



2021 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES/POSITIONS OF CONCERN GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA

CONSERVATION AND BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

January 14, 2021

The Garden Club of Virginia (GCV) is an active association of 48 Clubs, whose members together form a group of more than 3,500 civic leaders from around the Commonwealth. Guided by its mission statement, the Garden Club of Virginia considers the following positions, budget requests and bills currently before the 2021 Session of the Virginia General Assembly commensurate with its mission.

Therefore, the Garden Club of Virginia:

Supports Legislative Action/Initiatives to Address Climate Change and Recurrent Flooding

GCV supports efforts to promote control of greenhouse gas emissions as well as investment in coastal resiliency and flood prevention. The effects of climate change include increased air and water temperatures and increased intensity of storms and rainfall. Rising sea levels, a result of climate change, pose a huge threat to coastal Virginia. The increased level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is also causing the waters of our rivers and the Chesapeake Bay to become more acidic and therefore, harmful to marine life.

GCV continues to support the participation of the Commonwealth in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to limit carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the power sector and provide funds for mitigation efforts.

Supports Legislation to Promote Clean Energy

GCV supports legislation that encourages sensitively sited development of solar, wind and other forms of clean renewable energy in the Commonwealth. This includes support for small scale distributed solar and investments in energy efficiency as the most cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. GCV also supports the electrification of school buses and encourages giving tax breaks for the installation of publicly accessible EV Charging Stations. Members of the General Assembly are urged to encourage regional efforts to allocate a higher percentage of regional transportation revenues to transit and rail.

Supports Energy Legislation that Conserves and Protects our Natural Resources

GCV supports the protection of the environment including public and private lands from risky fossil fuel development. The strength of existing environmental protections must be maintained or enhanced as the Commonwealth's economy and energy needs progress.

Continued

Supports Efforts to Protect and Improve Water Quality

GCV is concerned about the risks of toxic materials polluting our waterways and drinking water.

1. Supports Managing Polluted Runoff to Protect Virginia's Waterways

The Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) provides matching funds for localities for stormwater improvement projects. The Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost Share Program offers financial and technical support to farmers to implement practices to restore and improve water quality such as stream exclusion systems and cover crops.

2. Supports Legislative Action to Enhance Localities' Authority to Capitalize on the Water-Quality Benefits of Trees

The General Assembly should give localities the authority to increase tree replacement minimums to meet polluted runoff and water quality goals. The 2018 General Assembly allowed localities within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to adopt ordinances requiring the planting or replacement of trees affected by development. But, the ruling limited tree canopy requirements to 20% in certain residential parcels and 10% for commercial parcels. Trees are a cost-effective way to help absorb polluted storm water run-off and excess agricultural nutrients.

Supports Legislative Action that Protects and Enhances Virginia State Parks

GCV has a long history of supporting Virginia's State Parks, as they provide not only recreation but environmental education, land conservation and water quality protection as well as the protection of flora and fauna habitat. The GCV urges members of the General Assembly to fully fund budget requests for state parks.

Supports Legislative Action to Strengthen Land Conservation

GCV strives for preservation and beautification of open spaces, historic areas, and environmentally sensitive habitats by promoting responsible, effective land use planning. GCV recommends that the General Assembly secure funding for Virginia Land Conservation Foundation at \$20 million annually, including \$2 million annually for Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund. GCV supports removing the cap of \$5 million per project for Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit projects (HRTC) and opposes any further efforts to cap or weaken the HRTC programs. GCV also supports increasing biking and walking pathways throughout the Commonwealth, ensuring that every Virginian has access to parks, trails and green spaces.

Supports Vigilance over the Placement/Replacement of Billboards

The Board of Directors of the GCV recommends continued vigilance over the placement/replacement permitting of large roadside advertising, including LED advertising.

Supports Environmental Education

GCV promotes funding for positions under the Education Secretary that oversee coordination of school programs for environmental education so that Virginia students will graduate from high school knowing the importance of conservation and environmental stewardship.

Other Issues of Concern

Supports Continuing the Ban on Uranium Mining

GCV continues to strongly support the moratorium on uranium mining in Virginia until the Commonwealth is assured that the mining can be performed safely and that financial resources are available to fund sufficiently long-term regulatory oversight systems to conserve and protect Virginia's natural resources.

Continued

Supports Legislation Encouraging Civic Planting

GCV supports enabling communities and citizens in urban areas in the planting, building and caring for their green spaces and public landscapes with an emphasis on native plants.

Supports Legislation to Limit Single Use Plastics and to Ban Balloon Releases

GCV supports banning the use of expanded polystyrene food service containers. GCV also supports amending Virginia's current law to make the intentional release of any balloons illegal and subject to a civil penalty, excepting federal or state agency purposes (i.e., weather balloons.)