



# GCA - National Affairs & Legislation

**March 17-20 2024**

**280 people  
40 states  
199 clubs  
17,500 members**





# GCA - 100 yrs of Action

The importance of Advocacy:

A core mission of the GCA is to “ Restore, Improve and Protect the environment “.

These position papers have been developed to fulfill the mission of GCA. Using the power of our numbers WE can be influential on pending legislation

REMEMBER- We represent a constituency that VOTES! And that is why our congressman pay attention to us.

## GCA - Position Papers on public policy issues

- Agriculture, Soil, Seed Diversity, and Food Security
- Clean Air
- Climate Change
- Land Conservation
- Native Plants
- Oceans
- Transportation & Infrastructure
- Waste Management
- Water





# NAL - Day 1 - Education Day



GCA EXCLUSIVE: NAL CONFERENCE  
**REBECCA ROM, SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS PRESENTATION**



GCA EXCLUSIVE: NAL CONFERENCE  
**YVETTE CABRERA, NRDC PRESENTATION**



GCA EXCLUSIVE: NAL CONFERENCE  
**BRANDI JENKINS & SALLY MILLER, BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES PRESENTATION**

Climate change is a civic problem. You **take care**. Teach other people to take care, too.

GCA EXCLUSIVE: NAL CONFERENCE  
**SPENCER GLENDON, PROBABLE FUTURE**

**2 Example: Massachusetts v. ExxonMobil (ongoing)**

680. ExxonMobil's Synergy™ and "green" Mobil 1™ product promotions are positioned to reassure consumers that use of those products is beneficial in addressing climate change, when indeed, any continued large scale use of such fossil fuels is extremely harmful, just as the tobacco companies' misleadingly promoted "low tar" and "light" cigarettes as a healthier, less harmful choice, when the tobacco companies knew any use of cigarettes was harmful.

681. As with the images used by ExxonMobil to affiliate its products with the Earth, Earth Day, and a clean and healthy environment, the tobacco industry used in its advertising for "low tar" and "light" cigarettes analogous images of athletes, wellness, and success to disassociate in consumers' minds the connection between smoking, cancer, illness, and death. An example of these images appears below.

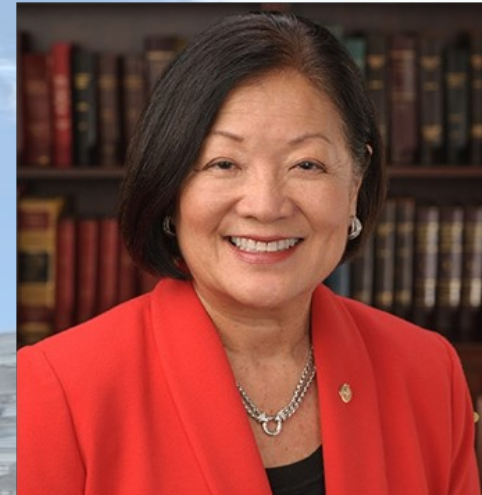
**Climate lawsuits today**

GCA EXCLUSIVE: NAL CONFERENCE  
**DR. BENJAMIN FRANTA, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW IN CLIMATE LITIGATION AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY**

**Dr Benjamin Franta**



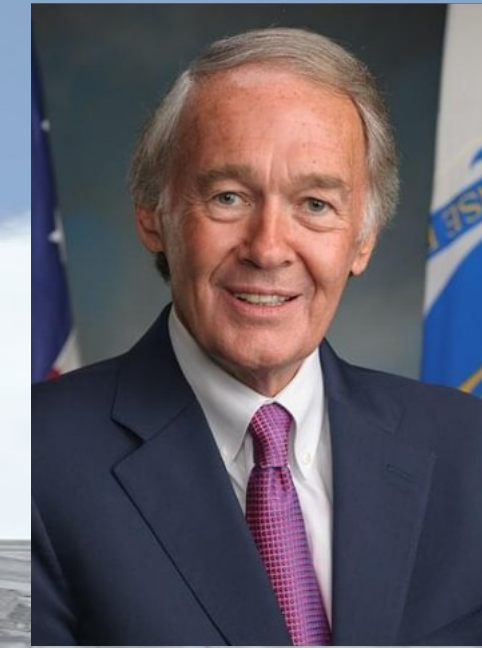
# NAL - Day 2 - Capitol Hill Day



Senator Mazie K. Hirono (D-HI) is a leading champion for women's rights and reproductive freedom, voting and civil rights,



Congresswoman Dingell is a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Natural Resources Committee, Dingell also plays a major role in leading the fight against PFAS by spear-heading the PFAS Action Act with Republican colleague Rep. Fred Upton. Dingell continued her husband John's work to open the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.



Senator Edward Markey (D-MA) co-authored the Waxman-Markey bill, the only comprehensive climate legislation ever to pass a chamber of Congress - demonstrating to the world that the United States was serious about addressing climate change.



Ali Zaidi

Mr. Zaidi serves as Assistant to the President and National Climate Advisor leading the White House Climate Policy Office.



Garret Graves is proud to represent nearly 800,000 people across south Louisiana including the Baton Rouge capitol region, and both sides of the mighty Mississippi.



Kathleen Biggins

The founder and president of C-Change Conversations, Kathleen Biggins sought to bridge the political divide over climate change. By helping community members understand how climate change will impact them personally and the urgency to address it,



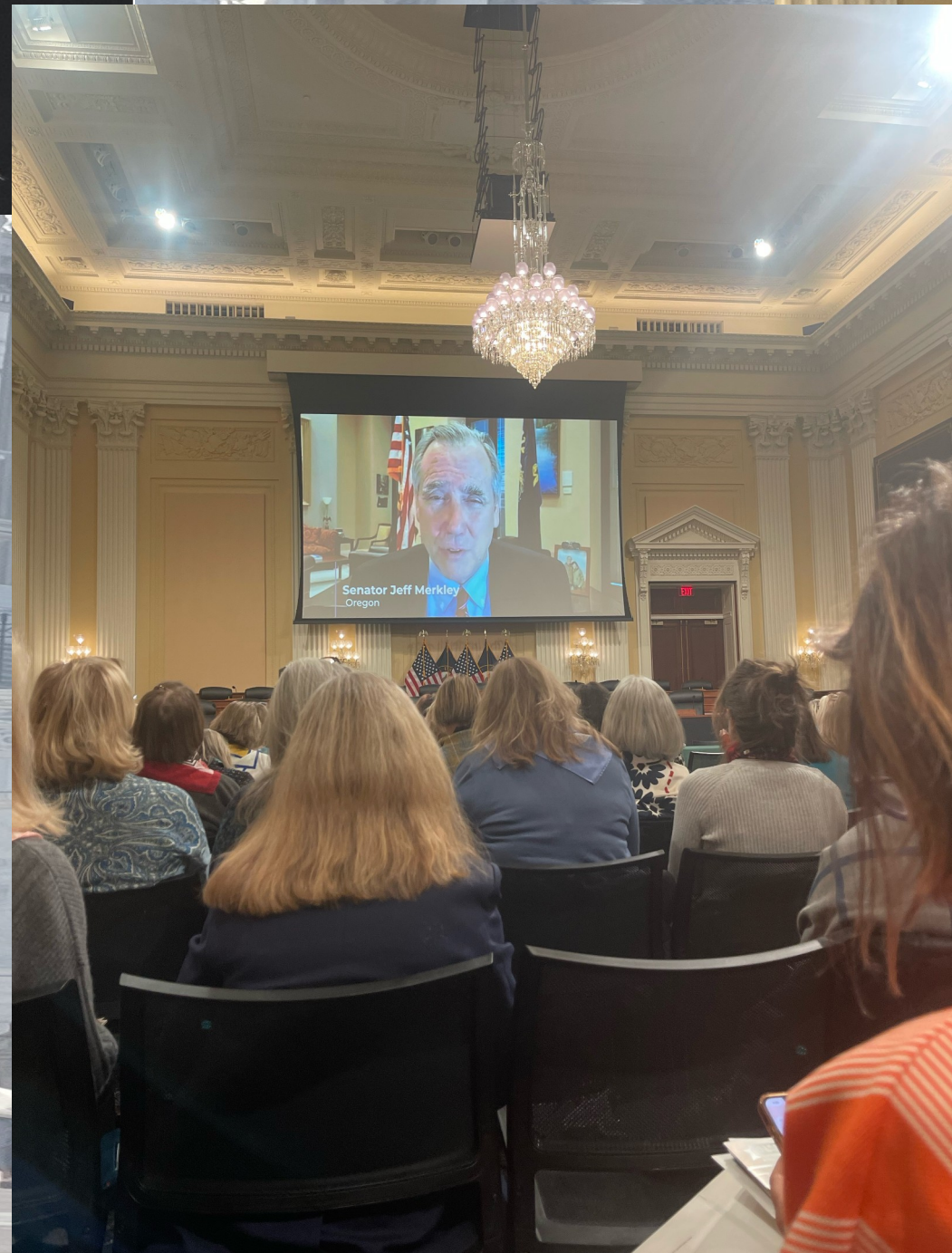
Sheldon Whitehouse has been at the center of bipartisan efforts to pass laws overhauling federal education policy, rebuilding our nation's infrastructure, reforming the criminal and juvenile justice systems, protecting Americans from toxic chemicals in everyday products, and addressing ocean plastic waste.



# NAL - Day 2 - Capitol Hill Day



CLEANSING  
CURRENTS







# NAL - Day 3 - Advocacy Day . In person appointments with our legislators



**Senator Richard Blumenthal  
Senator Chris Murphy  
Congressman Jim Himes**



# The Garden Club of America LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR CONGRESS 2024

For over 100 years The Garden Club of America (GCA) has advocated for a healthy planet. Today, climate change and biodiversity loss pose existential threats to our earth and to all of humanity. To save the Earth and protect the future of generations to come, we must save Earth's ecosystems – our air, water and land – and the plants and animals they support.

Addressing the monumental challenges confronting us requires focus, commitment, and urgent action. The future of our communities – our economy, national security, and health – depends on our choices and commitment to take action.

The priorities below reflect the GCA's values as outlined in our nine position papers. Our members of Congress can help save our planet by taking action on these issues today!



## AGRICULTURE & SOIL HEALTH

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 52% of US land is considered farmland, devoted to raising crops that sustain our nation and our economy. Federal agricultural funding and policies affect farming practices, soil health, and the adequacy and safety of our food supply.



## FARM BILL

The GCA supports a strong, well-funded conservation "Title" in the Farm Bill to provide technical and financial resources that farmers rely on to improve their soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat. The Conservation Title provides the largest single source of federal funding for conservation on private lands. Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that integrates conservation practices onto working lands and forests, and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that funds incentives to take eligible land out of production for 10-15 years, promote healthy soil and serve as natural solutions for addressing climate change. Both Farm Bill and IRA dollars are critical for agricultural communities to thrive and succeed.

**We ask our legislators to guard against any siphoning off of funding for non-conservation priorities and to ensure that Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds are protected for conservation and climate goals.**

## HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

According to NatureServe, 40% of animals and 34% of plants in the U.S. are at risk of extinction, and 41% of our ecosystems are at risk of collapse, due to severe habitat loss, pollution and climate change. To address these issues the GCA is advocating for the protection of native plants and habitats and the restoration of our lands, oceans and coastlines.

### Addressing Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss

#### THE RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT (RAWA)

RAWA (S. 1149), reintroduced by Senators Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Tom Tillis (R-NC), has broad bipartisan support. RAWA provides \$1.4 billion annually to support wildlife conservation strategies in our states, territories, and on tribal lands. It prioritizes innovative recovery efforts for endangered or threatened species. Funds can be used to conserve and restore habitats, fight invasive plant species and reintroduce native species.

**We ask our legislators to continue to support the Senate version of RAWA and to advocate for its principle of protecting biodiversity to support wildlife and healthy ecosystems.**



### NATIVE PLANT MONTH

Native plants are critical to the survival of wildlife and pollinators, which rely upon specific species as food sources. The proliferation of non-native plants is a factor in the rapid decline of pollinators – and represents a threat to agriculture and crop productivity. Last year, Senate Resolution 570 established April as Native Plant Month for the third year in a row, and the GCA's Native Plant Month initiative resulted in 48 states issuing Governor's proclamations declaring April as Native Plant Month. This year the GCA is working to establish a Native Plant Month in all fifty states.

### BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

House Resolution 195, introduced by Representative Joe Neguse (D-CO) calls for the U.S. government to establish a national biodiversity strategy, including conserving at least 30% of US lands and waters by 2030 to protect biodiversity and address climate change.

**We ask that our legislators support legislation protecting the biodiversity of our ecosystems through conserving natural habitats and promoting use of native plants.**





## Protecting and Restoring Marine Habitats

### THE SAVE OUR SEAS 2.0 AMENDMENTS ACT

The Save Our Seas 2.0 Amendments Act (S. 318 / H.R. 886) was reintroduced by Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR). It increases administrative support for the Save Our Seas Act of 2020, which provides resources to combat marine debris. It passed in the Senate by Unanimous Consent on December 13, 2023.



### RISEE (REINVESTING IN SHORELINE ECONOMIES AND ECOSYSTEMS ACT)

Protecting our oceans, wetlands and coasts is critical in our fight to stop climate change. The RISEE Act (H.R. 913 / S. 373) was reintroduced by Representative Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). It establishes dedicated funding, including certain offshore wind and oil and gas revenues, to protect communities and businesses most impacted by sea level rise and coastal erosion.

### COASTAL HABITAT CONSERVATION ACT

The Coastal Habitat Conservation Act (S. 1381 / H.R. 2950) was introduced by Senators Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC), and Representative Jared Huffman (D-CA). It authorizes the Coastal Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which provides technical and financial assistance for habitat restoration and protection in priority coastal areas.

**We ask that our legislators enact these three bills to provide dedicated funding for removing marine debris and to support coastal restoration and resiliency.**



## PLASTICS, TOXINS & POLLUTION

Plastic waste and toxins choke our oceans and lands, and as they break down in the environment, they harm the wildlife that ingests them, contaminate our food and build up in our bodies.

### THE BREAK FREE FROM PLASTIC POLLUTION ACT

The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act (S. 3127 / H.R. 6503) was reintroduced by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Representative Jared Huffman (D-CA). It makes certain producers of plastic products — including packaging and beverage and food containers — fiscally responsible for collecting, managing, and recycling or composting products after consumer use.

### THE REDUCE ACT

The REDUCE (Rewarding Efforts to Decrease Un-recycled Contaminants in Ecosystems) Act (S. 2844 / H.R. 5564) was introduced by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representative Lloyd Doggett (D-TX). It creates an excise tax on virgin plastic resins and a per-pound fee on sale of resins for single use plastics. The aim is to increase recycling, and reduce the waste that threatens our ecosystems and public health.

**We ask our legislators to support these two bills as we strive to hold plastic producers accountable for the pollution they create and foster international collaboration to reduce marine debris.**



### PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS)

Exposure to high levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (“PFAS”) correlates with adverse health outcomes including many cancers and developmental delays. PFAS, called “forever chemicals” because of their extreme persistence in the environment, are ubiquitous, found in products including non-stick coatings, firefighting foam and stain-resistant carpeting. They are found in the bloodstream of 99% of Americans, and in 45% of US tap water. The GCA encourages regulatory and legislative efforts to prevent release of PFAS into our air, drinking systems, and food supply.

### THE PFAS ACTION ACT

The PFAS Action Act (H.R. 6805), introduced by Representative Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and co-sponsored by Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), will establish a national drinking water standard for PFAS, and require the EPA to designate PFAS as hazardous air pollutants under the Clean Air Act, and as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), the EPA’s Superfund for toxic, uncontrolled hazardous waste. It requires the EPA to limit discharge and ban unsafe incineration of PFAS and provides \$200 million annually for clean-up.

**We ask our legislators to support this legislation to designate PFAS as hazardous pollutants and limit their use, and to continue advocating for legislation and regulations that protect our health and the environment.**

 Printed on recycled paper.





# The Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act

The “Break Free from Plastics” bill  
(co-sponsored by our own Sen. Blumenthal).

Its purpose is

- to prevent plastic pollution from entering into animal and human food chains and waterways.
- To make PRODUCERS of plastic products responsible for the end-life of the products, after consumer use (incl. collecting, managing, recycling).







# Risee Act

The RISEE ( Reinvesting In Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems) Act ( H.R. 913 / S. 373) reintroduced by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representative Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX), **establishes dedicated funding, including certain offshore wind, oil and gas revenues, for coastal infrastructure and resiliency work to protect communities and businesses most impacted by sea level rise and coastal erosion.**





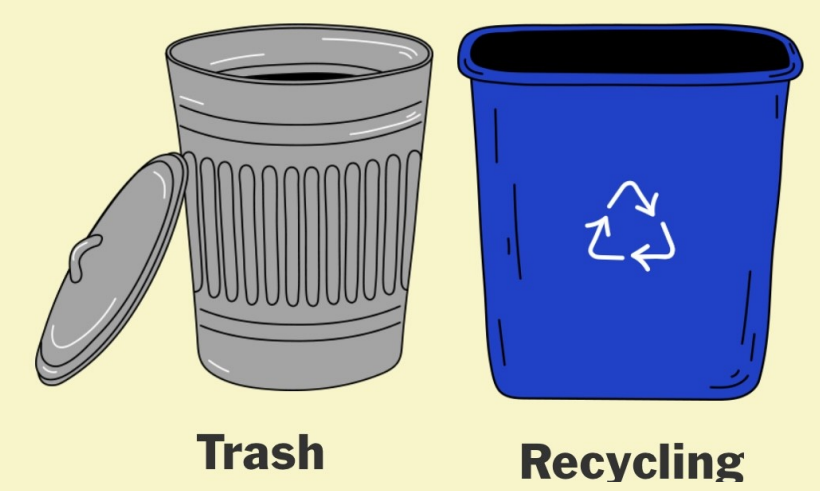
# Reduce Act

The Reduce Act creates an excise tax in Virgin plastic resins and a per pound fee on sales of resins for single use plastics.



Some politicians began proposing things like bans on single-use products. But many of the bills failed under industry pressure.

Instead, plastics makers lobbied governments to take a different approach: Curbside recycling, funded by taxpayers.



For instance, the plant might not be able to find buyers, so plastics pile up in bales with nowhere to go.



Graphics taken from NYTimes





**And what now????**





**Continue to communicate with our congressional representatives!**

**They will understand our concerns if they hear from us!**