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GFWC 2024 Federal Legislative Priorities

Signature Program: Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention

VAWA Appropriations: The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was reauthorized in March 2022, and the FY 2023 Omnibus Appropriations bill provided historically high funding levels for these programs to serve survivors and strengthen prevention programs. GFWC urges Congress to provide significant increases in federal funding for FY 2024 and FY 2025 to meet the needs of survivors and strengthen education and prevention.

Rape Kit Backlog: The Debbie Smith Act must be reauthorized to provide funding to law enforcement to analyze untested rape kits. DNA analysis is one of the most important methods to investigate crimes and improve the capacity of state and local prosecutors to bring these cases to court.

Anti-trafficking: GFWC urges Congress to pass anti-trafficking and anti-exploitation bills reauthorizing essential programs to support survivors and combat human trafficking in all forms, both domestically and internationally.

Strengthening Protections for Domestic Violence and Stalking Survivors Act: GFWC urges Congress to pass legislation to fully close the “dating loophole” in federal firearms law which allows dating partners subject to final protective orders to legally possess firearms, and the “stalking loophole” which allows people convicted of misdemeanor stalking to legally possess firearms. Legislation (H.R. 905, S. 321) is in response to a February 2023 ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit in *United States v. Rahimi* which struck down 30 years of federal law prohibiting those under a protective order for domestic violence from possessing firearms. Action is pending in the U.S. Supreme Court which heard arguments in November 2023.

Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Reauthorization: GFWC supports increased funding for domestic violence shelters and services for survivors, increased access to programs and services for tribes, communities of color, and underserved communities, investment in 24-hour hotlines, prevention programs for local communities, and enhanced victim services through training and technical assistance.

Juniors’ Special Program: Advocates for Children

Online Safety: GFWC strongly supports efforts to prevent online sexual exploitation of children. The Eliminating Abusive and Rampant Neglect of Interactive Technologies Act (EARN IT Act) removes the technology industry’s liability protection shield for third-party content which would then allow state and federal lawsuits. The Kids Online Safety Act sets out requirements for covered platforms to protect minors from online abuse. The Project Safe Childhood Act modernizes the Department of Justice’s Project Safe Childhood Program to enhance law enforcement’s response to online child sexual exploitation. The REPORT Act will ensure tech companies are held accountable to report and remove child sex abuse material, and to strengthen protections for kids online. The STOP CSAM Act expands civil remedies for victims of online sexual exploitation and requires the removal of related exploitive visual depictions.

Arts and Culture

GFWC supports increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts to enhance state and local programs that help transform communities into beautiful and resilient places through strategies that incorporate arts and culture.

Civic Engagement and Outreach

Food Insecurity: GFWC urges Congress to reauthorize and increase funding for programs addressing hunger and food insecurity including Meals on Wheels, the Emergency Food Assistance program (TEFAP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch Program.

ERA: GFWC urges Congress to enact legislation to remove the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. In January 2020, the necessary three-quarters, or 38 states, voted to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, yet the United States Archivist has not certified the ratification. While most believe the requirements of ratification have been met, advocates acknowledge the deadline must be removed to clear any remaining barriers, so that ratification by the United States Archivist can take place and gender equality will be protected by the United States Constitution. Except regarding the right to vote, the U.S. Constitution does not guarantee women the same legal status and protections guaranteed to men.

Pay Equity: Wage discrimination based on sex should be prohibited. It would be unlawful to require an employee to sign a contract or waiver prohibiting the employee from disclosing wage information, which is of course the way you find out if you are making the same as your coworker.

Veterans: The Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act (H.R. 542, S. 141) expands access to home and community-based services for aging and homebound veterans and provides support and benefits to caregivers of disabled veterans.

Education and Libraries

STEAM: GFWC supports federal funding for STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) programs, broadband infrastructure to enable learning for every family, and increased funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services to strengthen local community resources.

Environment

Recreation: The Outdoors for All Act (H.R. 1065, S. 448) directs the Interior Department to establish an outdoor recreation legacy partnership grant program to support states and local communities or organizations develop new or renovate existing outdoor recreation facilities. The America's Outdoor Recreation Act (S. 873) addresses issues regarding public recreation on federal lands and waters.

Health and Wellness

Global Vaccinations: GFWC urges Congress to fully fund global childhood immunizations. GFWC supports funding the CDC's polio eradication and measles elimination programs through the Health and Human Services appropriations bill, and funding for the US Agency for International Development (USAID), UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance) programs through the State Department/Foreign Operations appropriations bill. These efforts improve global disease detection systems that enable other nations to effectively detect and efficiently respond to a range of other diseases. Preventing diseases at their source is the most cost-effective approach, saves the most lives, and makes the world more resilient to new viruses that could cause the next pandemic.

Paid Family and Medical Leave: GFWC supports policies that support families and reduce health disparities in the workplace such as parental leave, paid family and medical leave, and pregnancy accommodations.

Alzheimer's: The bipartisan National Alzheimer's Project Act (NAPA) reauthorization bill (H.R. 619, S. 133) builds upon efforts originally approved in 2011 and extends the work of the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease, emphasizes the importance of healthy aging and risk reduction, and addresses health disparities among underrepresented populations. The Alzheimer's Accountability and Investment Act (H.R. 620, S. 134) would continue to prioritize Alzheimer's and dementia research funding at the National Institutes of Health. With robust and steady investment, scientists will be able to work faster to advance basic disease knowledge, explore ways to reduce risk, uncover new biomarkers for early diagnosis and drug targeting, and develop potential treatments.

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