



The Garden Club of Virginia exists to celebrate the beauty of the land, to conserve the gifts of nature and to challenge future generations to build on this heritage.

GCV Positions on 2022 Legislative Issues

Conservation and Beautification Committee

January 11, 2022

The Garden Club of Virginia (GCV) is an active association of 48 Clubs whose members form a group of more than 3,400 civic leaders from around the Commonwealth. Guided by its mission statement (above), the GCV considers the following positions, budget requests and bills currently before the 2022 Session of the Virginia General Assembly.

The Garden Club of Virginia supports:

Legislative Action/Initiatives to Address 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 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 (CO₂) emissions from the power sector and provide funds for mitigation efforts.

Legislation to Promote 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 transit and rail.

Energy Legislation that Conserves and Protects 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 economy and energy needs progress.

Efforts to Protect and Improve Water Quality

The GCV is concerned about the risks of toxic pollutants in our waterways and drinking water.

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.

Legislation to study and control the presence of PFAS in Virginia's water supply

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), known as “forever chemicals” are industrial toxins, present in many consumer products, that are a threat to public health. The GCV supports the identification and disclosure of PFAS and other chemicals used in manufacturing with an aim to eliminating them from our environment and drinking water.

Legislation to increase localities' authority to capitalize on the water quality benefits of trees.

Trees are a cost-effective way to absorb polluted storm water runoff and excess agricultural nutrients. The 2018 General Assembly allowed localities within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to adopt ordinances requiring the planting or replacement of trees affected by development, and it should give localities the authority to increase tree replacement minimums to meet polluted runoff and water quality goals. The GCV also strongly encourages the planting of native trees, both deciduous and evergreen.

Legislative Action that Protects and Enhances Virginia State Parks and Regional Recreational Trails

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

Legislative Action to Strengthen Land Conservation

The 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 the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation at \$40 million annually. The GCV supports removing the cap on Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit projects (HRTC) and opposes any further efforts to cap or weaken the HRTC programs.

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.

Issues of Continuing Concern

Ban on Uranium Mining

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.

Encouraging Civic Planting

The GCV supports enabling communities and citizens in municipal areas in the planting, building and caring for their green spaces and public landscapes with an emphasis on native plants and alternatives to invasive species.

Limiting Single Use Plastics and Banning Balloon Releases

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

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.

Protecting the Viewshed of the Lower James River

There is a permit pending before the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to build transmission towers across the historic lower James River, spoiling this iconic landscape of Virginia's Historic Triangle. The harm the unlawfully permitted project has caused to nationally significant natural, historic, and cultural resources requires that the ACOE reevaluate Dominion Power's proposed route and consider alternatives. These alternatives would be less expensive and not invasive of the historic resource. The GCV recommends that our state and federal legislators ask that the ACOE, as ordered by the U.S. Court of Appeals, fully evaluate alternatives to protect the integrity of the James River.