



General Federation of Women's Clubs of Massachusetts

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GFWC Advancement Guide Area: Legislation/Public Policy

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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. Goals of this Advancement Area include:

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

THE GFWC LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER – National Issues

GFWC's Legislative Action Center is an exciting policy tool that allows members to stay informed on national legislation, spread the word on important issues, and take action by contacting your elected officials. In addition, GFWC is able to track and promote national legislation that is relevant to the mission and scope of GFWC Resolutions and member interests. This is a vital piece in promoting GFWC as a national leader on the major issues that face our nation. To access the Legislative Action Center, click here: <http://cgrcengage.com/gfwc/home?0>

BUILDING THE GFWC BRAND:

Recognize the Red

GFWC's advocacy efforts should also help to raise awareness of GFWC as an organization. To maximize this awareness, GFWC is launching the "Recognize the Red" campaign.

- Any time a GFWC member engages in written correspondence with her legislator, she should use the color RED, the color of GFWC's official flower, the red rose, for her signature.
- 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) in RED.
- For traditional letters, the member should write her return address in RED and put a big check mark in RED on the outside of the envelope.

Eventually, when a legislator or legislative aide sees a red signature or a red return address, she will recognize that he/she is again hearing from a GFWC member.

ADVOCACY – MAKING IT LOCAL

Advocacy and educating our members and the public about public policy issues affecting our communities is the core of our efforts. Remember - clubs must be nonpartisan in their outreach efforts. 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.

Advocacy Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- Advocate for various bills, issues, and ballot measures especially those supporting GFWC of MA Resolutions.
- Take action by contacting elected officials through the Legislative Action Center
- 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 candidates and elected officials on GFWC of MA Resolutions. Send them a copy

DON'T

- Endorse or oppose a candidate or political party.
- 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 issues germane to GFWC and GFWC of Massachusetts Resolutions.

GFWC & GFWC of MA RESOLUTIONS

GFWC Resolutions are national or international in scope and germane to the work or interests of GFWC members. In Massachusetts we have Resolutions many being based on the GFWC ones. These can be used to not only guide advocacy, but club programs and activities as well. These Resolutions address issues such as conservation, education, women's health, children's welfare, the United Nations, crime prevention, public safety, and support of the arts.

WHAT CAN YOUR CLUB DO?

- Educate club members on GFWC of MA Resolutions.
- Encourage your club members to subscribe to the Legislative Action Center.
- Read and discuss Resolutions
- Send a club delegate to meet with your elected officials about club positions on public policy issues.

HOW CLUBS CAN BECOME EDUCATED ON ISSUES

- Establish a club legislative committee or appoint a Legislation/Public Policy chairman to follow national policy issues.
- Create a news clipping service on issues of interest to members. Ask members to find articles and email them to club members. Use the articles to foster discussion and debate about public policy issues at meetings.
- Institute a series of member study groups to learn about public policy issues affecting their families and community.
- Plan a club program on how bills become laws or how to communicate ideas and opinions to legislators.
- Participate in issue-awareness programs and nonpartisan issue panels and forums in your community.
- Create club programs to educate members and the community of government at all levels as well as the responsibilities of elected and appointed officials.
- Develop a community public policy directory listing public officials and their staff, government agencies, and other civic and advocacy organizations.

HOW CLUBS CAN ADVOCATE

- Decide on an issue of importance to all members.
- Seek out information.
- Hold a letter-writing campaign. Sign your names and write your GFWC affiliation in **RED** ink.
- 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. Bring information you can leave with the legislative staff.
- 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.

Please go to <https://www.gfwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-20-Legislation-and-Public-Policy.pdf> for more information.