

## **GFWC LEGISLATION/PUBLIC POLICY NOVEMBER 2015**

### **LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER**

GFWC is a NON-PARTISAN organization, advocating for universal issues germane to the organization without a political bent. Our goals are to educate members about policy issues and pending legislation, while mobilizing members to advocate for GFWC policy priorities.

The GFWC **LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER** is an incredible tool to educate our members on important issues. Not only can we send legislative alerts, we can also send updates to keep our members informed.

Here are the six easy steps to sign up for the GFWC Legislative Action Center. Start making a difference by

#### ***Living the Volunteer Spirit!***

1. Go to [www.GFWC.org](http://www.GFWC.org).
2. Click on 'What We Do'.
3. Click on 'Public Policy'.
4. Scroll down the page to the words 'Legislative Action Center' in the picture of the dome and click on the picture.
5. On the right side scroll down to 'Subscribe to our mailing list' and click on the word 'GO' in the blue square.
6. Type in the requested information and click on the word REGISTER in the blue square.

You are all set. Check on the current issues and send your opinions directly to your own legislators.

### **2015 GFWC Region Meetings Resolutions Workshop**

Have you ever seen something on television and said, "Isn't there a law against that?"

Or seen something happen and said, "They should pass a law against that."

Who's 'they'? It's me – and you – and you. It's all of us – just one of us alone makes a small ripple in a puddle but if we put all our voices together we will make an ocean tidal wave – headed right for our legislators.

And we may not get it done with just one call or one email or one project. We need to stick with what we want until our message becomes a reality.

Think about the suffragettes – they saw that women were not treated like individuals – they were really property of their husbands. They had no way to voice their opinions – to elect the people they thought could represent their wishes. It wasn't until the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment was ratified in 1920 that women received the right to vote – **144** years after the Declaration of Independence was signed.

But let's be more current in our thinking. Let's go to 1968 – things were pretty progressive then – women's lib had already started. Guess what? Maybe not - here are some things a women could not do in 1968:

1. **Get a divorce with some degree of ease.** Before the No Fault Divorce law in 1969, spouses had to show the faults of the other party, such as adultery, and could easily be overturned by recrimination.
2. **Be acknowledged in the Boston Marathon.** Women could not don their running shoes until 1972!
3. **Get a credit card.** Until the Equal Credit Opportunity Act in 1974, women were not able to apply for credit. In 1975, the first women's bank was opened.
4. **Report cases of sexual harassment in the workplace.** The first time that a court recognized sexual harassment in the workplace was in 1977 and it wasn't until 1980 that sexual harassment was officially defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

5. **Keep her job if she was pregnant.** Until the Pregnancy Discrimination Act in 1978, women could be fired from their workplace for being pregnant.

And if you think 1968 was a long time ago – how about these:

6. **Refuse to have sex with her husband.** The mid 70s saw most states recognize marital rape and in 1993 it became criminalized in all 50 states. Nevertheless, marital rape is still often treated differently to other forms of rape in some states even today.
7. **Compete as a boxer in the Olympics.** It wasn't until the 2012 London Olympics that women could compete in boxing in the Olympics.

Every one of these issues – and so many more – came about through grass roots organizations and groups of concerned citizens – just like GFWC. One person wanted to right a wrong and told someone else who got more people involved – and found a way to get lots of people involved – the noise to legislators became so loud, they had to pay attention – after all it's their constituents who keep them in office.

*How can you make a difference about something you think is important??*

**The first thing you need to do is to join the GFWC Legislative Alert.**

A GFWC Legislative Alert keeps us informed on legislation pending and needed on the issues that are important to us. You have the immediate opportunity to share your opinions directly with **your** Congressional Representatives and Senators. And you can say it as a member of GFWC. All Alerts sent out for action are covered by a GFWC Resolution, which are our position on issues. There is currently an Alert that came out recently concerning the attempt to pass legislation allowing triple trailers on all national roads – that means interstates in every state. The amendment has been tacked onto a \$55 billion transportation and infrastructure bill. The bill has already passed the House and has been sent to the Senate for passage during the current legislative session running from September to December. This is an issue that both Pennsylvania and New Jersey federations have been fighting for years. Think about a truck with THREE trailers - each 55 feet in length barreling across Interstate 80 or up and down Interstate 55 in the rain or snow or ice. It's scary enough when the weather is clear.

**The second way is to write a RESOLUTION. Easy to do. Let's take a pretend idea: Make Federation Day a National Holiday.**

**Here is a sample resolution:**

WHEREAS, 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,

WHEREAS, GFWC members transform lives each day, not simply with monetary donations, but with hands-on tangible projects that provide immediate impact, and;

WHEREAS, Since 1890, GFWC's impact has been felt throughout communities across the United States and the globe, therefore

RESOLVED, THAT the General Federation of Women's Clubs urges its member clubs to contact their legislators and request that April 24 be designated a national holiday in recognition of its past, present and future commitment to community service.

### **OK it's written – now what?**

1. Bring it to your club for a vote.
2. After it passes send the resolution to your state's Resolutions Chairman. If there is no Resolutions Chairmen, send it directly to your state president. Make sure you adhere to any deadlines for submission.
3. After it is reviewed by the State Resolutions Committee, the resolution will be presented for adoption at the State Convention.
4. Once adopted, it will be sent by the state to the GFWC Resolutions Committee.
5. After it is reviewed by the GFWC Resolutions Committee, the resolution will be presented for adoption at the GFWC Convention.

Granted this is a complex process and it can take as much as two years to get from you to the club to the state to GFWC. But it is worth the effort to be able to get the shouting of GFWC members behind you.

One thing to remember – if time is critical, you can contact a member of the GFWC Resolutions Committee and ask them to bring your club's resolution to the committee directly. This committee has the right to present a resolution for adoption. Be sure that the resolution is national in scope and germane to the workings of GFWC.

Here are some issues that are facing us today that you may want to address:

- Road rules for Self-Driving Vehicles.
- Establishing a mandate for hacked companies to disclose breaches and how soon the disclosure must be.
- Elimination of billing of sexual assault victims by hospitals
  - Reports say victims of sexual assaults were being billed for medical treatment - with possible legislation relative to emergency room procedures and administration of the Crime Victims Reparations Fund.

### **If you care and make the effort, here's what can happen:**

1. 1898: GFWC unanimously passed a resolution against child labor. With the help of clubwoman Jane Addams (1860-1935), child labor became a major area of concern for the Federation. In 1901, Addams headed the Federation's Child Labor Committee to work for the maintenance and improvement of child labor laws.
2. 1899: GFWC's Chicago Woman's Club supported the juvenile court law, the first ever to be passed in the United States. This law became the model for all subsequent juvenile court laws, many of which were passed at the insistence of GFWC clubwomen. Julia Lathrop led this club effort and was appointed by President William Howard Taft to head the Children's Bureau in 1912.
3. 1906: GFWC member Alice Lahey (from NJ) spearheaded a letter and telegram writing campaign, which was essential to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. Dr. Harvey Wiley, the first chief of the Pure Food Bureau, attributed the bill's passing to GFWC and stated, "Trust them [GFWC] to put the ball over the goal line every time."
4. 1916: GFWC worked with the Children's Bureau to promote National Baby Week. Over 2,000 clubs participated by focusing on infant and maternal mortality, birth registration, and public health facilities. The Federation's efforts resulted in the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act (1921), which advanced maternal education.
5. 1990s: GFWC actively supported the passage of the Violence Against Women Act; the Americans With Disabilities Act; the Family and Medical Leave Act; and legislation supporting handgun control.

### **Are you the next Jane Addams, Julia Lathrop, or Alice Lahey?**