



# GENERAL FEDERATION *of* WOMEN'S CLUBS

## GFWC Legislation and Public Policy Quarterly Newsletter 2020-2022 December 2020 – January 2021 Newsletter – Issue #1

While elections results are not yet final at this time (11/22/20), we thought a snapshot of the number of women elected to federal and state office on November 3, 2020 and trends over time would be interesting. Voter turnout in 2020 is estimated at 67%, the highest since 1900 (73.7%). The 160 million votes cast represent the most ever for a Presidential election. The number of women elected continues to climb and is cause for celebration in this, the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. We also remember clubwoman Jeannette Rankin of Montana, the first woman elected to Congress in 1916.

Women Elected to US Congress*					
2020			2016		
Total	140	26.20%	Total	127	23.70%
House	116	26.70%	House	101	23.20%
Senate	24	24%	Senate	26	26%

- So while gains were made in the House, a few seats were lost to women in the Senate.

History of Women Elected					
<u>Federal Office</u>			<u>State Office</u>		
1920	0			Not Available	
1940	9			Not Available	
1960	19			Not Available	
1970	11			24	
1980	17			34	
1990	31			47	
2000	65			89	
2010	90			71	
2020	140			94	

## How to Turn a Cause into a Law

We wanted to share advice from super-advocate Amanda Nguyen. Amanda is a rape survivor who was a strong advocate for herself, doing everything one is told to do after an assault, and found the justice system and care services for rape victims deeply flawed. Did you know a rape kit can take 3-7 hours to perform? After all, a victim's body is the crime scene. Did you know that in some states, a rape kit can be destroyed in months, while the statute of limitations on rape charges can be years? So a case may be brought later (depending on the state, anywhere from three years and up, some states have no limit), but the rape kit, a major piece of evidence, may no longer exist. Amanda stated that she felt more betrayed by the justice system than the rape.

Amanda has appeared before Congress several times. In the end, her Sexual Assault Survivors Bill of Rights was passed unanimously by Congress, one of very few substantive bills to do so (.016% in fact). It was signed by the President in 2016. She then took her case to the states. So far, she has passed 30 related laws, all unanimously. She started the non-profit civil rights organization Rise and serves as their CEO. She was a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize and received the Nelson Mandela Changemaker Award in 2019.

Amanda assures us passing a law is not as simple as the Schoolhouse Rock lets on. It's important to understand that only a few people can really move a bill forward. Know who these people are and build a relationship with them. If they don't place your cause on the agenda, it has little chance.

### TIPS

- Recruit an Army. You can't do it alone. Amanda started off with a single email recounting her experience to everyone in her address list and asked for their help and advice. Find people who share your commitment.
- Build a bipartisan coalition before introducing your bill. She reached out to a diverse group of organizations across the political spectrum. It helps to show that people can, and will, work together on your issue.
- Model your bill on another successful bill. She used the 2004 Federal Crime Victims' Rights Act. There are often elements of precedent already established for what you are trying to do.
- The most important people in passing a bill are the chairs of your bill's committee, the Speaker of the House, and the Majority Leader of the Senate (if you're passing your bill in Congress) or the Senate President (if you're passing a state law). The chair of the bill's committee has the power to advance the issue or not.
- Establish personal relationships with politicians. Go to their offices and establish a relationship of mutual respect with them. You don't have to agree on everything, but connect with them personally.
- Keep the message positive and action-oriented. Positivity brings hope and hope sustains people. A positive and easy to sustain call-to-action will keep people engaged.
- Stay in control of the narrative. For Nguyen's bill, this meant sharing the stories of rape survivors who had been re-victimized by lapses in our criminal justice system and directly connecting them to their local politicians. It's easy to get off track when lots of people get involved.
- Keep your faith in democracy. "Our current democracy isn't perfect. A healthy democracy depends not only on its leaders but on its citizens' ability to hash things out," says Nguyen.

And as always, if your cause is one for which GFWC has a resolution – get us all involved with you! If we don't have a resolution currently, propose one to fit the cause. Contact your region Legislation Committee member to get started.

**Reminder: The deadline for your State Award Entry is March 15, 2021 to GFWC Chairman Vicky Ann Trimmer**

Sources:

- *cawp.rutgers.edu - The Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers, Eagleton Institute of Politics*
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- *Pretty Big Deal with Ashley Graham, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nju\\_lvEWO6o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nju_lvEWO6o)*