



LEGISLATION/ PUBLIC POLICY

ADVANCEMENT GUIDE

 Visit www.GFWC.org/membership/club-manual/ for updates and more information.

Legislation/Public Policy

For more than a century, GFWC members have advocated to raise awareness of specific issues requiring attention at the national level. Our advocacy efforts are practical not political; through our advocacy, we seek the implementation of practical solutions to problems that are national in scope. Many of those solutions have come in the form of legislative action, with GFWC members having worked to pass laws affecting highway safety, juvenile justice, women’s suffrage, the rights of the disabled, equal pay for women, and resources for victims of domestic violence and penalties for domestic abusers. The goals of Legislation/Public Policy during this administration include:

- Educating members about both GFWC’s legislative priorities and about how the legislative process works;
- Mobilizing our members to raise a united voice to advocate for those priorities; and
- Rebuilding the GFWC name into a brand that lawmakers (and others) recognize.

EDUCATING AND MOBILIZING: THE GFWC LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER

One of the primary tools that GFWC uses to educate and mobilize its members is the GFWC Legislative Action Center (the LAC). Members who sign up for the LAC will receive updates on specific legislation GFWC is supporting. These updates will let members know when they should contact their national legislators about a particular bill. Additionally, if a State Federation provides GFWC with at least 72 hours’ notice, GFWC can send out a legislative alert to that state’s members regarding one or more pieces of state legislation. To realize the full potential of this tool, however,

members must sign up for the LAC. They can do this by going to the GFWC website (**GFWC.org**), clicking on the “Public Policy” tab, and then clicking on the link that says “Take Action.”

GRAND INITIATIVE: That 1,000 members join the Legislative Action Center!



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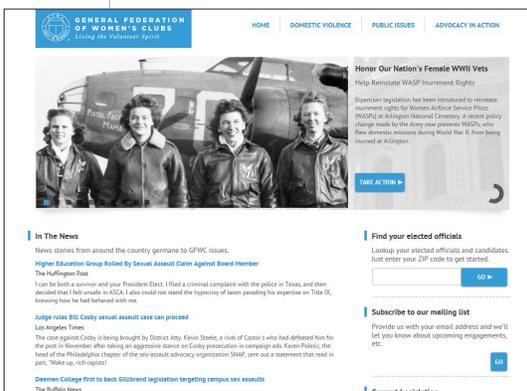
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2018-2020 INITIATIVE

In 1994 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January was declared a National Day of Service. Each and every club in GFWC is asked to do a service project on that day. It may be in any area, any type of project. OUR GOAL IS 1,000 CLUBS PARTICIPATING.



BUILDING THE GFWC BRAND:

Recognize the Red

GFWC's advocacy efforts should also help to raise awareness of GFWC as an organization. To maximize this awareness, GFWC is launching the "*Recognize the Red*" campaign.

- Any time a GFWC member engages in written correspondence with her legislator, she should use the color **RED**, the color of GFWC's official flower, the red rose, for her signature.
- Whether the correspondence is a traditional letter or an email, the member should sign her name (and the name of her club and State Federation and GFWC) in **RED**.
- For traditional letters, the member should write her return address in **RED** and put a big check mark in **RED** on the outside of the envelope.

Eventually, when a legislator or legislative aide sees a **red signature** or a **red return address**, she will recognize that she is again hearing from a GFWC member.



RESOLUTIONS AND ADVOCACY

Only with a resolution on the books can GFWC advocate for or against an issue. Resolutions can be used as tools for advocating important issues at the local, state, and national levels. If a particular subject is not addressed by a resolution, members cannot use GFWC's support to advocate for or against the issue but may advocate as concerned individuals.

ADVOCATING AS A 501(c)(3) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

Many members are under the impression that because GFWC (or their State Federation or local club) holds tax-exempt status, the members cannot lobby. IRS guidelines do not ban lobbying activities; instead, they limit the types and amount of lobbying in which a nonprofit organization may engage. To maintain tax-exempt status, lobbying may not be the primary purpose of the organization nor may it constitute a substantial part (more than 50%) of the organization's activities. If organizational funds are spent in lobbying efforts, those expenses must be reported on the organization's IRS Form 990 (which all 501-c (3) organizations are required to complete). A nonprofit organization may advocate to raise awareness of an issue or to lobby for or against a particular piece of legislation. Such organizations may not, however, endorse or oppose specific candidates or political parties. To ensure that your State Federation or local club stays within these guidelines, follow our Advocacy "Do's and Don'ts."

DO:

- Advocate for action on a specific issue or for a specific piece of legislation;
- Contact your elected officials directly;
- Participate in voter registration drives;
- Hold nonpartisan forums to educate the public about one or more specific issue;
- Sponsor candidate forums, ensuring that all candidates receive a formal invitation to participate;
- Give only facts when referring to or speaking about a specific candidate or incumbent; and
- Educate candidates on GFWC's resolutions and legislative priorities.

DON'T:

- Endorse or oppose a specific candidate or political party;
- Use club funds, facilities, in-kind donations, publications, or events to promote a specific candidate or political party;
- Ask candidates to sign a pledge on any issue;
- Offer opinions about an incumbent or candidate; or
- Support legislation that would be in conflict with a GFWC Resolution.

* A State Federation that takes a position in conflict with any GFWC Resolution must register a minority opinion with GFWC. If a State Federation takes legislative action on an issue that reflects this minority opinion, it must make clear that its position does not represent that of GFWC.

WHAT TO ADVOCATE FOR: GFWC RESOLUTIONS

GFWC's national advocacy efforts are based on GFWC Resolutions; we do not ask our members to advocate for or against any issue that is not addressed by a specific GFWC resolution. Our resolutions address issues that are national or international in scope and that are germane to the work or interests of GFWC members. Currently, there are over 200 GFWC resolutions addressing issues such as domestic violence awareness and prevention, education, women's health, promotion of the arts, conservation, highway safety, gun safety, and the United Nations/UNICEF. Many of these resolutions call for members to advocate not only for national legislation but also for state laws that address a particular issue. Examples of state legislation that would address a problem national in scope include laws involving domestic violence, gun safety, highway safety, human trafficking, and education.

Where do I find the GFWC Resolutions?

Members may download a PDF of the GFWC Resolutions from the GFWC website (GFWC.org) or purchase printed copies through the GFWC marketplace (GFWC.org/membership/marketplace or 1-800-443-GFWC (4392)).

How Are Resolutions Drafted and Adopted?

Under the GFWC Bylaws, the Resolutions Committee proposes all resolutions to the GFWC membership for adoption or rejection. The Executive Committee, individual State Federations, and the GFWC Community Service Program Chairmen, Standing Committee Chairmen, Special Committee Chairmen, and International Liaisons Chairman may submit proposed resolutions to the Resolutions Committee. The committee then studies these proposed resolutions and votes on which resolutions to bring before the GFWC membership. Additionally, the Resolutions Committee may propose resolutions based on its own research or input from GFWC members and/or any of the GFWC committees. Resolutions are debated and voted on by delegates at GFWC's annual convention. Prior to convention, proposed new resolutions (as well as any current resolutions proposed to be continued, amended, or rescinded) are posted on the GFWC website and are included in the "Call to Convention" found every year in the Spring issue of the *GFWC Clubwoman Magazine*. When a resolution is brought to the convention floor, delegates have the opportunity to debate and amend that resolution. If a majority of the voting delegate's vote in favor of a resolution, the resolution is adopted and serves as a basis for GFWC public policy initiatives and advocacy activities.

After adoption, a resolution is reviewed no less than once every four years by the Resolutions Committee, which recommends that the resolution either be maintained without change or that it be updated through the amendment process. Alternatively, where the purpose of a resolution has been accomplished, the committee will recommend that it be rescinded. The continuation, amendment, or rescission of a resolution is also decided by majority vote at the GFWC annual convention.

How to Submit a Proposed Resolution to GFWC?

Before submitting a resolution, you should review the current GFWC resolutions to make sure a similar one does not already exist. If there is no resolution addressing a particular issue, the GFWC Executive Committee or any of the GFWC Community Service Program Chairmen, Standing Committee Chairmen, Special Committee Chairmen, or International Liaisons Chairman may draft a proposed resolution and submit it to the GFWC Resolutions Committee. Local clubs or individuals should submit a proposed resolution to their State Federation for consideration at its next state convention.* Resolutions passed at State Conventions should then be forwarded to GFWC. Proposed resolutions must be typed and accompanied by supporting documentation.** All proposed resolutions must be submitted to the GFWC Resolutions Committee Chairman by November 1 of the year preceding the annual convention at which the resolution will be considered (e.g., resolutions to be considered at the 2019 annual convention must be submitted no later than November 1, 2018). More information about the resolutions process can be found in the GFWC Standing Rules (GFWC.org/what-we-do/governance).

* Specific procedures for proposing and adopting resolutions at the state level should be outlined in each State Federation's bylaws.

** Supporting documentation would include articles, surveys, statistics, reports, and studies that support the facts on which the resolution is based.

ADVOCATING AT THE LEGISLATIVE LEVEL

Most of GFWC’s advocacy efforts take place at the legislative level – our members advocate for or against a specific piece of legislation. We also advocate for the legislature to fund specific programs. Effective advocacy at the legislative level requires that our members first understand the steps of the legislative process and learn that there is an opportunity to advocate at every stage of that process.*

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Step 1: Introducing Legislation. Legislative work begins with the introduction of a proposal in the form of a bill. The senator or representative who introduces a bill is known as the bill’s primary sponsor. Other senators or representatives may show their support for the bill by signing on to it as a co-sponsor. *One of the most effective ways a GFWC member can influence the passage of legislation is by encouraging her senator or representative to sponsor or co-sponsor a bill.*

Step 2: The Committee Process. When a bill is introduced, it is given a legislative prefix and number, which indicates, among other things, whether it originated in the House or the Senate. The bill is then referred to the appropriate committee by congressional leadership. (For example, a bill dealing with farm subsidies would go to the committee on agriculture.) Committees study proposed legislation in-depth, and *the committee process represents one of the best opportunities for GFWC members to express their opinions.* During this process, a committee will hold hearings, receive written reports, and vote on amendments to the bill. Often, a bill will be referred to a subcommittee, where many of these activities will take place. Information on current committees, including membership, subcommittees, bills under consideration, and scheduled hearings can be found on the Congressional websites (*House.gov* and *Senate.gov*).

Step 3: The Floor Vote. If a proposed bill receives an affirmative vote from its assigned committee, then it will be reported out of committee and placed on a legislative calendar for a vote by the full House or Senate. *Once a bill is placed on a legislative calendar, GFWC members should contact their congressmen to advocate for passage or defeat of the bill.* After being passed by either the House or the Senate, the bill will be sent to the other chamber, where it will again go through the committee process and a floor vote.

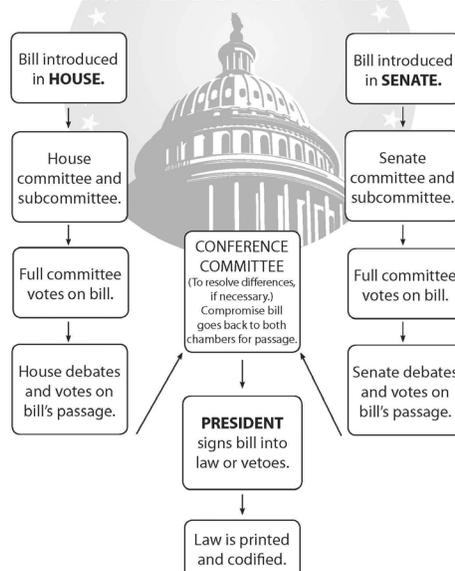
Step 4: The Conference Committee. Any piece of proposed legislation will often be amended during the committee process and may also be amended from the floor. As a result, the bill originally passed by the first chamber may differ significantly from the version passed by the second chamber. In those cases, a House-Senate conference committee will reconcile the differences between the two versions so that both chambers may pass an identical bill.

Step 5: Executive Action. After being passed by both houses, a bill is sent to the president, who either signs the bill into law or vetoes the legislation. In the case of a presidential veto, the bill is returned to the chamber from which it originated. The bill can still become law if two-thirds of both chambers vote to override the veto.

Effective Legislative Advocacy

Contact with your legislator’s office occurs in three ways: personal meetings, written correspondence, and telephone calls. Below are some suggestions to help maximize your advocacy efforts.

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN THE U.S. CONGRESS



* CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
 (To resolve differences, if necessary.) Compromise bill goes back to both chambers for passage.

Meeting with Your Legislator

- Be sure to schedule an appointment in advance.
- At the outset of the meeting, identify yourself as a constituent and explain your GFWC affiliation. Emphasize the fact that you are speaking for others, if appropriate.
- Go in with the assumption that neither the legislator nor her staff has any detailed understanding of the issue at hand or any knowledge about GFWC.
- Be prepared with a short, direct, and fact-based statement of the issue in question and the specific action you are asking the legislator to take. Relate how the issue affects you, other constituents, and/or specific groups.
- Have a "Leave Behind" - Bring information you can leave with the legislative staff. Try to include the following: a succinct, one-page fact sheet; in-depth materials (for legislative aides who may want more information); information on GFWC and your State Federation or local club; your name and contact information (preferably written in RED). Place all of these items in a single RED folder and, if possible, affix a GFWC sticker to the front of the folder. If you are feeling really creative, and it is not cost-prohibitive, leave the office a RED rose (the official flower of GFWC).
- Be sympathetic to the time demands made on legislators and their staff.
- Remain fact based and focused on the action you want the legislator to take. Do not argue with the legislator or staff member.
- Follow-up after the meeting to see if there are any questions or any requests for additional information.
- Once you have established contact with your legislator's office, keep a line of communication open by touching base periodically with new information on the issue you met about or on other issues.

Writing Your Legislator

- Both on the envelope and in the salutation, address your legislator as The Honorable, Senator, Representative or Congressman/Congresswoman. If sending a traditional letter, write your return address in RED.
- At the outset of the letter, identify yourself and your GFWC affiliation.
- Explain the reason for your letter, refer to the specific legislation you want addressed, and be specific about the action you want your legislator to take. If applicable, explain how the issue in question directly affects you, your family, and/or your community.
- While keeping the correspondence relatively short, include as many relevant facts as possible, citing sources for those facts, if available.
- Address no more than one issue in your letter.
- Sign your name and write your GFWC affiliation in RED ink.

Calling Your Legislator's Office

- While the most effective forms of communicating with your legislator are personal meetings or written correspondence, there are times when you should call your senator or representative to make your views known. Phone calls are most often used when an immediate vote is scheduled to take place on a bill in which you have an interest.
- Be aware that unless you are a personal friend of the senator or representative, you will usually be speaking with a member of the legislator's staff. Seek assurances that your position will be transmitted to your senator or representative and request a written response from the legislator's office.
- At the outset of the phone call, give your full name, address, and GFWC affiliation.
- Identify the specific action you want your senator or representative to take.
- Keep your call short and focused. Remain fact-based and do not engage in debate or argument.

MAKING OUR PRESENCE KNOWN: THE 2018-2020 LEGISLATIVE FOCUS PROJECT

During the 2018-2020 administration, GFWC members will journey together through the legislative process. The Executive Committee will pick two prospective pieces of legislation and ask that GFWC members advocate for the passage of these measures. As part of this focus project, we will track these two bills through the legislative process. Every member who has signed up with the LAC will be notified when:

- The bills are introduced;

- A specific bill is referred to a committee;
- A bill is coming up for committee vote;
- A bill has been voted out of committee; and
- A bill is scheduled for a floor vote.

At each step of the way, GFWC will let members know what action needs to be taken. These actions could include contacting a committee or subcommittee chairman to urge them to schedule a committee vote on the bill; contacting Senate and House leaders to schedule a floor vote on the bill; and contacting your congressional representatives to urge their support of the bill.

For this project to be successful, it is imperative that as many GFWC members as possible sign up for the LAC. Bring a computer to your club meeting so that you can sign up members. Explain that they will be notified through their email about action GFWC would like to see taken on a bill and that they can tell their senator/representative how they feel by clicking on the "Take Action."

ADVOCACY AND ISSUE AWARENESS: PROCLAMATIONS

A significant part of advocacy includes bringing attention to a specific issue or group. State Federations and local clubs can help raise awareness by asking their state or local governments for a proclamation recognizing a specific awareness day, week, or month (e.g., Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October). You can also request a proclamation recognizing Federation Day (April 24) or the anniversary of a club or State Federation. Your chances of receiving a proclamation may be enhanced if you can present a draft of the proclamation. When drafting a proclamation, follow these guidelines:

- Proclamations usually consist of two to five factual statements about the organization, issue, or event being recognized. Each of these statements should be preceded by the word "WHEREAS."
(For example: "WHEREAS, The General Federation of Women's Clubs is an international women's organization dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service.")
- Following the factual statements, you should have one or more sentences that presents the organization or event being recognized. The first of the sentences begins with the words "THEREFORE RESOLVED," and subsequent sentences begin with the phrase "AND FURTHER RESOLVED."
(For example: "THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Town of Jones recognizes April 24 as Federation Day.")
- When presenting the proclamation to officials, have them sign in descending order of rank. You may request proclamations for more than one entity (e.g., you could ask for a proclamation from your state, your county, and your city). For each proclamation ask that the entity apply the state/county/city seal to mark your proclamation as official.

ADVOCACY AT THE CLUB LEVEL

There are many things clubs can do to create awareness of the need for advocacy and to train their members on how to advocate.

Educate Members about GFWC's Advocacy Efforts

- Appoint a club Legislation/Public Policy Chairman or designate a member to be responsible for reporting to the club on GFWC's advocacy efforts and the organization's resolutions.
- Give a club presentation on the GFWC Legislative Action Center. Have one or more members bring their computer to the meeting and help club members sign up for this advocacy tool.
- Educate members on the "**Recognize the Red**" campaign.
- Give a presentation on the bills that will be the subject of the 2018-2020 Legislative Focus Project.
- Reprint information from GFWC in your club newsletter or forward it to members via email.
- Invite a Legislation/Public Policy Chairman or committee member from the national, state, or district level to speak about GFWC's impressive history of advocacy and its current advocacy efforts.

Educate Members on the Legislative Process and How to Advocate

- Present a club program on how a bill becomes a law. Consider playing the video "I'm Just a Bill" from Schoolhouse Rock (available on YouTube), which provides lots of information about the legislative process.
- Encourage club members to contact their senators and representatives via written correspondence, the LAC, or phone calls. Provide them with the tips for communicating with their legislators found in the Club Manual.
- Draft and distribute a sample letter for club members to send on a specific issue.
- **Bring paper, envelopes, and stamps to each club meeting and have members write to their senator/representative urging passage of a bill or write to the senator/representative chairing the committee to which the bill was sent urging it be voted out of the committee. ALWAYS SIGN THE LETTER WITH A RED PEN AND PUT GFWC AFTER YOUR NAME IN RED, WRITE YOUR RETURN ADDRESS IN RED, AND PUT A BIG RED CHECK MARK ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE ENVELOPE.**
- Present a program to teach members about the various levels of government (city, county, state, and national) where they can use their advocacy skills.
- Develop and distribute a directory that lists contact information for public officials and their staff.

Educate Members on the Issues

- If your club becomes interested in a particular issue, invite an elected official to a meeting to discuss that issue. Make this an open meeting, where you invite the general public to attend.
- Become familiar with women's caucuses at both the state and national level. Determine what issues they are focused on and if those issues interest your club.
- Educate your members and the community on the effect of budget cuts on programs designed to benefit women and children.
- Ask members to be on the lookout for articles on public policy issues that are of interest and/or concern to them. If possible, email these articles to other members or provide them with copies at the club meeting. Use these articles to foster discussion and debate about public policy issues.

Have Your Members Take Action

- Make an appointment with a state or national legislator in his or her home office to discuss GFWC's top legislative priorities.
- If there is an issue before a legislative body that you want to advocate for or against, hold a letter-writing campaign in your club.
- Hold a legislative day for your club, during which you visit your state legislature or local council meeting to advocate for an issue or piece of legislation that is important to you and your community. Consider partnering with other groups for this day. For instance, if the issue is domestic violence, consider partnering with a state or local advocacy group whose sole focus is domestic violence awareness and prevention.

AWARDS

GFWC recognizes outstanding and creative work in implementing the Legislation/Public Policy program as follows:

- A certificate to one State Federation in each membership category
- A \$50 award to a single club for the most creative and effective project

To be eligible for awards, **each State Federation** may submit one State Award Entry Cover Sheet and one Club Creativity Award Entry Cover Sheet for the Legislation/Public Policy program. **Individual clubs do not submit entries.** Award winners will be judged from entries submitted by the State Federations.



Refer to the Awards section of the *Club Manual* for more information, including the Award Entry Cover Sheet guidelines.