COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: County Council

SUBJECT: Appointments to Right to Vote Task Force

Background

1. Resolution No. 17-867 adopted on September 24, 2013, established the Right to Vote Task Force to affirm the Council's commitment to increase voter participation, improve election practices, and support an affirmative right to vote.

2. The Task Force will review and offer recommendations to improve election processes in Montgomery County.


Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. The following individuals are hereby appointed to the Right to Vote Task Force:
2. The Honorable Timothy Male will serve as Chair and Gary Featheringham will serve as Vice Chair.

3. Alysoun McLaughlin, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Board of Elections will serve as an ex officio member.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council
Resolution No.: 17-867
Introduced: September 10, 2013
Adopted: September 24, 2013

COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: Council President Navarro, Council Vice President Rice, Councilmembers Andrews, Berliner, Elrich, Ervin, Floreen, Leventhal, and Riemer

SUBJECT: Affirming the Council’s Commitment to Increasing Voter Participation, Improving Election Practices, and Supporting an Affirmative Right to Vote

Background

1. Voter turnout in Montgomery County was 66% of registered voters in the 2012 presidential election and 51% of registered voters in the 2010 gubernatorial election.

2. In the United States, less than 60% of eligible voters participated in the 2012 presidential election.

3. Of the 119 nations that elect their public officials using democratic elections, the United States is one of only 11 nations that does not have the right to vote in its constitution.

4. The 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution provide that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged based on race, sex, and age respectively, and the 24th Amendment prohibits poll taxes. However, these amendments do not guarantee Americans an explicit right to vote.

5. In the 2000 decision, *Bush v. Gore*, a majority of the Supreme Court wrote: "The individual citizen has no federal constitutional right to vote."

6. In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby County v. Holder* that the coverage formula in Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) is unconstitutional, thereby invalidating the formula used to determine which states are covered by Section 5 of the VRA.

7. Section 4 of the VRA was an effective tool in curbing racial discrimination in elections in 1965; and continued to be a critical instrument for free, fair and accessible elections, helping block laws making it more difficult to vote for nearly a half century.

8. With Montgomery County’s proud tradition of civic and community activism, the Council has a history of supporting a variety of efforts to increase participation in and access to the democratic process.
Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. The Council calls on Congress to propose an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would grant an individual right to vote to every American citizen of voting age.

2. The Council calls on Congress to restore Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by creating a new coverage formula to determine which states and local jurisdictions should have voting changes reviewed for potential discriminatory impact.

3. The Council calls on Congress to give residents of Washington, DC full representation and voting rights in the House of Representatives and United States Senate.

4. The Council supports Maryland’s recent expansion of early voting and the adoption of same-day voter registration. We support placing new early voting sites at locations that are easily accessible by public transportation.

5. The Council establishes a Right to Vote Task Force to:
   a. Review all local laws and practices that may affect the right to vote;
   b. Review and recommend changes at the local level to uphold voting rights and increase voter participation;
   c. Develop plans and take action to promote early voting and same-day registration and make recommendations to the Council on any policies or actions needed to strengthen these efforts;
   d. Develop plans for a voter registration program designed to register eligible high school students and support voter education programs to increase citizenship knowledge and participation in the democratic process;
   e. Review Maryland election laws and regulations and recommend legislation that would strengthen the right to vote in Montgomery County, including whether the General Assembly should adopt automatic voter registration, allowing eligible voters to “opt-out” of the voter registration database instead of “opt-in”; and
   f. Review with the Montgomery County Board of Elections the strengths and weaknesses of our election practices and regulations after the 2014 general election.

6. The Task Force consists of up to 15 members appointed by the Council. The members of the Task Force should include representatives of political parties and those not registered in any party. Not more than two-thirds of the members may be registered to vote in the same party. The Task Force will also include a representative of the Board of Elections as an ex officio member. The Council must designate a Chair and Vice-Chair for the Task Force. The Chair and Vice-Chair must not be from the same party.

8. Copies of this resolution will be sent to the Governor, Montgomery County’s State Legislative Delegation, and Maryland’s Congressional Delegation.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council
Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

September 24, 2013

FOR INFORMATION: Linda Lauer, 240-777-7979
linda.lauer@montgomerycountymd.gov

Montgomery County Council Seeks Applicants to Study Election Laws, Practices

*Deadline for Applications Is Wednesday, Oct. 30*

ROCKVILLE, September 24, 2013—The Montgomery County Council is seeking applicants for a citizens’ Right to Vote Task Force to study state and local laws and practices that may affect the right to vote. The task force will develop plans and take action to promote early voting and same-day registration, develop plans for a comprehensive voter registration program and make recommendations for changes in state and local laws, regulations and practices.

Letters of interest to serve on the committee must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 30.

In Montgomery County, elections are administered by the Montgomery County Board of Elections according to federal, state and County laws and regulations. Voter turnout was 66 percent of registered voters in the 2012 presidential election and 51 percent of registered voters in the 2010 gubernatorial election.

The Montgomery County Council has a history of supporting efforts to increase access to the democratic process, in keeping with its tradition of civic activism. The State of Maryland recently expanded early voting, resulting in at least three new early voting centers for the 2014 elections, and adopted same-day voter registration during early voting.
The County Council created the Right to Vote Task Force to ensure that the County maximizes these new opportunities to make voting easy and accessible for every citizen. The task force will consist of up to 15 members, appointed by the Council, with a staff member from the County Board of Elections serving as an ex officio member. No more than two-thirds of the members may be registered to vote in the same political party. The Council will designate a chair and vice chair. The chair and vice chair must not be from the same party.

The task force must issue an interim report by Feb. 28 and a final report with recommendations by May 31, 2014. The Task Force must also submit a report by Feb. 28, 2015 that evaluates the efficacy and implementation of its recommendations during the 2014 general election.

Persons interested in serving on the committee should submit their letter of interest with a resume by 5 p.m. on Oct. 30 to Council President Nancy Navarro, Montgomery County Council, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Md. 20850. Letters can also be sent by email to county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov.

# # #