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770-301-5885  
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**GFWC Georgia Legislation / Public Policy**

Remember to Educate, Engage and Mobilize through Legislation and Advocacy Activities.

Use the GFWC Advocacy in Action Guide for federal issues and to learn about policy positions approved by our General Federation.

In Georgia, sign up for our GFWC Georgia legislative alerts by contacting Legislation and Advocacy Chairman Beth English at benglish@swga-easterseals.org. State Officers, Chairman and District Presidents will automatically be included in the group email. All members are welcome to join. Information on a variety of legislative and advocacy issues is provided from a broad range of sources and should be used for discussion purposes. GFWC Georgia does not endorse particular opinions or views but seeks to provide a variety of perspectives on issues impacting our six areas of work. Clubs may choose to support issues. GFWC Georgia will periodically lend its name to legislation of importance provided it is consistent with overall GFWC approved advocacy statements.
More than 100 years of GFWC advocacy has garnered such results as child labor laws, women's suffrage, pure food and drug statutes, rights for people with disabilities, and domestic violence programs. Today, GFWC extends this record of national significance with an organized and effective framework. Our goals include:

- Educating members about the political process, policy issues, and pending legislation.
- Encouraging civic engagement among members.
- Mobilizing members to advocate for GFWC policy priorities.

Advocacy in Action: The GFWC Legislation and Public Policy Advancement Guide supports member advocacy efforts, based on GFWC Resolutions and priority issues.

GFWC AND PUBLIC POLICY

Advocacy and Lobbying
Advocacy is similar to lobbying, and involves influencing legislation by contacting your legislators or gaining grassroots support on an issue or specific piece of legislation. GFWC must be nonpartisan in our outreach efforts. It is perfectly legal for a nonprofit to lobby, as long as lobbying is not a substantial part of the organization’s activities.

Advocacy Do’s and Don’ts
As a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization, GFWC may advocate for or against specific issues, but by law cannot endorse or oppose candidates. You can certainly support candidates as an individual, but not on behalf of GFWC.

Do:
- Advocate for various bills, issues, and ballot measures.
- Volunteer and attend voter registration drives.
- Hold nonpartisan public education sessions about political issues.
- Sponsor candidate forums, ensuring that all candidates are formally invited to participate.
- Educate all candidates on GFWC Resolutions.

Don’t:
- Endorse or oppose a candidate or political party.
- Oppose GFWC Resolutions*
- Use official club funds, facilities, in-kind donations, publications, or activities on behalf of a candidate or political party.
- Ask candidates to sign a pledge on any issue.
- Increase the volume or amount of incumbent criticism as election time approaches.

* A State Federation that has a differing opinion on any adopted resolutions may register a minority opinion with GFWC. If a State Federation takes legislative action on an issue that it has a minority opinion on, it must clearly state that its action represents the GFWC minority vote.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

How GFWC Clubs Can Advocate:
- Decide on an issue of importance to all members.
- Seek out information.
- Hold a letter-writing campaign.
- Invite an elected official to attend a meeting to discuss the issue. Invite the general public to attend. (Don’t worry; if the official is speaking on a specific issue, it is not considered an endorsement.)
• Make an appointment with a state or national legislator in his or her home office to discuss GFWC’s top legislative priorities.
• Hold a legislative day. Plan a visit for your club to local or state legislatures to advocate for an issue or piece of legislation that is important to you and your community.
• Encourage women’s involvement in the legislative process; become familiar with the women’s caucuses; educate yourself and others on the effects of budget cuts on programs to benefit women and children.

Advocacy Tools and Techniques

Tips for Calling your Legislator’s Office
• While it is usually best to write your senators or representative, when a vote is scheduled to take place immediately, you should call his or her office to make your views known.
• Always give your full name and address.
• Unless you are a personal friend of the senator or representative, it is not necessary to speak directly with him or her. Leave a message with the legislator’s staff member who handles the issue in question.
• Try not to argue; just express your opinions.
• State the action you want your senator or representative to take.
• Seek assurances that the message will be transmitted to your senator or representative, and request a response in writing.
• Keep your call short and to the point.

Tips for Writing your Legislator
• Identify yourself early in the email or letter.
• Give a reason for writing and refer to the specific legislation.
• Explain how the issue in question directly affects you, your community, and/or your family.
• Use as many relevant facts as possible and back them up with sources, if available.
• Be specific about the action you want your legislator to take.
• Include relevant key points, but keep the correspondence short.
• Address no more than one issue in your letter.
• On the envelope and in the salutation, address your legislator as The Honorable, Senator, Representative, or Congressman/Congresswoman.

Tips for Meeting with your Legislator
• Write or call ahead to schedule an appointment.
• Be well-prepared to present your case.
• Assume that the senator or representative knows few details about the issue.
• Identify yourself as a constituent and emphasize the fact that you are speaking for others, if appropriate.
• Consider preparing a succinct, one-page fact sheet document for your senator or representative, and in depth briefing materials for his or her staff members.
• Provide the legislator with GFWC informational materials, such as the GFWC Brochure or GFWC Mini Trifold.
• Be sympathetic to the time demands made on senators and representatives.
• If it is not possible to meet with the legislator directly, meet with a staff member.
• Do not get into arguments.
• Relate the issue to your personal situation and the impact it has on your community.
• Make your presentation short, to the point, and factual.
• Always follow up promptly after a meeting.
• Once established, keep a line of communication open by periodically writing with new information on this or other pertinent issues.

Find your senators’ or representative’s contact information at www.House.gov or www.Senate.gov.

RESOURCES

The Georgia General Assembly website provides contact information for every legislator and tracks all legislation that is introduced. Live broadcasts of the session and committee meetings are available online. www.legis.ga.gov

For information on the budget from “think tank” type organizations:
Georgia Budget Policy Institute www.gbpi.org

2020 Georgia www.2020georgia.org

For information on domestic violence and prevention:
  • Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence www.gcadv.org
  • GFWC Georgia will again hold our “Day at the Capitol” in conjunction with the GCADV

For information on legislation impacting children and families:
Families First www.familiesfirst.org

For information on health care:
Healthy Futures Georgia www.healthyfuturega.org

LEGISLATION / PUBLIC POLICY AWARDS

THE CAROLYN JONES LEGISLATIVE AWARD: (General or Junior) A silver tray will be presented annually to a club for the best overall excellence in governmental activity incorporating the GFWC/GFWC Georgia areas in legislation. This award will be given for the first time in 1999 and will be presented for the last time at the 2018(*) State Convention. CRITERIA: Report must not exceed five (5) 8 ½ x 11 typewritten pages, double spaced, using one side only. Five pieces of addenda may be included (10 pages total). This award is presented by Kathy Hanna and George Ann Hoffman in honor of Carolyn Jones for her service in the field of Public Issues and her term as President of the Georgia Legislative Forum. This award will be retired to Carolyn Jones in 2019. *Renewed in 2008 for ten (10) additional years.

A $50 award will be given one club in the nation for creativity in implementing an effective Advocacy and Public Policy program. Certificates will be presented to one State Federation in each membership category to recognize outstanding efforts in implementing an effective GFWC Advocacy and Public Policy program.

Awards will be determined by entries into the Awards Program. Each State Federation may submit one State Award cover sheet and one Club Creativity Award Entry cover sheet for the Legislation and Public Policy Advancement Area. Clubs do not submit entries to GFWC.