



LEGISLATION/PUBLIC POLICY

ADVANCEMENT PLAN

Legislation/Public Policy

For more than 100 years, GFWC members have raised awareness of specific issues requiring attention at the national level through their advocacy efforts. GFWC member's advocacy efforts are practical not political. Our GFWC advocacy seeks the implementation of constructive solutions to problems that are national in scope and regional in impact. Our efforts can change lives! GFWC members worked to pass laws affecting highway safety, juvenile justice, women's suffrage, the rights of the disabled, equal pay for women, resources for victims of domestic violence, and penalties for domestic abusers. GFWC members must continue to use public advocacy to seek solutions to local, state, and national concerns.

During the 2020-2022 Administration, the Legislation/Public Policy Committee will be "Gathering Facts & Working for Change." The goals of the Legislation/Public Policy Committee during this Administration include:

- Encouraging participation in the Legislative Action Center.
- Educating members about GFWC's legislative priorities.
- Educating members about the local impact of civic engagement.
- Mobilizing our members to raise a united voice to advocate for GFWC and national priorities.
- Building relationships with the local, regional, and national decisions makers.
- Establishing the GFWC name as a brand that lawmakers and the community recognizes.

THE GFWC LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER: A DIRECT LINK TO CONGRESS

The GFWC Legislative Action Center (LAC) is the primary tool that GFWC uses to educate and mobilize its members. Members who sign up for the LAC receive updates on specific legislation GFWC is supporting. These updates let members know when to contact their national legislators about a 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. Sign up for the LAC by going to the GFWC website (GFWC.org), clicking on the "Public Policy" tab, and then clicking on the link that says, "Take Action."



2020-2022

LEGISLATION/PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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Members should "OPT IN" to receive the notifications issued by GFWC and then "TAKE ACTION" by responding to the notifications. Community engagement requires action in addition to education. Members are encouraged to use the information from the LAC notifications and share it with their local community.

Bring a computer to your club meeting to sign up members. Make signing up for the LAC a club meeting event. Invite a representative from GFWC or your State Federation to answer questions. 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 Senators/Representative how they feel by clicking on "Take Action."

BUILDING GFWC RECOGNITION: USE THE GFWC EMBLEM

GFWC's advocacy efforts also help to raise awareness of GFWC as an organization. To maximize this awareness, GFWC encourages members to use the GFWC emblem on all communications, promotional materials, and advocacy efforts.

GFWC members impact our nation and communities through the power of one. One member telling another who tells another is like compound interest – GFWC legislative and public policy initiatives will grow into waves that cannot be ignored!

- When a GFWC member engages in written correspondence with her legislator, she should use the GFWC emblem.
- 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) and insert the GFWC emblem.
- The GFWC emblem can be downloaded from the GFWC website.

RESOLUTIONS AND ADVOCACY

GFWC advocates for or against an issue only if a resolution on the issue has been adopted by its members. Resolutions can be found on the GFWC website at www.gfwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Resolutions-June-2019-FINAL.pdf. Resolutions are tools members should use to advocate and educate about important issues at the local, state, and national levels. If a subject is not addressed by a resolution, members cannot use GFWC's name to advocate for or against the issue but may advocate as concerned individuals. If members feel an issue needs to be addressed by GFWC, any local club can submit a resolution for consideration to the Resolutions Committee. Every resolution currently in effect started with a proposal to the Resolutions Committee.

ADVOCACY DO'S AND DON'TS

GUESS WHAT?

A 501(c)(3) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION CAN ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY AND IT IS OK WITH THE IRS!

Some members are under the impression that because GFWC (or their State Federation or local club) holds Internal Revenue Service (IRS) §501(c)(3) status, its members cannot lobby. IRS guidelines **do not** ban lobbying activities. Rather, the IRS rules limit the types and amount of lobbying that a 501(c)(3) organization may engage in. Lobbying may not be the primary purpose of the organization nor may it constitute a substantial part 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 that all 501(c)(3) organizations are required to complete. A 501(c)(3) organization may advocate to raise awareness of an issue or to lobby for or against a piece of legislation. A 501(c)(3) organization may not endorse or oppose specific candidates or political parties. Advocacy by GFWC members is OK and GFWC encourages it!

Here is a list of Advocacy “Do’s and Don’ts” to ensure that your State Federation or local club stays within these guidelines:

DO

- Advocate for action on a specific issue or for a specific piece of legislation.
- Contact your national, state, and local elected officials directly.
- Participate in voter registration drives.
- Hold nonpartisan forums to educate the public about one or more specific issues.
- 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.
- Educate candidates on GFWC’s resolutions and legislative priorities.
- Use the GFWC emblem when advocating on a GFWC-endorsed issue.

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.
- Support legislation that conflicts 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: UNLOCKING THE GFWC RESOLUTIONS

GFWC’s national advocacy efforts are based on GFWC Resolutions. GFWC will never 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 approximately 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 resolutions call for GFWC members to advocate not only for national legislation but also for state laws that address a specific 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.

The GFWC Resolutions are easy to find! Members can download a PDF of the GFWC Resolutions from the GFWC website (www.gfwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Resolutions-June-2019-FINAL.pdf) or purchase printed copies through the GFWC Marketplace (GFWC.org/membership/marketplace or 1-800-443-GFWC (4392)).

HOW ARE RESOLUTIONS DRAFTED AND ADOPTED?

GFWC individual members control the legislative agenda via the resolutions process. 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 studies the proposed resolutions and determines 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 the GFWC 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” in the Spring issue of *GFWC Clubwoman Magazine*. When a resolution is brought to the convention floor, delegates can debate and amend that resolution. If a majority of voting delegates vote in favor of a resolution, the resolution is adopted and

is a basis for GFWC public policy initiatives and advocacy activities. Attending the GFWC Annual Convention as a delegate makes each member an active participant in GFWC's legislative process. You are the decision makers!

After adoption, a resolution is reviewed no less than once every four years by the Resolutions Committee. The Resolutions Committee 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. Just as a GFWC State Federation can submit a new resolution, it can also propose changes to existing resolutions.

INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING A PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO GFWC?

Before submitting a new resolution, you should review the current GFWC resolutions to ensure a similar one does not already exist. If there is no resolution addressing that specific 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 GFWC Annual Convention at which the resolution will be considered (e.g., resolutions to be considered at the 2021 GFWC Annual Convention must be submitted no later than November 1). Visit GFWC.org/what-we-do/governance for more information about the resolutions process in the GFWC Standing Rules.

* 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. The Resolutions Committee needs to understand WHY this issue is important to GFWC members.

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 engage decision makers and learn that there is an opportunity to advocate at every stage of that process. We all learned in high school how a bill becomes a law, but we are not taught how citizens impact that process. The Legislation/Public Policy Committee wants you to understand your role in the legislative process and how every club member can make an impact.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS: ENGAGING WITH DECISION MAKERS

Legislative work begins with the introduction of a proposal in the form of a bill. One of the most effective ways a GFWC member can influence the passage of legislation is by encouraging her senators or representative to sponsor or co-sponsor a bill. After a bill is introduced it is assigned to a committee. GFWC members can express their opinions to their legislators serving on the committee. The committee process represents one of the best opportunities for GFWC members to express their opinions. If a bill is scheduled for vote, GFWC members should contact their congressmen to advocate for passage or defeat of the bill. The LAC uses its notification process to alert GFWC members about upcoming legislation actions that require attention.

EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

To be an effective advocate, GFWC members need to build relationships with the decision makers who impact their lives. This requires members to contact their legislators. Contact occurs in three ways: personal meetings, written correspondence (letters and email), and telephone calls. Here are some suggestions to help maximize the effectiveness of your advocacy efforts.

MEET WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

- Schedule an appointment in advance.
- Open the meeting by identifying yourself as a constituent and explain your GFWC affiliation. Emphasize the fact that you are speaking for yourself and others, if appropriate.
- Assume that neither the legislator nor the legislator's 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. Let them know why the issue is important to their constituents.
- Have a "Leave Behind." Bring information you can leave with the legislative staff. 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. Place all of these items in a single folder and, if possible, affix a GFWC logo sticker to the front of the folder or purchase GFWC folders through the Marketplace.
- 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. Always remember that advocacy is about educating so action can be taken. Be passionate – not personal.
- 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. Build that relationship.

WRITE YOUR LEGISLATOR (OR EMAIL)

- Address your legislator as The Honorable, Senator, Representative or Congressman/Congresswoman on the envelope and greeting. Insert the GFWC emblem on your correspondence.
- Open the letter or email by identifying yourself and your GFWC affiliation.
- Explain the reason for your letter/email and refer to the specific legislation you want addressed. Be specific about the action you want your legislator to take. Explain how the issue in question directly affects you, your family, and/or your community.
- Keep the correspondence succinct and direct. Include as many relevant facts as possible, citing sources for those facts, if available. Keep it as short as possible while still getting your point across.
- Address no more than one issue in your letter/email.
- Sign your name.
- Understand that due to security concerns, mailed correspondence can be delayed for weeks. When time is short, email is a more effective and timely means of communication.

CALL YOUR LEGISLATOR'S OFFICE

- Phone calls are an excellent advocacy tool when an immediate vote is scheduled to take place on a bill of interest.
- Unless you are a friend of the senator or representative, you will typically speak with a member of the legislator's staff. Ask that your position 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.
- Do not abuse the phone system – flooding the phone switchboard can result in a negative image of GFWC. Find that happy medium of a recognizable number of phone calls but not an abusive activity.

INVITE YOUR LEGISLATOR TO SPEAK

- Every GFWC club, State Federation, and Region needs speakers for events.
- Your local, state, and national legislative representatives are *free* speakers.
- Invite them to bring greetings, offer comments, and update your members on important local issues.
- Ask a legislator to present a keynote speech at your event. Let them pick the topic or mention areas your members are concerned about, so they know who they are speaking to.
- Ask them to speak about an area of concern they are passionate about. For example, one legislator who was invited to speak had been a registered nurse prior to her election to public office. Her passion was immunizations and the need to educate parents as decision makers in their children's lives. She was an effective speaker, supplied materials clubwomen could take back to their local club, and was a valuable resource when the State Federation was reviewing a proposed resolution.
- Always remember to be respectful. You may not agree with everything the legislator talks about, and it is okay to ask difficult and thought-provoking questions, but never be disrespectful.
- A speaking invitation can open the door to further communications. Once opened, keep your foot in the door to develop a productive relationship.

MAKING GFWC'S PRESENCE KNOWN: THE 2020-2022 LEGISLATIVE FOCUS

During the 2020-2022 Administration, GFWC members will journey together through the public advocacy and legislative process. The Legislation/Public Policy Committee, in conjunction with the Special Program Chairmen, Community Service Program Chairmen, Resolutions Committee, and Executive Committee, will identify a piece of legislation which impacts each project area. GFWC will ask that GFWC members advocate for the passage of these measures. As part of this project, GFWC will track these bills through the legislative process. Every GFWC 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.
- 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 via the LAC. 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. It is critical that GFWC members respond to these requests for action. Just being a member on paper is not enough, you must advocate.

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 are greatly enhanced if you 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 present 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 from 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.
- Promote the fact that the proclamation was issued on your website and on social media. Ask the local newspaper to print a photo of the proclamation being presented to your club.
- Share the proclamations with GFWC's Legislation/Public Policy Committee Chairman so GFWC can share in your success.

CLUB LEVEL ADVOCACY

Individual GFWC clubs can create awareness about the need for advocacy and train their members to be effective public advocates. Once a clubwoman becomes an advocate, she plays a vital role in the legislative process.

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 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 GFWC Resolutions by reading one at every club meeting and asking members why it is important in your community.
- Include a short article about a GFWC Resolution in every club newsletter. Do not just reprint them, talk about what it asks from members and why.
- Give a presentation on the bills that will be the subject of the 2020-2022 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.
- Provide club members with information about the Woman's History and Resource Center and the history of GFWC, which can be obtained from the GFWC website or purchased through the GFWC Marketplace.

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. It is something we have all seen but it is a cute "refresher" course!
- Encourage club members to contact their senators and representatives via written correspondence (email), 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 or email for club members to send on a specific issue.
- Bring paper, envelopes, and stamps to a club meeting and have members write to their senators/representative urging passage of a bill or write to the senator or representative chairing the committee to which the bill was sent urging it be voted out of the committee. Do not forget to include the GFWC emblem on your correspondence.
- Circulate a sample email that members can copy and paste into an email to their senators or representative urging passage of a bill, or write to the senator or representative chairing the committee to which the bill was sent urging it be voted out of the committee. Do not forget to include the GFWC emblem on your email.
- 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. Include this information in your club directory and update it frequently as office addresses often change.

EDUCATE MEMBERS ON THE ISSUES

- If your club becomes interested in a specific issue, invite an elected official to a meeting to discuss the issue. Make this an open meeting, where you invite the 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 also 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 on public policy issues.

HELP 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 (email) 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 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.
- Sponsor a voter education night in your community to inform voters.
- Sponsor a voter registration drive in your community. Visit NonprofitVote.org (www.nonprofitvote.org) for information, resources, and handouts.
- Ask a GFWC member who works as a public servant to share how her membership encouraged her to seek her current position and/or enhance her skills.



MOCK LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT

The GFWC Juniorette Diamonds of Picayune (MS) conducted a daylong "Mock Legislative Summit." Participants included members and students who engaged in club HOBY workshops. A State Senator was the facilitator and a keynote speaker. Using GFWC Resolutions Committee materials, students learned how to write resolutions and how a bill travels from proposal to passage. Students broke into groups and drafted two potential bills for the legislature: one providing harsher penalties for those convicted of animal abuse and another providing education funding directly to classroom teachers.



LOBBY FOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

The GFWC IFC Progress Club (IN) successfully lobbied the legislature to assist with funding for Dismas House of Indiana, a nonprofit that provides transitional housing and other support services to recently released inmates. Those who completed the program have a recidivism rate of only 15%.



CLUB LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

The GFWC Woman's Club of Cypress (CA) formed its own Legislation and Public Policy Committee. The committee met regularly to discuss both pending state legislation and local legislative issues, and it made recommendations on whether the club should support, oppose, or remain neutral on specific legislative initiatives. This information was shared at club meetings and in the club newsletter, so club members could write their legislators to support or oppose certain pieces of legislation.



LEGISLATIVE CALL TO ACTION

The GFWC Suburban Woman's Club of Pompton Plains (NJ) had a "Legislative Call to Action," advocating for a ban on single-use plastics (e.g., plastic grocery bags and plastic straws). The club lobbied the state legislature to either ban or tax such items. The club lobbied local restaurants and national fast-food restaurant chains to eliminate straws or switch to paper straws. They also lobbied grocery stores to reward shoppers for bringing their reusable grocery bags and/or to charge for plastic bags. Well-researched statistics were used.

AWARDS

GFWC recognizes outstanding and creative work in implementing the Legislation/Public Policy projects 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 projects. Individual clubs do not submit entries.



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