



*Our mission is to conserve the gifts of nature, to restore and preserve historic landscapes of the Commonwealth, to cultivate the knowledge and love of gardening, and to lead future generations to build on this heritage.*

## **GCV Advocacy for 2023 Legislative Issues**

Conservation and Beautification Committee

**January 3, 2023**

The Garden Club of Virginia (GCV) is an active association of 48 Clubs whose members form a group of more than 3,500 civic leaders from around the Commonwealth. Guided by its mission statement (above), the GCV recommends attention to the following issues currently before the 2023 Session of the Virginia General Assembly:

### **Climate Change and Recurrent Flooding**

The effects of climate change include increased air and water temperatures and increased intensity of storms and rainfall. Resultant rising sea levels pose a huge threat to coastal Virginia. Increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere cause the waters of our rivers and the Chesapeake Bay to become more acidic and harmful to marine life.

The GCV supports efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions and to invest in coastal resiliency and flood prevention. GCV continues its support of the Commonwealth's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to limit carbon dioxide emissions from the power sector and provide funds for mitigation efforts.

### **Clean Energy**

The GCV supports legislation that encourages sensitively sited development of solar, wind and other forms of clean renewable energy in the Commonwealth, including small scale distributed solar and investments in energy efficiency as the most cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Members of the General Assembly are urged to encourage regional efforts to allocate a higher percentage of regional transportation revenues to mass transit and rail.

### **Conservation and Protection of our Natural Resources**

The GCV supports protection of public and private lands from negatively impactful fossil fuel development. The strength of existing environmental protections must be maintained and enhanced as the Commonwealth's economic and energy needs progress.

### **Protection and Improvement of Water Quality**

The GCV is concerned about toxic pollutants in our waterways and drinking water and supports the identification and disclosure of PFAS and other chemicals of concern in order to eliminate them from our environment and drinking water. The GCV also encourages funding to manage polluted runoff to protect Virginia's waterways.

Virginia lies between the Chesapeake Bay and the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds, the two largest estuaries in the United States. The GCV supports the need for study and effective planning that would ensure the protection and restoration of these and other critical watersheds.

## **State Parks and Regional Recreational Trails**

The GCV has a long history of supporting Virginia's State Parks. Parks provide not only recreation but environmental education, land conservation, water quality protection, and protection of flora and fauna. The GCV urges full budget funding for maintaining and improving state parks and encouraging their equitable use by all citizens.

The GCV also supports increasing biking and walking pathways throughout the Commonwealth, ensuring that every Virginian has access to parks, trails and green spaces through dedicated funding and green spaces.

## **Land Conservation**

The GCV strives for preservation and beautification of open spaces, historic areas, and environmentally sensitive habitats by promoting responsible, sustainable land use. The GCV recommends that the General Assembly establish a source of ongoing annual dedicated funding of the Virginia Land Conservation Grant Programs for preservation of land, farmland and battlefields, and protection of the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HRTC).

## **Environmental Education**

The GCV promotes funding that oversees coordination of programs for environmental education at all educational levels so that Virginia citizens know the importance of conservation, beautification, and environmental stewardship.

## **Mining**

At present, Virginia has no effective regulations controlling hard rock mining - the extraction of minerals (i.e., gold, pyrites). A large number of abandoned mines need reclamation, and without regulation pose a threat to public health, water quality and supply, and the general environment. Until the General Assembly creates an effective regulatory framework, the GCV opposes the issuance of new permits for large-scale mining, and supports the well-regulated reclamation of abandoned mines.

The GCV strongly supports 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.

## **Civic and Community Planting**

The GCV supports enacting state statutes and local ordinances enabling communities and citizens in the creation, planting and caring for green spaces and public landscapes, and champions the preferential use of native plants and trees which support pollinators and native wildlife. While all plants and trees sequester carbon, the GCV opposes the use of non-native invasives which threaten natural areas and wildlife and recognizes the cost-effective benefits of native trees to clean our air and filter our water. The GCV supports increasing the urban tree canopy to cool our cities and combat climate change.

## **Single Use Plastics**

The GCV supports banning the use of single use plastics.

## **Viewshed Preservation**

The Board of Directors of the GCV recommends continued vigilance over the placement/replacement/permitting of large roadside advertising, including LED advertising. This includes the placement and construction of large power lines.