



GENERAL FEDERATION *of* WOMEN'S CLUBS

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Money Makes The World Go Round OR

Like the Famous Movie with Tom Cruise – Show Me The Money!

In this newsletter, the Legislation/Public Policy Committee provides educational information about the federal appropriations process, since we frequently ask clubwomen to participate in the GFWC Legislative Action Center by contacting members of Congress urging them to provide increased funds for particular programs.

While the process is similar for all discretionary spending, we are providing *Frequently Asked Questions* about the federal appropriations process in the context of funding Violence Against Women programs, in support of GFWC's Signature Program: Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention.

What are federal appropriations?

Congress has the power of the purse. While the President proposes an annual budget for the federal agencies, Congress finalizes the annual appropriations bills so the federal agencies can provide services and perform critical tasks. It is an annual process. Appropriations bills must be signed by the President, so a veto threat is taken very seriously and requires negotiation between the White House and congressional leaders. The United States Government has the authority to do deficit spending, unlike most states and local governments that must maintain a balanced-budget.

How many appropriation bills are there?

The House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee has 12 subcommittees, as does the Senate Appropriations Committee. Each subcommittee prepares its bill and the process begins to full committee, onto the floor for a vote, then to a House-Senate conference committee to finalize the annual appropriations bills. The 12 subcommittees include: Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration; Commerce, Justice, Science; Defense; Energy

and Water Development; Financial Services and General Government; Homeland Security; Interior, Environment; Labor, Health and Human Services, Education; Legislative Branch; Military Construction, Veterans Affairs; State, Foreign Operations; and Transportation, Housing and Urban Development.

What is the timeline and the process for appropriations?

As a result of the significant spending needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the current FY 2022 appropriations process is delayed and it is unlikely that annual spending bills will be completed by October 1, 2021, the beginning of the next federal fiscal year. Continuing Resolutions will be needed.

Traditionally, the President addresses a joint session of Congress in late January, presenting his/her priorities in the State of the Union address, and submits the proposed budget to Congress in early February. The House and Senate Budget Committees prepare a Budget Resolution to set forth the overall level of discretionary spending for the year. The Budget Resolution is adopted by Congress, but is not signed by the President. It is a guiding tool for Congress.

The Budget Resolution provides the overall spending allocation to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, which divide the spending targets among the 12 subcommittees dealing with different parts of the budget. The 12 appropriations subcommittees begin their process by holding public hearings. Administration officials present their proposed budgets, and members of Congress have the opportunity to identify their priorities by signing letters of support to the Appropriations Committees, completing online questionnaires seeking congressionally directed spending projects better known as earmarks, and presenting testimony in committee hearings. Every member of Congress has the opportunity to participate in this process. In the past, most appropriations bills have bipartisan support.

Appropriations bills are supposed to be formulated in the House of Representatives first. The House Appropriations Committee considers its bills in May and June. The Senate usually unveils its bills in June and July. In a “normal” process, the House-Senate conference committees would reconcile their bills in September after receiving new revenue projections and the debt ceiling is established. The 12 conference reports would be approved by both the House and Senate, and signed by the President before the October 1 deadline, the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Although the budget process calls for 12 individual bills, many are often combined into an omnibus appropriations bill, and sometimes a few are combined into what has been termed a minibus appropriations bill in order to gain the necessary votes for passage and be signed by the President. Congress can approve Continuing Resolutions to fund the federal departments and programs at the current level until new appropriations bills have been enacted. Without appropriations, the federal government shuts down.

How does this work for the federal programs that provide services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and enhance prevention programs?

Congress must pass authorization bills creating the programs and funding limits. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act provide services and prevention programs addressing Intimate Partner Violence, Teen Dating Violence, Campus Sexual Assault, Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women, and training and resources for law enforcement and the courts, among other programs. If these authorization bills have not been enacted, it is customary for the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to fund these programs, but only if the bills have been passed by the House of Representatives prior to completion of the appropriations process.

GFVC has supported the passage of these reauthorization bills. Advocates also have contacted their members of Congress urging support for funding VAWA programs. The following are examples of specific programs and their federal funding pathways.

The Sexual Assault Services Program is administered by the Justice Department, Office of Violence Against Women. Funding in FY 2020 was \$38 million and in FY 2021 was \$41 million. The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence is requesting \$100 million in FY 2022. It is critically important to secure an increase above the baseline to serve the rising number of victims of sexual assault. These funds are distributed through formula grants to every state, territory, and tribe. Funding provides services such as counselors, and accompaniment through the medical and judicial systems. Advocates help victims heal. When advocates are present in the legal and medical proceedings following rape, victims fare better in both short- and long-term recovery, experiencing less psychological distress, physical health struggles, sexual risk-taking behaviors, self-blame, guilt, and depression. These Justice Department funds are provided in the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill, one of 12 appropriations bills considered annually by Congress.

The Rape Prevention and Education Program is funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, Injury Prevention Center. With these funds, state coalitions against sexual violence, rape crisis centers, and nonprofit organizations bring educational programs and trainings, such as anti-bullying and bystander intervention, to settings including classrooms and community groups. You can invite a speaker to your state convention or local club. This program is funded through the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations Bill, one of 12 appropriations bills considered annually by Congress.

State Coalitions Against Domestic Violence and local domestic violence shelters receive federal funding through the Office of Violence Against Women and the Office of Victims of Crime in the Justice Department, as well as the Department of Health and Human Services programs authorized by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act. Recent advocacy efforts have focused on housing needs for victims of domestic violence and those resources to make sure victims are not expelled from public housing, but given priority for safe housing away from the abuser. Housing issues are funded through the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill, one of 12 appropriations bills considered annually by Congress.

How as Clubwomen can we advocate for more appropriations for a focus area?

GFWC activates the Legislative Action Center in support of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act. We also urge Congress to increase federal appropriations for these critical programs. Often our legislative alerts seek appropriations in the Spring when the House and Senate Appropriations Committees are preparing their bills, and again in the Fall when the House-Senate conference committees and congressional leadership are making their final decisions for the annual budget for each federal program. Every state has federally funded domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions with professional staff funded by federal and state funds. But, they need community support to be effective. Many of you have donated products to local domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers, funded scholarships, libraries, and child care centers at local shelters, and members have served on local and state boards, raising local funding and advocating for state legislative initiatives.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and community groups have increased their requests for prevention programs. The #MeToo movement; national focus on sexual assault on campuses, in the military, and faith communities; and high-profile cases of sexual violence in the media have led to increased interest in comprehensive community responses to domestic and sexual violence, and also have increased the demand for prevention programs beyond providers' capacities.

**GFWC has an important role to play – BE AN ADVOCATE!
Join the GFWC Legislative Action Center!**

[Gathering Facts and Working for Change](#)