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**STATEWIDE WOMEN’S COALITION URGES VOTE ON BILL
TO EXEMPT GEORGIA SALES TAX ON FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS**

A statewide coalition of women is urging the Georgia House Ways and Means Committee to allow a bill to exempt feminine hygiene products from state sales tax to come up for a vote in the Georgia Legislature this year.

The Junior Leagues of Georgia, with 7,000 members statewide, have made the legislation one of their top legislative priorities this year, joining the Macon-based Georgia Women (And Those Who Stand With Us) grassroots advocacy organization, representing more than 700 in the midstate area, and the Greater Atlanta YWCA in support of the legislation.

“We are thankful that the Federal Drug Administration has deemed feminine hygiene products as medical devices so these are safe products to use. The next step in this women’s issue is the sales tax exemption,” said Rebecca West, chair of the Junior Leagues of Georgia State Public Affairs Committee.

“Georgia has exempted items in the ‘medical devices’ category such as hearing aids, prosthetics, wheelchairs and prescription glasses, which require a prescription and other items like insulin syringes and blood glucose measuring strips, which do not,” noted Claire Cox, president of Georgia Women, which initiated the idea to eliminate the full 4 percent sales tax on feminine hygiene products.

“These items are essential necessities and a monthly portion of every woman’s budget,” Cox said. “With many women in our state economically disadvantaged, we need to remove this undue burden.

“One in five Georgia women live in poverty,” said Cox. “That’s 20 percent compared to 12 percent of men. Two-thirds of the minimum wage jobs in Georgia are held by women, and women in Georgia make 81 percent of what men make.”

Feminine hygiene products are exempt from state sales tax in nine states and five states have no sales tax. Florida began exempting feminine hygiene products from state sales tax on Jan. 1. The Georgia bill is modeled on the Florida legislation.

The original cosigners of the bipartisan Georgia H.B. 731 included Rep. Debbie Buckner, D-Junction City; Allen Peake, R-Macon; Susan Holmes, R-Monticello; Joyce Chandler, R-Grayson; Carolyn Hugley, D-Columbus and Pam Stephens, D-Decatur and Karen Mathiak, R-Griffin. ##