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Thursday, July 21, 2011

Montgomery County Council
Sent by email

Dear Council President Ervin and Councilmembers:

The Executive Committee of the Montgomery County Civic Federation has voted unanimously to **support Bill 20-11**, "Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Public Accountability - Impasse Arbitration." Our decision will be communicated to our membership and voted on by all attending delegates at our September 12 meeting.

Bill 20-11 would establish an interest arbitration panel to resolve an impasse, require an impasse arbitration hearing to be open to the public, and modify the criteria to be applied by the impasse panel. These changes represent significant and positive reforms to the impasse resolution process. We believe that splitting the job of mediator and arbitrator and creating a 3-person arbitration panel instead of a single arbitrator will result in more fair and balanced outcomes in the bargaining process. The proposed new criteria that an impasse panel must take into account - particularly the requirement that the panel "first determine the ability of the County to afford any short-term and long-term expenditures required by the final offers" before rendering a decision on the final offers - are reasonable, balanced and will serve the long term interests of taxpayers and service recipients better than the present system.

We disagree with the testimony of the public employee union representatives. This bill will not "strip away" unions collective bargaining rights but will give us greater fiscal stability in the future. In the interest of good government, we urge the Council to **support Bill 20-11**.

Sincerely,

Peggy Dennis, President
Montgomery County Civic Federation