



Girl Scouts of the USA Welcomes the 116th Congress

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) is eager to work with the members of the 116th United States Congress to advance policies that foster girls' leadership development. Together we can address a range of issues that will benefit all girls across the nation.

Girl Scouts is 2.5 million strong—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. We are a 21st century experience for girls that is designed to help them learn to be leaders in today's world. No youth-serving organization other than Girl Scouts combines time-tested, research-backed program delivery methods with fun, innovative programming that speaks to the interests of today's girls and their particular learning styles and leadership development. Indeed, at Girl Scouts, we know the value of programming designed specifically for girls and delivered in an all-girl, girl-led learning space.

As *the* premier leadership development organization for girls, Girl Scouts welcomes girls of all backgrounds and interests who want to develop the courage, confidence, and character to make the world a better place. Girl Scouts offers girls the single best leadership experience in the world, as well as helps families support their girls' development into strong, confident leaders. 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.

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



A Commitment to Civic Engagement

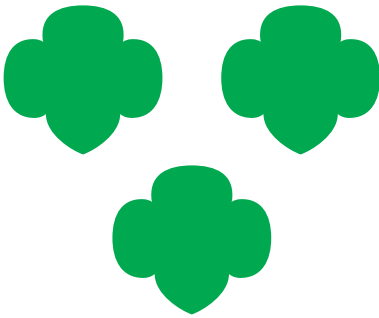
At the core, Girl Scouts aims to inspire girls to be leaders in their own lives by helping them learn to raise their voices and advocate for the issues and ideas that are important to them. We encourage girls to speak their minds, and we support them as they take civic action to drive positive change in the world.

Our civic engagement programming for K–12 girls helps them develop the skills they need to take part in a civil debate, make decisions as part of a group, and get involved in government at all levels—and then put these skills into action. Girl Scouts' Citizen badges foster a strong sense of civic duty in girls who earn them by encouraging active citizenship in pursuit of common ground—and last year the organization launched a nonpartisan initiative, the G.I.R.L. Agenda Powered by Girl Scouts, to inspire, prepare, and mobilize girls and those who care about them to lead positive change through civic action. Through the G.I.R.L. Agenda, Girl Scouts makes expert-curated civic engagement resources, derived from our unparalleled programming, accessible to all girls, as well as adults.

The Girl Scout Difference

More than 50 million women can call themselves Girl Scout alums. Over half (53 percent) of female entrepreneurs and business owners are alums, as well as the majority of female members of Congress and every female secretary of state in U.S. history. At Girl Scouts, we're always thinking about how we

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



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.

Additionally, our Girl Scout Gold Award is recognized as one of the world's most prestigious youth achievements. A young woman who has earned her Gold Award has become a community leader by transforming an idea and vision for change into an actionable plan with measurable, sustainable, and far-reaching results. Gold Award Girl Scouts who enlist in the United States Armed Forces may receive advanced rank, and many of these young women mention their Gold Award projects in college application essays due to the pivotal impact

on their lives and intended educational and professional paths. Numerous universities and colleges offer scholarships to these remarkable young women.

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

Preparing Girls for a Lifetime of Leadership

Now more than ever, our country needs Girl Scouts. The 106-year-old organization offers all girls the skills and leadership opportunities they need to prepare themselves for a lifetime of success, and it does so in an all-girl environment that is supportive of girls' needs and nurtures their potential.

Girls need public policies that champion support for all-girl—and girl-led—safe spaces and honor the unique developmental needs of girls in relation to extracurricular activities like scouting. They need programs and initiatives that allow them to grow up healthy and strong, develop the skills they need to excel in an ever-changing workforce, and make a positive mark in their communities and the world. In partnership with its 111 Girl Scout councils, Girl Scouts of the USA works with policymakers at all levels to advance the cause of girls and their limitless potential.

To build tomorrow's leaders, Girl Scouts is prioritizing the following public policy goals in the 116th Congress:

- Promote economic opportunities for girls and build the nation's workforce pipeline by increasing girls' involvement in 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 in all STEM fields. Reports show that STEM occupations are growing at double the rate of other professions and that, over the next decade, the U.S. needs more than 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—can 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-related fields. 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 deliver it to girls in every zip code through inspiring female role models and leaders. In a safe all-girl space, 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.

Toward the end of 2017, Girl Scouts of the USA announced a groundbreaking national initiative, the Girl Scout STEM Pledge, to reduce the gender gap in STEM fields. Specifically, we've pledged to put 2.5 million girls through Girl Scouts' hands-on STEM programs by 2025. With this promising initiative, we hope a new generation of girls will be inspired to serve as the confident STEM leaders our country needs. The Girl Scout STEM Pledge will support the development of STEM Ecosystems that include five new STEM Centers of Excellence, STEM mobile units, and "STEM fellows" that will engage communities, train volunteers, and deliver STEM programming to girls nationwide, regardless of where they live or their socioeconomic status.

In July 2018, Girl Scouts debuted 30 new badges for girls ages 5–18. These badges not only enhance the one-of-a-kind Girl Scout experience—they address some of society's most pressing needs, including those relevant to cybersecurity, mechanical engineering, robotics, computer science, and space exploration. In addition, through a partnership with Palo Alto Networks, we introduced the first National Cybersecurity badges for girls in grades K–12; and through a multiyear partnership with Raytheon, Girl Scouts of the USA launched Girl Scout's first national computer science program and "Cyber Challenge"



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

for middle and high school girls. These national efforts are a vital step toward eliminating traditional barriers to industry access, such as gender and geography, and will help prime girls for success in their eventual careers and in life overall.

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Invest in STEM education 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 prepare them for the 21st century STEM 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 pathways 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 the financial know-how and business skills to power her future. Indeed, girls need an entrepreneurial mindset and financial literacy to own their futures. To make decisions about important life events and shape their own careers. And significantly, financial literacy is not currently a standard component of the K–12 curriculum in the United States.

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.

Our 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 the financial literacy capabilities of youth

ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO EMBRACE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Expand Girls' Access to Outdoor Adventure

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 in Girl Scouts strengthened their self-reliance, perseverance, and



Because of Girl Scouts 71% of girls tried an outdoor activity for the first time

leadership skills. As with other Girl Scout activities, at Girl Scout summer camp girls take the lead in an all-girl safe space where they're free to explore, learn, and have fun without the pressure and social anxiety that can result from a co-ed environment.

In April 2018, Girl Scouts announced a multiyear collaboration with the North Face to develop 12 new Outdoor Adventure badges, which will build on Girl Scouts' eight new badges that support outdoor skills and adventure and environmental skills. Featuring activities ranging from mountaineering and climbing to backpacking, hiking, and trail running, this expansion of Girl Scouts' outdoor programming will see girls challenging themselves, learning about the natural world, and honoring the Girl Scout tradition of having life-changing outdoor

experiences. The new programming will nurture girls' interest from an early age in areas they might not otherwise plug into, such as environmental conservation. 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.

Additionally, in 2019 Girl Scouts will expand its 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 unique ways.

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Ensure all girls can participate in transformative outdoor experiences regularly and in varied ways
- Engage in outdoor experiences girls from under-resourced and marginalized communities 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 can learn the value and, in the process, learn to advocate for themselves

Prevent Bullying/Relational Aggression and Foster Healthy Relationships Among Girls

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' and less physical and more often 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.

Girl Scouts of the USA's new global citizenship program will aim to provide girls with experiences that help them become responsible and effective global citizens and leaders who recognize new and differing perspectives and connect with others as they take action to improve their local, national, and global communities today and tomorrow. 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 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 such as Leadership 18, Independent Sector, the National Council of Nonprofits, the National Human Services Assembly, and the Charitable Giving Coalition. These groups ensure that nonprofits not only survive but 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—approximately 10 percent of the American 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 2017 surged to an estimated \$410.02 billion. While total giving remains robust, the number of American households who give to charity has declined every year for the last decade. It is vital that we work together in Congress towards a bipartisan solution to this trend and bolster America's vibrant and independent civil society. Girl Scouts supports changes in tax policy that encourage more people—specifically, those who do not currently have access to the charitable deduction—to give more.

Furthermore, in the 116th Congress, Girl Scouts supports Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) premium-reduction legislation so Girl Scout councils can serve more girls. Girl Scouts' ability to continue to fund vital programs, offer opportunities to girls in underserved communities, and retain staff and develop volunteers are in serious jeopardy. Every dollar that Girl Scouts spends on PBGC premiums is one dollar less spent on our mission—to provide the best leadership experience for girls in the world.

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Support tax policies that 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
- Reduce pension premiums, which hinder Girl Scouts' ability to improve girls' lives and develop our nation's future leaders

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. Visit Girl Scouts online at www.girlscouts.org.