

African-Americans in Congress



Leaders: Past, Present and Future

This program was made possible thanks to our generous sponsors Dell Computers and Faye Fields, CEO of Integrated Resource Technologies, Inc.



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In partnership with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and with funding from Dell Computers and Faye Fields, CEO Integrated Resource Technologies, Inc., the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital has created the African-Americans in Congress patch program to honor and celebrate contributions made to American history by African-Americans in the United States Congress.

The keystone of this program is the foundation's online library, *Avoice: African American Voices in Congress*, which Girl Scout Teens will explore during their progress through the patch. The online exhibits will provide information to consider as girls learn about the origins of the Congressional Black Caucus, how the U.S. Congress operates and other related topics.

www.avoiceonline.org

Through working on this patch program, girls will discover the history and leaders of the past; connect in the present with others locally and globally; and advocate for their future by taking steps to make the world a better place.

As a national organization, the first Girl Scout troop for African American girls was formed in 1917. Seventeen years later, in 1934, saw the formation of the first troop for African American girls in Washington, DC. This Brownie troop was based at the Dunbar Recreation Center. African American Girl Scouts were active in developing girls' interests in aviation, global travel, new technology and leadership.

Ethel G. Harvey, who began serving as a troop leader in 1943, became GSCNC's first African American president, serving from 1972 until 1981. Since then, GSCNC has had other African Americans serve as council president and in numerous other leadership roles.

This patch program was inspired by Girl Scout Teen Jasmine Jennings. While completing an internship at Avoice, Jasmine thought other young women could also benefit from a similar experience and advocated for a partnership between Girl Scouts and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation.

Introduction to the Congressional Black Caucus

“A legislative voice for African-Americans, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) traces its history back to the important civil rights victories of the 1960s. Founded in 1971, the CBC continues to be an advocate for African-Americans and other underrepresented people. Their efforts to affect positive change in domestic and international policy have helped to keep the concerns of the African-American community at the forefront of U.S. policy. Individual members have sponsored and passed countless bills that have been enacted into law. CBC members have been responsible for numerous laws positively affecting the lives of Americans.

The CBC has introduced and sponsored legislation on a range of issues, including voting rights, employment, education, health care and foreign policy. Making their legislative agenda known to the White House and in Congress, the members of the Congressional Black Caucus have been able to advance black political interests in the United States for almost forty years.”

~Avoice: African American Voices In Congress

Program Overview

The patch program is divided into three main sections: **Past**, **Present** and **Future**.

The first part of the booklet contains the activity descriptions and instructions; the second part is a Leadership Portfolio to help you keep track of your notes and your progress. Some of the activities have designated places in the portfolio where you can jot down your ideas. Use your completed portfolio to share your new knowledge.

You can also check the boxes (☐) to keep track of which activities you have completed.

Throughout the program, there are suggested **Extension Ideas**, (identified by this symbol ) which may help you extend your learning beyond the activity.

Once you complete the program, you will earn the African-Americans in Congress patch, which can be purchased in the council shop.

Requirements

The activities in this guide are most appropriate for Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors.

Each girl must complete the **Required** activity on the following page and the **Reflection** activity at the end of the program.

Girl Scout Cadettes must complete one activity from each of the three sections, and one additional activity of your choice.

Girl Scout Seniors must complete one activity from each of the three sections, and two additional activities of your choice.

Girl Scout Ambassadors must complete one activity from each of the three sections, and three additional activities of your choice.

Required Activity



**Shirley A.
Chisholm**

Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member

- ☐ The role of members of Congress is to represent the concerns and issues important to their local constituents in a larger governing body, to help in making decisions.

Take on the role of a member of Congress representing the area in which you live. What are issues that are important to your community? Consider the needs of youth as well as adults, and the demographic makeup of the community. What improvements could be made to programs already in place? To help guide your priorities, look at the topics covered in your community newspaper and talk to your classmates about what they want their government to know. *You can use page 1 of your Leadership Portfolio (LP1) to organize your thoughts.*

Discover the Past

- ☐ Choose at least one of the 13 founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) to learn more about. Find out which jurisdiction he or she represented, what issues they felt passionate about and how those issues fit within the larger CBC picture. Were there any issues that the member believed in that were not supported by the CBC or vice versa? Keep a record of your findings so that you can share what you know. *On page LP2 of your portfolio, you can fill out which CBC founding member you chose and what made you want to research that person.*



**William L.
Clay, Sr.**

Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member

- ☐ In the U.S., laws are not put in place automatically. What are the different houses of Congress and how do they operate to enact legislation? How does a bill become a law? Research a specific bill, such as the Girl Scout Commemorative Coin Act, and trace the steps that were taken to get it into action. A timeline of the important dates that led to the legislation may be a good format to organize the information. *You can use the blank timeline on pages LP2-3 to track this.*
- ☐ Besides being a member of Congress, what other jobs are available in Congress and Congressional offices? In addition to paid employees, there are also some volunteer programs connected with Congress. Research one of these volunteer programs and see if you meet any of the requirements. You may want to look into some of the opportunities GSCNC offers including Congressional Aide and Legislative Day. *You can jot down some of the positions you're interested in on page LP3.*

- As part of and leading up to the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s-60s, there were many court cases and discussions surrounding legal racial discrimination. If you were black, depending on where you lived at the time, you may not have been allowed to go to school with friends and neighbors of a different race or be able to try on clothing at a store.

Interview on your own or invite to a troop meeting an elder in the community who was affected by racial segregation. Where did she live? What were her experiences during segregation and after integration? You may want to ask about experiences regarding school, visiting the library, having dinner at a restaurant or going to the movies or on other outings. Make sure you take good notes or record the interview to refer back to later. You can check out a digital recorder from council and then download the interview to a computer.

For background, you may want to research historic court cases related to racial segregation and integration such as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. *After you schedule your interview, you can write down the details on page LP2 along with possible questions to ask.*



Extension Idea Interview more than one community elder and compare and contrast their experiences. You may want to interview people of different races or people who lived in different areas of the country.

- An act of Congress and subsequent presidential support made Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday a federal holiday in the 1980s. Who was he? Research King's life; be sure to note what injustices he saw around him and what action he took. Where did he live? What events surrounding civil rights took place during his life? King said that Girl Scouts is a "force for desegregation." What do you think he saw in the Girl Scout movement that influenced this observation? Discuss this quote with other Girl Scouts. *You can use the space on page LP3 to write down your reflections on King's quote.*
- Archives play an important role in documenting history. What is an archive and what type of information is stored there? What is an archival record? Choose a government body with an archive—this can be your local town council or the U.S. Congress, for instance. Where is it located? How is it supported financially? Find 3-5 different types of items stored there that people can access for research. Summarize what you learned about the archive through writing or another method. *The archive section on page LP3 can help you prepare your summary.*



George W. Collins
Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



John Conyers, Jr.
Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



**Ronald V.
Dellums**

Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



**Charles C.
Diggs, Jr.**

Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



**Augustus F.
Hawkins**

Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member

Connect in the Present

- How do members of Congress know what's going on in their local jurisdictions as well as in larger communities? How do they share their ideas with constituents in order to strengthen their followings? Go on a fact-finding mission to determine how people communicate with their elected officials, and vice versa. Do representatives attend meetings and other local events or conduct polls in the community? Talk to people who appear active in your community and ask them how they engage their representatives. Take notes about your findings. *You can use the dialogue bubbles on page LP5 to record what you find.*



Extension Idea Attend a meeting with one of your members of Congress.

- Attend a hearing or other congressional proceeding on a topic that interests you. How do the people speaking present their ideas? What type of information do they use—statistics, personal stories, visual aids? How do they make their arguments persuasive? Pay attention to the types of words, tone of voice and hand movements they use.

Take notes on what you notice from a few different people's presentations then compare and contrast the style of each person. Are there things that all of the speakers did? Did some techniques seem to work better than others? Can you use these techniques in your life? *If you would like, use the clipboard on page LP5 to keep a list of your observations.*

If you plan to watch from the galleries at the Capitol in Washington, DC, remember to contact one of your members of Congress to obtain a pass beforehand. If you aren't able to watch a session in-person, try watching one on TV or online.

- Identify a current member of the Congressional Black Caucus. Contact that member's office and request information or action on a specific topic of interest to you. Make sure you know how to appropriately address a member of Congress. In your letter, mention a specific area that this person has a history of working in. *Keep track of who you contacted on the envelope on page LP4.* To learn more about engaging members of Congress, go to www.gscnc.org/africanamericansincongress.html.
- Archives come in many shapes and sizes. Some are housed in massive buildings while others are Web-based. Visit an archive of your choice. Take a guided tour if you can. Learn about the tools of the trade. How do archivists preserve materials? If you go to a physical archive, what role does the facility play in preservation—pay attention to the temperature and

lighting of the building. Are there different preservation techniques for different items? Where do the archived items come from? If you are able, obtain a research card for the archive. *You can use the sample card on LP4 to jot down what you learn.*

Here are some local archives in the GSCNC region:

Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives: www.lrdudc.wrlc.org/jazzhome.html

GSCNC Archives (Washington, DC/Martinsburg, WV):

www.gscnchistoryarchives.org

Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (houses CBC records):

www.founders.howard.edu/moorland-spingarn/

Southern Maryland Studies Center: www.csmd.edu/library/smsc/

- Since its inception, the CBC has advocated on issues pertinent to black Americans, and has also supported equal rights for all citizens. Choose one of the following topics and learn more about the Caucus's position on the issue. (Through your research, you may also find a topic not included on this list.)
 - Anti-Apartheid Movement
 - Environmental Justice Movement
 - Voting Rights Act

What legislation and other key events have played a role in shaping your topic, and who are the important figures in its history? The Avoice Online Library, www.avoiceonline.org is a good place for you to begin your exploration. Create a way to keep track of your research. *The sample index card on LP4 can help you.*

Advocate for the Future

- Despite legislative efforts, discrimination based on race is still part of our world. Search for articles dealing with issues about racism. Summarize the situation and develop a solution. Discuss your findings in a small group and see if your group can come up with other possible solutions.
- In the previous sections, you may have learned about the importance of archiving and documenting historical milestones in seeking progress and equality. Put your skills to use and find an organization in your community that you think could benefit from having an archive. Contact the organization and ask if you can help with setting up an archive such as creating marketing materials seeking donations of artifacts.
- GSCNC and other organizations support environmental opportunities each year. Find out if there is an environmental event coming up near you and



Ralph H. Metcalfe

Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



Parren J. Mitchell

Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



Robert N.C. Nix, Sr.

Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



Charles B. Rangel
Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



Louis Stokes
Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member



Walter E. Fauntroy
Congressional Black
Caucus Founding
Member

sign up to share information about environmental racism and practices being taken to combat it. GSUSA's Forever Green program materials and the *It's Your Planet, Love It! Journey* series are green references.

- ☐ Create an educational PSA about a member, past or present, of the CBC. This short piece should educate others about major contributions that this individual made and touch on the history and the purpose of the CBC itself. (A YouTube video or audio podcast are format options.) Share your PSA with members of your troop, your family or classmates.
- ☐ Establish an archive for your troop or family. Before you start out, make sure you develop a clear plan of the purpose and criteria for determining what should and shouldn't be included. What resources are available to help you? Share your creation with others and encourage them to reference it.
- ☐ Do your neighbors know who represents them? Create a project that spreads the word about who is taking on their issues. What do people need to know about current legislation that is being discussed and considered? This could be a pamphlet identifying local leaders, upcoming hearings and when the next election is. The League of Women Voters (www.lwv.org) can assist you in finding information about elections and voting processes in your area.

Reflection

- ☐ Look back on your exploration on the journey toward earning this patch. Write a letter to a girl born today to read on her 18th birthday. Now that she's of age to vote in elections for people to represent her in government office, what should she know? What traits are important for today's leaders to have? Which issues in your life do you see as still being relevant nearly 20 years from now? What advice can you give her in order for her to grow into an effective leader?

Glossary

Caucus: a Congressional subgroup usually dealing with a particular party or specialty interest.
Constituent: a citizen who elects another person to represent their interests.
Public Policy: the set of laws, plans, actions and behaviors of a government.
Representative: elected by the people of their district to serve two-year terms in the House of Representatives. The number from each state depends on the state's population. Proposes and votes on legislation in the Capitol.
Senator: elected by the people of their state. Each state has two Senators who serve six-year terms. Proposes and votes on legislation in the Capitol.

Use a dictionary to define other Congressional words not included on this list.

Evaluation

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts about the African-Americans in Congress patch program. Your evaluation will help the GSCNC Program Department to better meet the needs of other girls and leaders.

How did you learn about this program?

Web site _____ Event _____ e-Edition _____ Troop Meeting _____
Other _____

I am a Cadette _____ Senior _____ Ambassador _____

(if you are completing this evaluation as a group, please write the total number of girls in each level in the appropriate space)

Please rate each category	excellent	very good	good	fair	poor
Clarity of activity instructions					
Knowledge gained					
Appropriateness for level of girls					
Program met expectations/needs					
Overall satisfaction with program					

Which activities did you like the most?

1. _____
Why? _____
2. _____
Why? _____

Which activities did you like the least?

1. _____
Why? _____
2. _____
Why? _____

Additional Comments

Completed evaluations can be submitted by:

MAIL: GSCNC Program Department, 4301 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008

FAX: 202-274-2161

EMAIL: programaa@gscnc.org

My Leadership Portfolio



African-Americans in Congress Leaders Past, Present and Future

Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital

Part of being a member of Congress—or leader of any type—is to be in tune with the needs of your community and the people you are leading.

Issues that are important to my community are:

As a leader in my community, I will address these by:

My Interview With a Community Elder

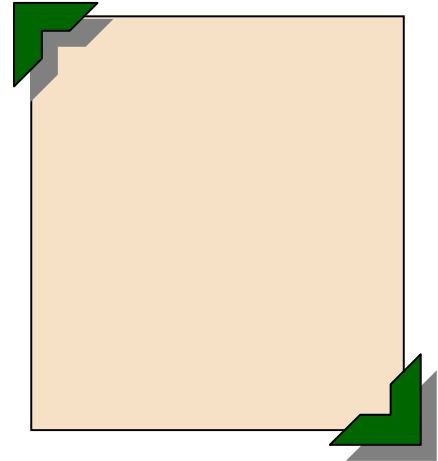
Name of Person I'm Interviewing

Date of Interview

Interview Location

3 Things I Want to Learn From This Interview:

Paste or draw a picture of the CBC
founding member you want to learn
more about.



member's name

jurisdiction

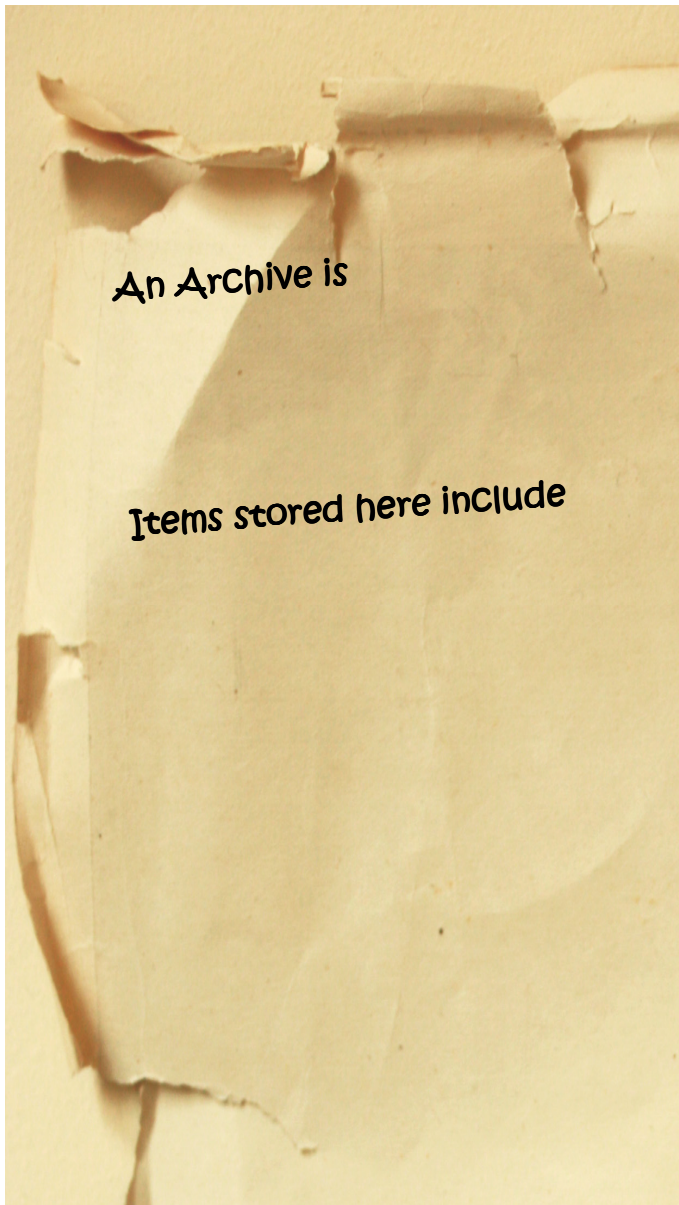
I am interested in learning more

about this member because

My Bill

Fill in the key
steps and
dates on the
timeline that
led to your bill
being passed.

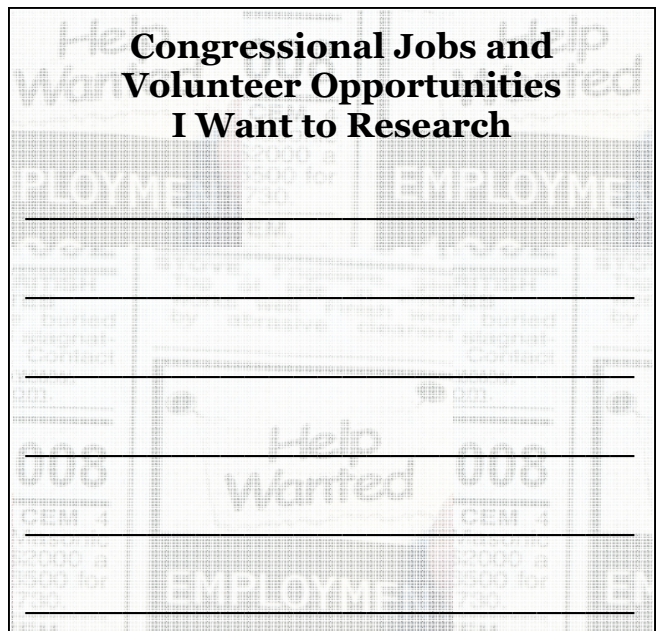




Girl Scouts is a "force for
desegregation."

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

My thoughts on this quote...



Present

Archival Research Card



my archive

tool of the trade

tool of the trade

tool of the trade

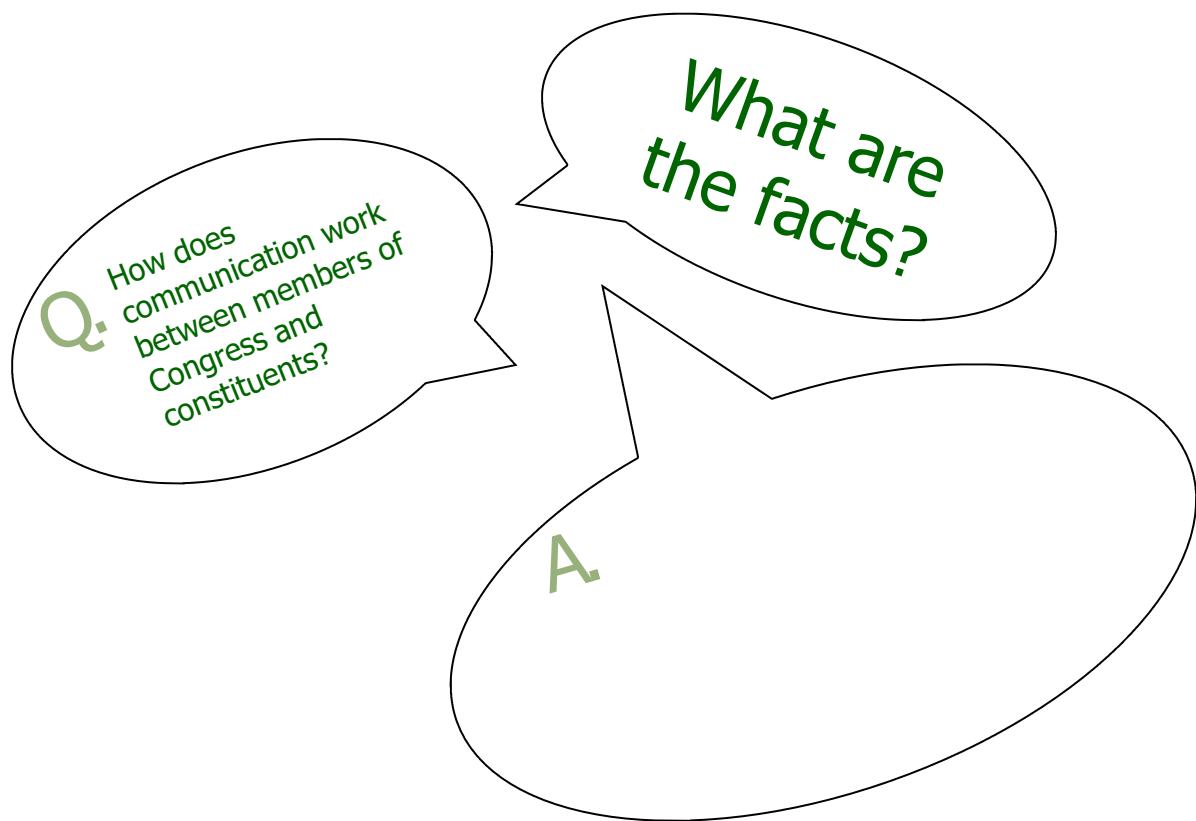
An issue that is important to the
Congressional Black Caucus is:

Two things I learned about this are:

The Web page link for this exhibit is:

**Congressional Black
Caucus member I'd like
to correspond with:**

**Topic I'm interested in
gaining this member's
perspective on:**



What techniques do people use to make successful public speeches?

☐ Statistics	☐ _____ other
☐ Personal Stories	
☐ Visual Aids	☐ _____ other

Which techniques can I use?

Advocacy Toolkit

Advocacy is the art of persuading others, or, the ability to change rules, decisions, laws and ordinances to solve community problems. Advocating can go beyond community service to address problems at the public policy level. Anyone can be an advocate. Being knowledgeable on an issue and sharing your reasoning can be effective in bringing about some sort of change. While Girl Scouts are not allowed to participate in any political campaigns or partisan efforts on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate in public office, you are allowed to advocate for issues that matter to you.

Reaching out to Members of Congress

Communication from constituents is important to elected officials and there are many ways to get in touch with the people who represent you to let them know your perspective on issues.

Whether you want to offer an idea for a law or voice your opposition to a proposed bill, there are many opportunities for you to participate in the legislative process—you don't need to be of voting age. All you need is what you already have—your knowledge about the issue, a little evidence, a few visuals and your concern.

You may want to write your member a letter or an email, call her on the phone or even meet with him in person. You may also choose to testify at a public committee meeting or hearing to get your voice heard by multiple decision-makers at once.

Getting your words printed in newspapers also has an impact because papers reach a large audience and are often monitored by elected officials.

You may want to write a Letter to the Editor responding to a previous article in the paper, or an Opinion-Editorial using a first-person narrative to support a larger idea.

Gold Award Girls in Action

GSCNC Girl Scouts are already making a difference—linking the past to the present, and getting Congress involved in making positive changes for the future.

One girl earned her Gold Award by conducting a census of two African-American cemeteries to preserve the inscribed information. She submitted her findings to a local genealogy library to give others access.

For her Gold Award project, another girl held film screenings addressing child soldiers, AIDS and poverty. After watching the movies, audiences wrote letters to their local members of Congress addressing these issues.

Additional Advocacy Resources

Find out who represents you: www.govtrack.us/congress/findyourreps.xpd

Find Congressional emails: www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt

Get your members' contact information from the Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121

Look up current Congressional legislation: www.congress.org/congressorg/issues/bills/

Getting Published

Sample Letter to the Editor

There are many issues affecting teens that you may wish to speak out on. You may want to talk directly to your member of Congress or write a letter to the local newspaper to reach a broader audience.

This Letter to the Editor was written in support of the STANDUP Act, which deals with driver safety.

A Letter to the Editor like this could support other legislation, or focus on new statistics that may have recently come out about an issue. Think creatively about ways to make the information timely and relevant.

Remember that this sample is meant to serve as an inspiration for writing your own letter. Make sure you add your own personal touches and don't just copy this word for word.

Dear Title (Sir or Madam, Mr. or Ms.) Last Name (name of the newspaper editor),

As a teenager, it's scary to know that more young people die from car crashes than any other kind of accident or disease. Teens aren't bad drivers ... we're inexperienced drivers. We need to get experience behind the wheel safely, and we need as few distractions as possible. Research has proven the benefits of laws that gradually introduce new teen drivers to the responsibility of driving. That's why [state] and other states have Graduated Driver Licensing, or GDL, programs. Effective GDL programs limit driving at night, driving with teen passengers, and using cell phones while driving for brand new drivers.

One of the benefits of Graduated Driver Licensing is that it gives us teens a framework for making good driving decisions. GDL helps us fight peer pressure, too. It's a lot easier to say "It's against the law," than it is to say "No, you can't have a ride home."

The Safe Teen And Novice Driver Uniform Protection (STANDUP) Act, or H.R. 1895, is a bill in Congress that will encourage states to strengthen their GDL programs. Laws are complicated, and it's not always easy to get information. It's even more complicated when you realize that all 50 states have their own set of rules. Why should teens in one state be safer than teens in another state?

I urge everyone to support strong, effective GDL programs by supporting the STANDUP Act. Call [member of Congress] today and ask for [his/her] support.

Sincerely,
Jane Doe
Girl Scout Troop #0001
Anywhere, USA 00000

If your Letter to the Editor or Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed) is printed in a newspaper or posted online, let us know!

Fax a copy to GSCNC's Program Department at 202-274-2161 or email it to programaa@gscnc.org

We love knowing about your advocacy efforts!

[illegible]