

Women's Rights - 1977

Equal Rights Amendment

The proposed 27th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States declares that equality of rights under law shall not be abridged or denied by the United States, nor by any State, on account of sex. In addition it gives Congress the power of enforcement.

Although equality is of concern to all, women have a unique responsibility to increasingly press their role in advocating and supporting necessary legislation to eliminate all sex discrimination. Therefore, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, on behalf of its United States members assembled in San Francisco affirms:

1. Continued support of the proposed 27th amendment to the Constitution of the United States which makes gender-based discrimination unconstitutional.
2. Constituents, particularly in those states which have not as yet ratified the 27th amendment should work toward its ratification; members in states which have taken action to rescind ratification, should work against such action. In the event that the passage of the 27th amendment requires an extension, members in all states should work promptly and vigorously for extension of the time limit to ratify the 27th amendment.
3. Affiliates should enlarge their advocacy role in support of proposed legislation affecting women either alone or through the Religious Committee for ERA, ERAmerica and other appropriate coalitions.
4. The need to press for elimination of obsolete provisions in Federal and State laws which are sex-based and which continually expose women to separate and unequal treatment; endorse recommendations of the United States Commission on Civil Rights that all legislation based on the bread-winning-husband, dependent, home-making-wife pattern, be changed to use precise functional descriptions in lieu of gender-based classifications.
5. Affiliated members should effectively and judiciously utilize their vote.
6. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion shall be commended for their heightened consciousness and growing affirmation of the equality of women in Reform Judaism. However, we remind both institutions, especially the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, to be sensitive when selecting locations for meetings or conventions so that women, in their own right and/or through the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, may attend sessions in states which grant legal rights commensurate to women's rights within Reform Judaism.

The Right to Choose—Legal Abortions

We believe that the right to choose on the matter of abortions is a personal decision based on religious, moral or cultural values and beliefs; it should not be determined for others by special interest groups whether religious or otherwise, nor should government be the enforcing agency for their points of view.

Therefore, on behalf of United States Sisterhoods assembled in San Francisco, We:

1. Reaffirm our support of the Supreme Court decision of 1973 relating to abortions.
2. Deplore the current trend of Supreme Court opinions to impinge upon women's freedom of choice, and the current trend of Congressional action to reject the funding of non-therapeutic abortions through federal programs. The preferential treatment policy which would permit women of means to travel to a facility for an abortion, while condemning all other women to bear unwanted children is abhorrent.

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3. Urge all Sisterhoods to participate at local and state levels to insure passage of pro-choice legislation, and to deter contrary action; to educate members on the importance of maintaining every woman's right to choose, with special emphasis on its significance to the preservation of religious freedom; to include family-planning and sex education programs; to cooperate and participate with the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights and other like-minded groups to create greater awareness of significance of the abortion issue, which preserves the rights of freedom of choice; to work against passage of constitutional amendments prohibiting abortion and for repeal of present restrictive legislation and defeat of prohibitive legislative proposals in Congress.
4. Offer encouragement to non-United States affiliates in their efforts to secure similar opportunities for women to exercise their own freedom of conscience and right to choose.

International Women's Year

We recognize that women have been discriminated against and prohibited from engaging in activities solely because of their sex, and recall the arduous struggle women have had to endure to achieve only limited success in arenas in which they are eminently qualified to perform.

Therefore, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods assembled in Convention in San Francisco, November 1977, on behalf of its United States members:

1. Lauds President Carter for his vision, farsightedness and clarity of purpose in supporting a National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year to articulate the objectives required to accept women as co-equal;
2. Urges its United States constituents to participate and cooperate in deliberations and to implement appropriate programs which will make the National Commission a meaningful instrument in eliminating obstructive forces which have kept women from their rightful co-partnership in the continuing progress of the United States;
3. Urges affiliated members in fifteen other countries of our worldwide association to intensify their efforts and action programs to improve the status of women in their own countries;
4. Earnestly requests women in other countries of the United Nations to strive for and eliminate prohibitions and restrictions against them in their own lands.