



GENERAL FEDERATION *of* WOMEN'S CLUBS

GFWC LEGISLATION/PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER MARCH/APRIL 2022

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

GFWC's IMPORTANT ROLE IN PASSAGE OF FEDERAL LEGISLATION

During this administration, GFWC is actively involved in the following ongoing issues. We hope that you will share this information with your club, district, and friends.

GFWC Members Matter!

GFWC adopts public policy resolutions in convention and those set the priorities of the organization. Each year, the GFWC Resolutions Committee recommends proposed language to the GFWC Executive Committee, which then recommends proposed resolutions to the member clubs and state federations through the Call to Convention. During the Annual Meeting, the voting delegates debate and vote on the resolutions.

GFWC has worked on domestic violence and sexual assault issues over many years, supporting domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers in local communities, long before passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 which provided federal resources, improved services to survivors, more training for law enforcement and the judicial system, and significant funding to support professional staff training and capacity.

Original GFWC resolutions related to domestic violence and sexual assault were adopted in the mid-1980s. During the 2006-2008 GFWC Administration, the convention approved a Signature Project: Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention and a committee with regional representation was formed. During the 2018-2020 Administration, the Signature Program was renamed Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention. Issue areas were expanded to include intimate partner violence, child abuse, teen dating violence, campus sexual assault, elder abuse, violence against Native American women, military sexual assault, and human trafficking for sexual purposes. At this 2022 GFWC Convention, domestic and sexual violence awareness and prevention resolutions will be considered to update our policy positions.

GFWC Works with Other Women's Organizations to Make a Larger Impact!!

While many organizations are involved in providing advocacy and services to victims, the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (NTF) is the foremost umbrella organization bringing all the issue experts together to focus on development, passage, and implementation of effective public policy to address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

GFWC joined the NTF outreach efforts on the recent passage of VAWA 2022, with GFWC and 38 state federations cosigning the national NTF letter. By utilizing the GFWC Legislative Action Center, we enabled individual clubwomen to contact their Members of Congress and urge passage. The NTF Steering Committee also asked GFWC to do specific outreach in some states to express strong grassroots support for the legislation.

GFWC International President Marian St.Clair wrote the Senate Judiciary Committee urging action on VAWA and urged President Biden to include VAWA passage as a priority in the State of the Union address to Congress. As a result of our multiple efforts, President St.Clair was invited to attend the March 16, 2022, White House celebration of passage of the VAWA reauthorization. Photos are available on GFWC Facebook and the March 24 News & Notes.

Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization 2022

The VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2022 (S. 3623 attached to H.R. 2741) will expand services and protections for survivors, including those from underserved communities such as rural communities, and provide increased resources and training for law enforcement and our judicial system. It will strengthen rape prevention and education efforts, support local rape crisis centers and domestic shelters, improve the training and availability of sexual assault forensic examiners, expand access to safe housing for victims of revenge porn, increase enforcement of cybercrimes, support victims of revenge porn, increase funding for responses to child abuse and child sex crimes and broaden access to legal services for all survivors.

Landmark provisions are included for Native American women and children, protecting families from non-Indian abusers by enabling Tribal prosecution for domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.

Additional Legislation Makes an Impact

Legislation to fix the Crime Victims Fund (H.R. 1652) was enacted in July 2021 to allow federal financial penalties from deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements to be deposited into the Fund rather than the General Treasury. The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants provide federal funding enabling local organizations serving survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, trafficking, and other crimes to provide counseling, case management, crisis hotlines, emergency shelters, and community-based programs.

Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act (H.R. 4445) became law March 2022, enabling workers to sue employers over workplace sexual harassment or assault regardless of contractual restrictions. The bill makes it illegal to enforce agreements signed before an alleged incident of sexual harassment or assault that mandate third-party arbitration, a form of dispute resolution that is conducted behind closed doors and often favors employers. This measure had strong bipartisan support and was a priority of the #MeToo movement.

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) is still pending in the Senate. In October 2021, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2119 which increases funding levels for programs to support domestic violence shelters and services for survivors, and increases access to funding for tribes, communities of color, and underserved communities. The bill invests in 24-hour hotlines, prevention programs for local communities, and enhances victim services through training and technical assistance.

There are more than 1,500 domestic violence programs and 240 tribes and tribal organizations which benefit from this funding. Significant funds were approved by Congress in the FY 2022 omnibus appropriations bill and in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. However, these funds have not yet been distributed.

The Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act passed the House of Representatives March 2021 and is pending in the Senate. This crucial investment in American families supports resources at the local level which mitigate the many challenges and stress which parents and caregivers are facing right now, such as decreased wages, inflation, lack of childcare, and housing affordability.

The community-based grants are designed to help families get the support they need before harm occurs, including voluntary evidence-based home visiting services, parental support programs, early childhood and childcare programs, family resource centers, distribution of food and medicine, and coordination with mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence services. All 50 states receive this funding to meet the needs of local communities.

GFWC members belonging to the Legislative Action Center supported these bills. Together GFWC, our state federations and our individual members can and will make a difference! Join us in this effort!

Gathering Facts and Working for Change