



# Girl Scouts of the USA 2020 Federal Legislative Agenda

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) is pleased to continue working with members of the 116th U.S. Congress to advance policies that will benefit girls across the nation. As we reflect on the centennial of women's suffrage and look ahead to our national convention this fall, we're excited to build on our legacy as the premier leadership development organization for girls with innovative programming designed specifically for them delivered in an all-girl, girl-led learning space.

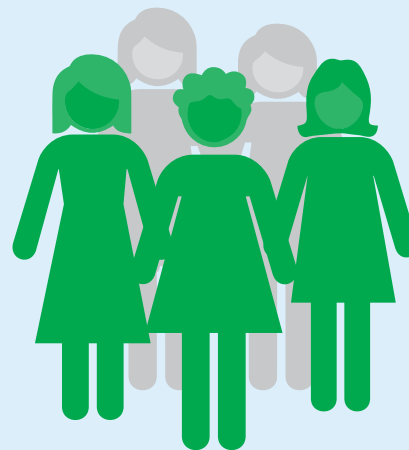
## ***The Girl Scout Difference***

Girl Scouts is 2.5 million strong—more than 1.7 million girls and 750,000 adults who believe in the power of every G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader)™ to change the world. More than 50 million women can call themselves Girl Scout alums, including more than half of female entrepreneurs and business owners, 60 percent of female members of Congress, and all female secretaries of state in U.S. history. Girl Scouts offers girls of all backgrounds and interests the single-best leadership experience in the world, as well as helps families support their girls' development into strong, confident leaders. At Girl Scouts, we're always thinking about how we can help the next generation of female business owners, educators, scientists, and community leaders succeed—and we know that a big part of this is by continuing to offer girls an unparalleled Girl Scout Leadership Experience, which encourages them to develop a strong sense of self, connect with their local and global communities, and unleash their potential to make a difference in the world.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the standout achievement of Girl Scouts who develop meaningful, sustainable solutions. A Gold Award Girl Scout gains the experience and life skills—strategic thinking, communication, collaboration, problem solving, time management, and more—that set her apart in the college admissions process. Many of these young women mention their Gold Award in college application essays because of the pivotal influence on their lives and intended educational and professional paths. Numerous universities and colleges offer scholarships to these remarkable young women, and Gold Award Girl Scouts who enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces may receive advanced rank.

Becoming a Gold Award Girl Scout is an opportunity available exclusively to Girl Scouts. The rigorous process calls for leadership at the highest level as girls tackle issues they feel passionately about.

**3 out of 5 women  
in the 116th Congress  
are Girl Scout alums**

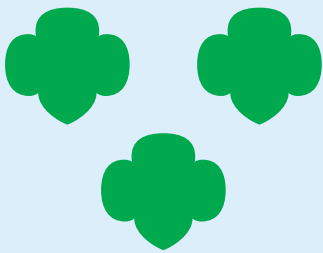


## A Commitment to Civic Engagement

At our core, Girl Scouts aims to inspire girls to be leaders in their own lives by helping them raise their voices and advocate for the areas and ideas important to them. A crucial element of this is understanding the systems, laws, and processes that govern our society.

Understanding how our government works empowers individuals to be active participants and to stand up for topics they care about in their communities, in their states, and nationally. Girl Scouts fosters a supportive environment that brings lessons of democracy to life for youth and emboldens them to enact change while increasing their sense of personal and civic responsibility.

*Girl Scouts has  
more than  
**50 MILLION**  
alums*



But in 2018, only 32 percent of Americans could name all three branches of government, while 33 percent couldn't name any branches of government. A staggering 37 percent couldn't name any rights guaranteed under the First Amendment. That's why Girl Scouts—drawing on our 100-plus years of inspiring girls to become engaged citizens—is taking the lead to power the next generation of change-makers.

For girls to understand the importance of civics, they need to learn the role that government plays in society. Only then will they feel like a part of a democracy and more fully hold responsibility for our country and its future. At Girl Scouts, we believe out-of-school civics programs prepare girls to be involved citizens with a deeper understanding of their government, both now and for the rest

of their lives. This year, we're introducing a new series of K–12 Civics Education badges to bring girls more experiences that deepen their understanding of government, prepare them for a lifetime of civic engagement, and motivate them to be catalysts for the change they want to see.

## Preparing Girls for a Lifetime of Leadership

Girl Scout programming has long promoted independent decision making, which helps girls develop agency, challenge themselves to move beyond their comfort zones, and build confidence in their abilities.

Now more than ever, our country needs Girl Scouts. From the skills and life-changing experiences we offer to the all-girl and girl-led environments that support girls' needs and potential, only Girl Scouts has the programmatic expertise and global reach to engage today's girls, speak to their interests, and equip them with the tools necessary for a lifetime of success. And at Girl Scouts, we're proud of our diverse and inclusive reach; approximately 30 percent of our girl members come from underserved and underrepresented communities, allowing Girl Scouts to function as a pathway to a brighter future.

In partnership with our 111 Girl Scout councils, GSUSA works with policymakers at all levels to advance public policies that champion all-girl safe spaces and honor the unique developmental needs of girls in relation to extracurricular activities like Girl Scouting.

## Girl Scouts is prioritizing the following public policy goals in the 116th Congress:

- Promote economic opportunities for girls and build the nation’s future workforce by increasing girls’ involvement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and strengthening their financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills
- Encourage girls to embrace a healthy lifestyle by expanding their access to outdoor activities, preventing bullying/relational aggression, and promoting healthy relationships
- Foster global citizenship and a global voice for girls
- Uphold a strong nonprofit community that supports the Girl Scout Leadership Experience

## PROMOTE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS

### *Increase Girls’ Involvement in STEM*

Women continue to be underrepresented across all STEM fields. Reports show that these occupations are growing at double the rate of other professions and that, over the next decade, the United States needs 1 million more STEM professionals than it’s currently on track to produce. If our country is to maintain its competitive advantage in the global economy, we need to make sure our young people—especially girls—take on careers in STEM. That’s why Girl Scouts is committed to ensuring every girl has chances to explore and build interest, and a possible career path, in STEM fields.

To close the gender gap, girls need to explore a range of STEM interests, understand how STEM helps people and society, connect with role models and caring adults, and access resources and support. With a long-standing history in STEM programming, a nationwide network of councils, over 750,000 volunteers, and best-in-class curriculum, Girl Scouts is uniquely suited to deliver meaningful STEM experiences. In July 2019, GSUSA introduced new badges and programming in cybersecurity, computer science, space science, observation and data collection, and coding, contributing to hundreds of thousands of new STEM experiences that allow girls to learn new skills, grow their confidence, and tap into their limitless potential.

Girls can now learn about the inner workings of computer technology and cybersecurity with nine new Cybersecurity badges released through our partnership with Palo Alto Networks and apply concepts of safety and protection to the technology they use every day. Additionally, through our multiyear partnership with Raytheon, GSUSA launched the organization’s first Cyber Challenge events for middle and high school girls. At these events, girls learn and apply crucial cybersecurity skills by completing challenges such as running traceroutes and identifying phishing schemes.



**77% of girls say that, because of Girl Scouts, they are considering a career in technology**

To engage more girls in space science, three new out-of-this-world Space Science badges provide girls with a pathway to develop a lifetime love of the cosmos and its endless possibilities. Together with the SETI Institute, Girl Scouts of Northern California, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, the University of Arizona, and ARIES Scientific, GSUSA created the program Reaching for the Stars: NASA Science for Girl Scouts, which allows girls to explore the universe and their place in it, properties of light, and inspiring space science careers.

With support from Johnson & Johnson and the Coca-Cola Foundation, we've also released Think Like a Citizen Scientist, a Girl Scout Leadership Journey during which girls participate in interactive activities to practice observation techniques; collect data; and share their findings with actual scientists through an online network. As with all of Girl Scouts' Leadership Journeys, girls use their newly honed skills to take action on a community issue of their choosing.

Our 18 Coding for Good badges completed in partnership with AT&T and Dell Technologies not only teach girls the basics of coding but also detail how every stage of the coding process allows them to use their skills for good. With plugged-in and unplugged program options for every activity, girls learn about algorithms through age-appropriate, creative activities, such as coding positive memes to spread a message about a cause they care about, designing a digital game to educate people about an issue, and developing an app to promote healthy habits.

GSUSA is building a STEM ecosystem to leverage our leadership development experiences and badges and evolve our physical properties to STEM Centers of Excellence and Experience Centers. We will mobilize a fleet of vans with STEM resources and activities to reach underserved communities as well as dense population centers and train engaged volunteers and staff to have a fluency in STEM. We will also roll out a dedicated STEM strategist in each of our 111 councils; each strategist will take a leadership role in developing and amplifying the impact of STEM community ecosystems at councils across the country. Through a joint local and national effort, the Girl Scout STEM Pledge will transform the workforce by adding 2.5 million girls to the future STEM workforce by 2025.

We're proud to be a recognized industry leader in providing girls with STEM programming in an all-girl, girl-led space—and we're unmatched in our ability to serve every residential zip code through inspiring female role models and leaders. Girl Scouts develop confidence and perseverance, as well as key skills relevant to STEM that set them up for success and prepare them to take action for a better world. Thanks to our second-to-none STEM programming, participating girls are equipped to become coders, video game designers, inventors, naturalists, scientists, app developers, cybersecurity experts, robotics engineers . . . the list goes on.

### Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Invest in STEM programs through federal partnerships with community organizations and schools
- Promote proven techniques for engaging girls in STEM, including single-gender learning

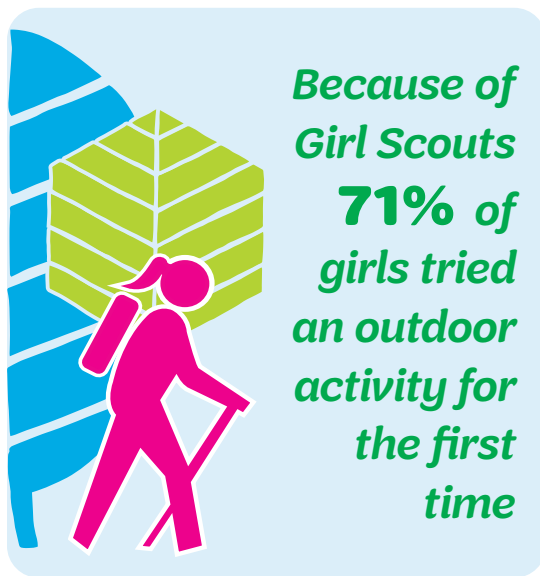
environments and hands-on, inquiry-based learning

- Engage girls in engineering and computer science to prime them for the 21st century workforce
- Introduce girls to diverse role models and mentors in STEM
- Expand out-of-school STEM programming to girls and underrepresented minority groups
- Encourage federal agencies to invest in developing STEM career paths for girls and underrepresented minority groups

### ***Strengthen Girls' Entrepreneurial and Financial Literacy Skills***

Whether she chooses to become the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, the CFO of her family, or an entrepreneur who starts her own business, a girl must develop financial know-how and business skills to power her future.

Entrepreneurship and financial literacy have been cornerstones of the Girl Scout experience for more than a century. We provide girls with countless hands-on, age-appropriate experiences in this realm,



including through our widely known Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is often girls' introduction to business planning and entrepreneurship. The cookie program gives girls the perfect foundation for launching their own business ventures down the road. By participating, girls develop important business and entrepreneurial acumen, acquiring five skills that serve them for life: goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics. In addition to selling cookies the traditional in-person way, girls can participate via the Digital Cookie® platform, which puts Girl Scouts in the driver's seat of their own digital cookie businesses and teaches them vital 21st century lessons about online marketing, app usage, and ecommerce.

### **Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:**

- Ensure all girls gain financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills
- Bolster the role of youth-serving organizations in promoting real-world financial literacy and entrepreneurial experiences in all-girl environments
- Expand federal initiatives that support financial literacy and entrepreneurial programs through partnerships with community organizations and schools
- Leverage educational technology to strengthen youth's financial literacy capabilities

## ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO EMBRACE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

### *Expand Girls' Access to Outdoor Adventure*

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The outdoors is a fundamental component of Girl Scouting—specifically, engaging girls in outdoor experiences that build capable, adventurous outdoor advocates. By participating in outdoor activities, girls feel connected to the environment, one another, and their communities at large, and many report that their outdoor experiences at Girl Scouts strengthened their self-reliance, perseverance, and leadership skills.

Building on our history of life-changing outdoor experiences and existing badges, Girl Scouts has launched 12 new Outdoor High-Adventure badges in partnership with The North Face. New programming is designed for girls to explore nature and take on adventures like backpacking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, rock climbing, and tree climbing—giving them the confidence to support one another, take healthy risks, and spend dedicated time in nature. And their confidence promises to soar as they join with fellow girls, and girls only, in trying new things, taking healthy risks, and learning through adversity.

We've also revitalized our historic Mariner and Trailblazer troops across the country. By participating in these specialized troops, girls seeking wilderness and nautical adventures will develop their technical skills in fun and useful ways. And at Girl Scout summer camp, as with other Girl Scout activities, girls take the lead in an all-girl safe space where they're free to explore, learn, and enjoy themselves without the pressure and social anxiety that can result from a co-ed environment.

### **Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:**

- Ensure all girls can participate in transformative outdoor experiences regularly and in varied ways
- Engage girls from underserved and marginalized communities in outdoor experiences who may have limited opportunities for (but are interested in) this engagement
- Provide girls with opportunities to explore solutions to conservation-related issues, thereby advancing their understanding of the natural sciences, natural resource management, and related STEM careers
- Engage girls in environmental stewardship and advocacy so they learn the value of protecting our world and, in the process, learn to advocate for themselves

### *Prevent Bullying/Relational Aggression and Foster Healthy Relationships Among Girls*

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According to the Girl Scout Research Institute, about 30 percent of girls have experienced some form of bullying or relational aggression from their peers. We know that girls' bullying experiences are different from boys'; typically less physical and more relational, often involving teasing, exclusion, and cruel behavior on social media, all of which are difficult for adults to notice. The consequences of bullying, in whichever form it takes, are devastating. Bullied girls have higher rates of absenteeism; have lower grades; and are at increased risk of depression, eating disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide.

To address this problem, Girl Scouts gives girls a blueprint for developing healthy relationships and

preventing bullying behavior outright. Our evidence-based BFF (Be a Friend First) bullying-prevention program, designed for middle-school girls, focuses directly on reducing bullying, particularly relational aggression and cyberbullying.

### Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Engage local education agencies in providing education and training programs for middle-school (and elementary school-age) youth to reduce relational aggression, bullying, and adolescent violence, as well as in creating safe schools and communities
- Support girl-only bullying-prevention initiatives that focus on relational aggression and girls' unique needs, relationship behaviors, and experiences
- Increase federal programs that invest in bullying-prevention programs through partnerships with community organizations and schools

## FOSTER GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND A GLOBAL VOICE FOR GIRLS

Girl Scouts is dedicated to ensuring that girls develop an increased awareness of the larger world around them and understand their relationship to it so they can grow into responsible global citizens.

GSUSA's global citizenship program provides girls with experiences that help them become responsible and effective leaders who recognize new and differing perspectives and connect with others as they take action to improve their local, national, and global communities. Participating girls achieve this by gaining valuable cross-cultural competency skills, exploring and enhancing their understanding of issues that affect girls around the world, and learning how to become effective global advocates who implement sustainable change for the greater good. As part of this work, Girl Scouts will develop a program focused on girls' access to education.



### Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Promote education about global issues, particularly those affecting girls and women, and ultimately help girls develop a sense of global citizenship
- Promote access to education for girls around the globe
- Support awareness of the impact of investing in girls globally—including through all-girl, single-gender spaces and activities
- Provide cross-cultural opportunities for girls' learning and international travel
- Provide opportunities for girls to explore and engage in creating solutions to global issues

## UPHOLD A STRONG NONPROFIT COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS THE GIRL SCOUT LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Girl Scouts is proud to partner with other charitable organizations and coalitions in the nonprofit sector, including Leadership 18, the National Council of Nonprofits, the National Human Services Assembly, and the Charitable Giving Coalition. These groups ensure that nonprofits not only survive but also flourish as employers that provide essential services to our country. Including Girl Scouts, there are 1.6 million tax-exempt organizations in the United States; this includes all 501(c) designations, from churches and cultural centers to food banks and disaster relief organizations. The nonprofit sector employs 11.4 million workers—just over 10 percent of the U.S. workforce—making the sector the third-largest workforce in the nation.

We support policies that incentivize charitable giving. Charitable giving policies fuel the health of our nation and communities around the world. Total charitable giving in the United States in 2018 amounted to an estimated \$427.71 billion. While overall giving remains robust, the number of U.S. households who give to charity has declined every year for the last decade. Taxpayers are also adjusting to changes in federal tax policy, including the doubled standard deduction. More than 45 million households itemized deductions in 2016, but numerous studies suggest that number may have dropped to approximately 16 to 20 million households in 2018, reducing an incentive for charitable giving. It is vital that we work together in Congress toward a bipartisan solution to this trend and bolster the country's vibrant and independent civil society. Girl Scouts supports changes in tax policy that encourage more people—specifically those who don't have access to the charitable deduction—to give more.

### Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Encourage individuals' charitable donations, which serve as the backbone of all nonprofits
- Ensure a healthy, effective, and vibrant nonprofit community that sustains the nation's philanthropic tradition
- Maintain the financial stability of the Girl Scout Movement so we can offer the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to an ever-increasing number of girls

*GSUSA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office, located in Washington, DC, works in partnership with all 111 Girl Scout councils across the country to educate representatives of the legislative and executive branches of government and to advocate for public policy issues important to girls and Girl Scouting. For more information, contact us at 202-659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org). Visit Girl Scouts online at [www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org).*