

**2019 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES/POSITIONS OF CONCERN
GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA
CONSERVATION AND BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE
January 30, 2019**

The Garden Club of Virginia (GCV) is an active association of 47 Clubs, whose members together form a group of more than 3,300 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 2019 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 supports the effort of the Commonwealth to join 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.

GCV also supports investments in energy efficiency as the most cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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.

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 Legislation to Safely Dispose of Coal Ash

GCV encourages the safe disposal of coal ash from ponds. This would be a combination of recycling the ash for use in concrete and disposal in modern, lined landfills. (This is standard practice in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia). Doing so will provide a safe solution that boosts the Commonwealth's economy; benefits local businesses; and protects the environment, and our communities for future generations.

2) Supports Managing Polluted Runoff to Protect Virginia's Waterways

The Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) provides matching funds for localities for stormwater improvement projects. \$50 million in addition to \$20 million in fiscal year 2019. 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. \$100 million based on the Agricultural Needs Assessment.

3) 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. The GCV recommends that the General Assembly secure funding for Virginia Land Conservation Foundation at \$20 million annually, to include \$2 million annually for Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund. Remove the cap of \$5 million per project for Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit projects (HRTC) and oppose any further efforts to cap or weaken the HRTC programs.

Billboards

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

Opposes Oil and Gas Drilling and Seismic Testing off the Coast of Virginia

GCV opposes seismic testing, offshore drilling and drilling infrastructure in Virginia Coastal waters. The GCV encourages legislation opposing any offshore drilling activity and repeal Virginia Code section 67-300 A and B that currently supports drilling 50 miles off the Virginia Coast. We encourage the General Assembly to strengthen policies that protect Virginia's coastal zone from the risks associated with offshore drilling, including Virginia's fisheries, marine life, coastal habitats, and wetlands.

Supports Legislative Action Allowing for Control of Proliferation of Disposable Plastic Bags

GCV has consistently supported legislation to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags because of the negative impacts on the environment.

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 system to conserve and protect Virginia's natural resources.

Supports Legislation Encouraging Civic Planting

Supports Governor Northam's Budget for Natural Resources

GCV supports Governor Northam's appropriate funding proposals for the protection of our water, land and air quality. We support the increase to 2% of the General Budget for these conservation initiatives.