



## **GFWC Legislative Priorities 2016-2018**

### Family/Domestic Violence Prevention & Services

The Signature Program of GFWC is Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention. It is our mission to ensure that domestic violence awareness programming, services to survivors and community shelters receive maximum resources through legislation like the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), and the Family Violence Prevention Services Act. Child abuse prevention, teen dating violence, and elder abuse are also key components of GFWC's Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention program.

### Children Services

The GFWC Juniors' Special Program is Advocates for Children. Through this initiative our members support efforts to provide private, federal, state, and local resources to nurture and protect our nation's children.

### Women's Health

Our clubs work with their communities, the government, and the private sector to improve the quality and affordability of health care services, prescription drugs, and insurance for all. We also work to support legislation that prohibits discrimination for pre-existing conditions in determining insurance eligibility and rates, gender discrimination in insurance rating and medical research, and lifetime caps. We urge continued commitment and funding for women's health programs and insist that women be included in all phases of clinical trials in the same proportion as men, and that data for gender difference be analyzed for impact.

### Opioids

GFWC advocates for the development of opioid educational awareness programs for providers, patients, and the community. We also promote legislation and regulations to combat opioid addiction and overdose.

### Human Trafficking

GFWC works closely with the US Fund for UNICEF to End Human Trafficking, both domestically and internationally. Our members urge Congress to make this a priority.

### Campus Sexual Assault

Victims of sexual assault require specialized medical treatment and counseling services. Campus sexual assault survivors suffer high rates of PTSD, depression, and drug or alcohol abuse which can hamper both the ability to succeed in school and future employment. Educational equity for women and girls requires fair, responsive, fully developed campus sexual assault policies, knowledgeable administrators, and ultimately, an end to sexual violence on college campuses.

### Female Veterans

GFWC continues to advocate for our nation's female veterans as well as those in active duty. We urge Congress to pass legislation protecting our servicewomen and men from military sexual assault. GFWC successfully urged Congress to honor female WWII pilots by allowing them to be inurned at Arlington National Cemetery.



## **TIPS FOR MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS**

2016-2018 GFWC Legislation/Public Policy

June 2017

- ❖ A Legislator's website/newsletter/social media messages are the best way to find out about your legislator's work and interests. Research before you visit!
- ❖ When requesting a meeting, describe your organization and the purpose of the meeting: The Best Woman's Club, located in your district, would like to discuss local resources and programs to support survivors of domestic violence.
- ❖ Identifying the reason for your visit in advance provides the office the opportunity to make certain you are meeting with the right staff.
- ❖ Normal meeting times: 30 minutes for staff and 10-15 minutes for legislators. If meeting with the Legislator, then ask for a photo with the group for your website.
- ❖ Prioritize your message; don't try to cover too much. There are 50 members of The Best Woman's Club and we care about preventing domestic violence and increasing resources for survivors because it impacts children and families in our community. Get the talking points from GFWC's Legislative Action Center and/or GFWC Resolutions.
- ❖ Meet with your Legislator or staff in the local district office. Locations are listed on their websites. Often they host town halls or local community meetings. Building a relationship with the local staff is the best entre to the Legislator. Invite the district director to speak to The Best Woman's Club and learn more about his/her job and issues which are important. When the club is hosting special events, invite the local district staff to attend. When you are visiting Washington, DC, meet with your congressional delegation – two Senate offices and your member of Congress.
- ❖ Have a Leave Behind: a one pager which describes the issue, gives relevant information, includes an ASK, and also includes a brief description of The Best Woman's Club and the best local contact.
- ❖ Use your resources: check federal department websites, non-profit organizations which are issue based – such as education or conservation, and do your homework before meeting with elected officials.
- ❖ Leave enough time for them to ask questions, and enjoy. This is your civic duty!

## News & Notes - December 7, 2017 **Legislative Action Corner**

Members of Congress have returned to Washington to complete negotiations on major pieces of legislation before the end of the year. **TO DO LIST:**

- Provide FY 2018 Federal Appropriations – current funding expires December 8;
- Set spending levels for FY 2018 and FY 2019 for defense and domestic programs;
- Tax Reform;
- Raise the Debt Ceiling;
- Stabilize the health insurance market;
- Children’s Health Insurance Program reauthorization;
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program reauthorization; and
- Determine Immigration solutions for the Dreamers, undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children.

## News & Notes - December 14, 2017 **GFWC Leaders Go to Washington**

Last week, First Vice President Marian St.Clair, Secretary Suellen Brazil, and Director of Junior Clubs Jolie Frankfurth met with congressional representatives on Capitol Hill to advocate for GFWC’s legislative priorities. These discussions allowed our leaders to present the Federation’s views on a variety of matters relevant to GFWC’s Resolutions such as tax reform and the protection of abused women and children.

During the group’s presentation, Marian St.Clair focused on two proposed tax reforms of particular interest to clubwomen. Namely, she expressed GFWC’s support for the Universal Charitable Deduction and urged that current tax deductions for medical expenses remain in place. “It seems especially unjust when families are financially challenged through no fault of their own by medical expenses to take away deductions that can provide some relief. Alzheimer’s disease, cancer, diabetes, and many other illnesses cause tremendous emotional and physical stress, and these families need our support,” stated St.Clair.

Director of Junior Clubs Jolie Frankfurth powerfully advocated for increased funding for programs that address domestic and sexual abuse. Federal support for these programs is needed to supply lifesaving emergency shelters, rape crisis centers, child abuse treatment, and educational programming. “As a former educator on a college campus, I have seen firsthand the positive effects these programs can have on young women,” voiced Frankfurth.

The main topic about which Suellen Brazil spoke was the negative impact firearms can have in domestic violence altercations. “The strengthening of background checks and passage of the Fix NICS Act of 2017 would significantly decrease the opportunity for an abuser to legally obtain a gun. How? By ensuring that state and local domestic violence protective orders are entered into the federal database. This would help address the deadly connection between domestic violence fatalities and an abuser’s ability to access firearms,” stated Brazil during the meetings.

Following their day in Washington, all three leaders praised the warm reception they received from congressional representatives and expressed their hope that additional clubwomen would become active advocates. As Marian said, “I want all of our members to stay engaged with current issues and speak up. Each of us can have an impact on the future, if not through visits to the Hill, then via the GFWC Legislative Action Center, or by just picking up the phone.”

## News & Notes - December 21, 2017 **Legislative Corner**

### **Tax Reform Bill Dominates Rush to Holidays**

In the final days of the 2017 legislative session, Congress completed action on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (H.R. 1, H. Rept 115-466). Here are the following provisions affecting charitable giving:

- The bill maintains charitable deductions but increases standard deduction (\$12,000 for individuals; \$24,000 for joint filers), so it is anticipated that fewer taxpayers will itemize. Our concern is that research indicates that donors will not contribute as much if deductions are eliminated;
- The measure increases the cap on deductions, from 50 percent to as much as 60 percent of Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), which hopefully will incentivize high-income donors to give more to charity;
- The bill repeals the statutory charitable mileage rate of 14 cents per mile and provides instead that the standard mileage rate used for determining the charitable contribution deduction shall be a rate which takes into account the variable costs of operating an automobile. The IRS will set the new rate to be used when providing volunteer services; and
- The bill allows tax deductions for medical expenses, returning to the 7.5 percent threshold of Adjusted Gross Income for tax years 2017 and 2018. Afterwards the rate will return to 10 percent unless Congress acts.



# GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS

## Tax Reform

12-6-2017

As the House-Senate Conference Committee begins work on reconciling tax reform bills (H.R. 1), GFWC urges Congress to support a Universal Charitable Deduction and work to make certain that tax reform does not adversely affect charities, our communities, and the millions of families that we serve through our volunteer organization.

Current Law: a taxpayer may claim an itemized deduction for charitable contributions. The deduction is limited to a percentage of an individual's adjusted gross income and varies based on the type of gift. Please be mindful of the following concerns as you finalize tax reform legislation:

- Support a Universal Charitable Deduction - Increasing the standard deduction will have unintended consequences of decreasing charitable giving; provide a way for all taxpayers to obtain deductions for charitable contributions;
- Support increasing Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limits to 60 percent (Senate bill) to incentivize high-income donors to give more to charity;
- Support increasing Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limits from 50 percent to 60 percent (both House and Senate bills) to incentivize high-income donors to give more to charity;
- Increase the charitable 14 cents mileage rate deduction for volunteers, and at the very least provide an adjustment based on inflation;
- Allow tax deductions for medical expenses, returning to the 7.5 percent threshold (Senate bill); and
- Create a new, non-refundable tax credit for working family caregivers.

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The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) is an international women's organization dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service. With more than 80,000 members in affiliated clubs in all fifty states, the territories, and a dozen countries, GFWC members work in their own communities to encourage civic involvement, preserve natural resources, advance education, promote healthy lifestyles, and support the arts. GFWC is distinguished from other nonprofit organizations in that clubs have the freedom to shape programs and projects that suit local communities and interests, while benefiting from the expertise and support at district, state, region, national, and international levels.

During 2015-2016, GFWC clubwomen completed 257,590 projects and logged 11,273,890 volunteer hours. GFWC clubwomen also donated over \$73 million to charitable causes.



## GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS

### **Guns Only Make Domestic Violence Worse**

#### **Strengthen Background Checks - Fix NICS Act of 2017 (H.R. 4477, S. 2135)**

Having a gun in the home increases the risk of intimate partner homicide by at least 5 times, and data indicate that guns are the weapon of choice for domestic violence homicides. The federal background check system is only as good as the information that is provided to it. Approximately 700,000 domestic violence protective orders reside in state databases that are not in any federal database, and countless more protective orders are issued at the local level, but never entered into state databases. Similarly, there are significant record gaps in the number of misdemeanor domestic violence convictions and the records submitted to National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). Poor record keeping often leads to domestic abusers erroneously gaining access to guns. We must ensure that federal and state authorities comply with existing law and accurately report relevant criminal history records to NICS.

*We urge you to support the Fix NICS Act, a bipartisan, bi-cameral bill that would address the deadly connection between domestic violence fatalities and an abuser's ability to access firearms.*

The Fix NICS Act:

- Directs federal funding to make certain that domestic violence records are submitted into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) accurately and promptly;
- Provides federal grant incentives to states to improve their reporting to NICS;
- Penalizes federal agencies that fail to report relevant criminal records to the FBI;
- Creates a Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Initiative to focus state efforts specifically on domestic violence records; and
- Requires the Bureau of Justice Statistics to report to Congress within 180 days of enactment the number of times that a bump stock has been used in the commission of a crime in the United States.

There is simply no excuse for the ongoing negligence of criminal history reporting into the National Instant Criminal background Check System (NICS).

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#### **Oppose Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act (H.R. 38)**

Various state lawmakers have enacted strong, commonsense protections to prevent domestic violence homicides in states and localities across the nation, and such protections to prevent domestic violence must not be undermined by federally mandating concealed carry reciprocity. The pending Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act, H.R. 38, undermines the safety of victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking by destabilizing protections for victims of abuse and allowing domestic violence offenders to follow their victims across state lines with loaded, concealed firearms.

Currently, each state determines who can legally carry concealed, loaded firearms in public. Many states have enacted strong laws to protect victims and survivors from gun-enabled abuse. The pending bill would force every state to accept other states' concealed carry permits, making it easier for abusers to threaten, harass, and kill their intimate partners with a firearm. This bill certainly makes it harder for law enforcement to protect victims of domestic violence and makes our communities less safe.



## GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS

### Provide FY 2018 Federal Funds to Combat Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Together, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund and related programs create and support comprehensive responses to the needs of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Federal funds for these programs have enhanced federal, tribal, state, and local responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, and support lifesaving emergency shelters, rape crisis centers, child abuse treatment, services for survivors, and prevention and education programs.

#### Violence Against Women FY 2018 Appropriations

We urge Congress to provide:

- \$215 million for the VAWA Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors (STOP) state formula grant program which supports coordinated community responses as well as specialized services;
- \$35 million for the Sexual Assault Services Program which funds state sexual assault coalitions and local rape crisis centers, with a focus on male, female, and child sexual assault victims and services;
- \$49.43 million for the Rape Prevention and Education Program, in addition to directing CDC to spend at least 75 percent of the funds for state and local programs to meet the growing demand;
- \$36 million for Rural Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Enforcement;
- \$20 million for Violence on College Campuses Program; and
- \$5 million for the Prevention of Elder Abuse Grant Program.

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#### Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)

FVPSA funds emergency shelters, crisis lines, counseling, victim assistance, and other vital services for over 1.3 million domestic violence victims and their children each year. We urge Congress to provide \$156 million, including \$5 million to supplement existing funding for Native American Tribes and Tribal Organizations.

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#### Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund

We urge Congress to release at least \$4.62 billion from the Crime Victims Fund for programs to serve victims of crime, including state formula victim assistance grants. VOCA uses non-taxpayer money from the Crime Victims Fund for programs that directly service victims of crime, including state formula victim assistance grants. These funds, which come from fines paid by federal criminals, support services to 4 million victims of all types of crimes annually, through 4,400 direct service agencies such as domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and child abuse treatment programs. VOCA funds should be released at a maximum level, with a tribal funding stream to address the devastating needs on tribal lands.

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#### 2015-2016 GFWC Statistical Totals for Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention

Club Projects Completed: 10,253

Dollars Donated: \$1,613,779

Volunteer Hours: 279,009

In-Kind Donations: \$2,013,505



# GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS

## INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1890, 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. With more than 80,000 members in affiliated clubs in all fifty states and a dozen countries, GFWC members work in their own communities to encourage civic involvement, preserve natural resources, advance education, promote healthy lifestyles, and support the arts. GFWC is distinguished from other nonprofit organizations in that clubs have the freedom to shape programs and projects that suit local communities and interests, while benefiting from the expertise and support at district, state, regional, and national levels.

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## CHARITABLE WORK

GFWC's Community Service Programs and Special Programs focus on major issues that affect our communities daily. They are structured to enable clubs to harness the vast resources of their membership and execute projects designed to address the needs of their individual communities. Two of GFWC's main areas of concern are domestic violence prevention and advocacy on behalf of children. Clubwomen support victims of domestic violence by promoting projects that support and cultivate work with national and local domestic violence and abuse organizations. Clubwomen advocate for children by improving public schools, working to end human trafficking, and supporting the fight against childhood cancer.

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## LEADERSHIP

GFWC is represented on the national level by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors. The Executive Committee consists of seven dedicated leaders from across the country who were elected by GFWC members to serve two-year terms. During her administration, the International President lives at GFWC Headquarters in Washington, D.C. GFWC International President Sheila E. Shea has been an active member of the Federation for over 44 years. During her administration, President Shea has focused on promoting GFWC's legislative initiatives, empowering women, and encouraging the spirit of volunteerism.

*International President*

Sheila E. Shea

*President-elect*

Mary Ellen Brock

*Second Vice President*

Debra Strahanoski

*Treasurer*

Wendy Carriker

*First Vice President*

Marian St.Clair

*Secretary*

Suellen Brazil

*Director of Junior Clubs*

Jolie R. Frankfurth

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## MISSION STATEMENT

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# GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS

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