

## 2013 Legislative Positions

January 28, 2013

The Garden Club of Virginia is an active association of 47 clubs, whose members together form a group of more than 3300 civic leaders from around the commonwealth. Guided by its mission statement, the Garden Club of Virginia supports the following positions (or the bills that are substitutes for these topics) currently before the 2013 Session of the Virginia General Assembly.

- **Continue the moratorium on Uranium Mining in Virginia** In November 2011, the Garden Club of Virginia held a balanced and objective Conservation Forum at the University of Richmond to educate our members, the public and members of the General Assembly on the complexity of uranium mining and milling in Virginia. Since the GCV Forum, studies have been made and reports have been discussed by legislators, community leaders and private citizens. Many cities, counties, planning districts, water authorities, and organizations have publicly opposed uranium mining in Virginia. Science has not shown that uranium mining, processing, and storage can be accomplished safely in Virginia. Our climate, geology, and weather patterns are very different from other areas of the world where uranium mining has been done successfully. The potential risk to the water supply of both Southside and Tidewater Virginia is of concern to the citizens who live there. The benefit of jobs created for a depressed region in Virginia does not outweigh the expense to the state of creating a system to regulate and monitor mining and milling done there for decades to come. The potential loss of other business opportunities to that region is recognized by the fact that many of the Chamber of Commerce organizations of that region oppose lifting the moratorium. Local farmers are concerned about their crops and livestock should the water supply be contaminated. Other citizens around the state worry that possible mining and milling of uranium sites may come to their region in the future bringing with it these same concerns should the moratorium be lifted. *The Garden Club of Virginia strongly urges the General Assembly of Virginia to continue the moratorium on Uranium Mining in Virginia and that the General Assembly vote accordingly on issues before it pertaining to the moratorium.*

NOTE: The final posting date for bills was January 19, 2013. The four bills relating to Uranium Mining in Virginia are the following, all of which GCV would oppose:

HB 1804 (Delegate Jackson Miller) and SB 919 (Senator John Watkins)

These bills establish a three percent state severance tax on the gross receipts of any Uranium severed from the earth in the Commonwealth. HB 1804 has been referred to the House Committee on Finance. SB 919 has been referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

HB 2330 (Delegate Jackson Miller) and SB 1353 (Senator John Watkins)

These bills establish a process for the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) to issue permits for the mining of uranium ore. HB 2330 has been referred to the House Committee on Commerce and Labor. SB 1353 has been referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources.

- **Support the introduction of a fee on plastic bags in Virginia**

HB 1381 (Del. Joseph D. Morrissey) and SB 970 (Senator Adam Ebbin)

This bill would impose \$.05 tax beginning 7/1/14 on plastic bags used by purchasers with the exception of a few such as those used for ice cream, meat, prescriptions, etc. The revenues from the tax would be deposited into the Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund. These bills are modeled after programs in the District of Columbia and Maryland and have the support of the Farm Bureau and several large retailers.

*The Garden Club of Virginia supports HB 1381 and SB 970 to create a fee on plastic bags.*

NOTE: HB 1381 was referred to the Committee on Finance. On 1/16 a subcommittee recommended “laying on the table” (or table) by voice vote. SB 970 was referred to the Committee on Finance. On 1/16, the bill failed to be reported and was defeated 5Y-9N.

- **Oppose Weakening of Placement of Billboards**

HB 2298 (Delegate Richard Anderson) and SB 820 (Senator Phillip P. Puckett) This bill establishes conditions under which certain billboard signs may be relocated if land on which the billboard sign is located is acquired by eminent domain in connection with a highway project. Historically the Garden Club of Virginia has worked for beautification of our commonwealth through strong billboard legislation. The Garden Club of Virginia *opposes SB 820 which weakens placement of billboards if relocated for reasons of eminent domain.*

NOTE: SB 820 was referred to the Senate Committee on Transportation. HB 2298 has been referred to the House Committee on Transportation.

- **Support the preservation of the view shed along the Historic Lower James River**

HB 1579 (Delegate Michael B. Watson) and SB 1271 (Senator John C Miller) This bill allows for the consideration of construction of new utility infrastructure as an alternative solution in the planning for use and development of water and related land resources along the Historic Lower James River. This bill would allow for consideration of other solutions to pass utility lines across the Lower James River and not be limited to those that are the least expensive such as overhead power lines. Scenic Virginia, Preservation Virginia, Colonial Williamsburg, and the College of William and Mary are also concerned about this historic view shed. The Garden Club of Virginia *supports HB 1579 and SB 1271 which allows for consideration of alternative solutions in planning the use and development of water and related land resources along the Historic Lower James River.*

NOTE: HB 1570 was assigned to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources. On 1/16 a subcommittee recommended “laying on the table” (or table) by voice vote. SB 1271 was referred to Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources.