

GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS



GFWC BYLAWS COMMITTEE AUTUMN 2023 NEWSLETTER

Barbara D. Whitaker, PRP, Chairman

2022-2024 GFWC BYLAWS COMMITTEE

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A REMINDER

State federations, GFWC Committees, the GFWC Executive Committee, and the GFWC Board of Directors may propose amendments to the GFWC Bylaws. Individual members, clubs, and GFWC Regions may not submit proposed amendments. Proposed amendments are submitted to the Bylaws Committee Chairman by NOVEMBER 1.

When proposing an amendment, please state the Article(s) of the GFWC Bylaws and any section or subsection where the amendment is to be made. State exactly what is to be removed, added, or otherwise changed and how the bylaw should read if the amendment is adopted. Give the reason why this change is proposed. If the proposal comes from a state federation, include the pages of minutes of the meeting where this proposal was presented to the delegates and voted upon, along with verification by the state president and state recording secretary.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

As with other standing committees, the members serving on a committee may change, but the committee's work does not. Preparing a good old-fashioned hard copy folder or notebook of your committee's work, along with a USB flash drive or access to a cloud storage folder of the current committee documents, is advisable. There is no need for the incoming committee to repeat the outgoing committee's work. Rather, they should be building on that work. A hard copy is advisable as computer programs change, the new member's computer may not have a USB port, and "The Cloud" may be inaccessible due to some glitch. However, if technology does work, it saves time by not having to reproduce the documents by hand.

SHOULD IT BE IN THE BYLAWS?

The bylaws of an organization, be it local, state, or international, is the document that contains its own basic rules as an organization rather than rules of parliamentary procedure. They define the primary characteristics of the organization, prescribe how it functions, and include all rules that are considered so important by the group that they cannot be changed without prior notice, require a

sufficiently large majority to amend, and cannot be suspended unless provided for in the bylaws under specified conditions. Administrative details should not be in the bylaws but in the Standing Rules. These are items like how much an officer may be reimbursed for attending a function as a representative of the organization, whether a fine will be imposed for not wearing a name badge at a meeting and what that fine will be, or what kind of refreshments may be served at a meeting. Specific how-to details, such as where the switch is to turn on the microphones or the order in which the tables are arranged in the room for the holiday event, belong in a procedure manual. This manual should be passed along year to year and updated regularly.

BUT WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT THAT WAY

Sometimes, the rule is not written anywhere, but that's how the organization has always performed a duty or placed an item on the agenda. That's called a custom. Should it be discovered that a standing rule or bylaw conflicts with the custom, the bylaw or standing rule takes precedence over the custom, and the custom is out of order and must not be followed. Suppose the group would rather do it the way they always have. In that case, they must amend the bylaw or standing rule to conform to the custom unless they find it violates the rules of the facility where they are meeting or the local ordinances prohibit it.

HISTORY LESSON

The GFWC Charter is a Congressional Charter. A congressional charter is a law passed by the United States Congress that states a group's mission, authority, and activities. Congress issued federal charters from 1791 until 1992 under Title 36 of the United States Code. From 1989 through 2018, the House Judiciary Subcommittee maintained a moratorium on granting additional Title 36 charters. Although the subcommittee does not appear to have formally readopted this policy, the committee did not report new Title 36 charters from 2019 to the beginning of 2022.

The following information was found in the records of the 56th Congress from the Library of Congress' website: "Senate bill S. 5715- Granting a charter to the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Introduced by Mr. Scott and referred to Committee on Judiciary 1321.- Reported back with amendments 1544.-Passed Senate 3221.-Debated and Passed House 3601.-Examined and signed 3556, 3603. Approved by President (*omitted in record.*)

"House Resolution H. R. 13836- Granting a charter to the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Introduced by Mr. Landis and referred to Committee on Judiciary 1496

"*District of Columbia.* An act granting a charter to the General Federation of Women's Clubs. March 3, 1901---..... - - 1438"

Mr. Scott was Nathan B. Scott of Wheeling, West Virginia, a glass industrialist. Mr. Landis was Charles B. Landis of Delphi, Indiana, a newspaper publisher. Extra trivia point – both men were born in Ohio.

The GFWC Charter document states: "The Congressional Charter of the General Federation of Women's Clubs was enacted by the Congress of the United States of America on December 3, 1900, and approved on March 3, 1901, by President William McKinley." GFWC legend claims the Charter was the last Act of Congress that President McKinley signed. With the assistance of WHRC Librarian Joanna Church, the committee continues to delve into the history of the GFWC Charter.