

Get Active

Starting Your Own NOW Chapter

National Organization for Women
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202.628.8669



**If you have any questions about the contents of this packet,
or your role in starting a new chapter of NOW,
please contact your NOW State President.**

Enclosed are materials describing the convening process and resources that will help you start a NOW Chapter. Some of the key pieces of this kit are described below. You must be a NOW member to receive these resources; you can join at www.now.org/join . Then ask your State President for login details for the “NOW Leaders” section of www.now.org .

I. Convenor Authorization Form

When you have three NOW members and have designated the President and Treasurer, complete the Convenor Authorization Form. Send it to your State President/ Coordinator who will sign it and forward it on to the National NOW Vice President. The newly convened chapter will then receive, among other things, a chapter Organizing Manual, which will help you in starting your chapter.

II. The Basics

- a. About NOW
- b. NOW's Priority Issues
- c. FAQ
- d. NOW Structure Outline

III. Getting Started

- a. What to Do First
- b. What to Think About Next
- c. How National NOW Can Help You
- d. Policy on Naming Chapters
- e. Sample Meeting Agenda
- f. Sample Grassroots Actions

IV. Other Resources and Forms

- a. **Charter Requirements**
- b. **Membership Processing Information** – This packet answers questions that leaders have about processing new members to the chapter- how to submit those memberships to the Action Center with minimal errors. It contains sample forms, and explanations of computer generated Excel reports.
- c. **Guide to Chapter Bylaws and Operating Rules** – This is a resource to help you write your chapter bylaws and operating rules. The chapter can adopt the model versions, but take care to go over the sections and “personalize” them to the chapter structure you want to have. To see examples of the other chapter bylaws, contact your state organization or the “NOW Leaders” section of www.now.org .
- d. **Policy Chapters in Same Geographical Area**
- e. **Annual Report Form** – All chapters of NOW are required to file an online annual report each year with National NOW. Many chapter leaders plan a special meeting to complete the report, reviewing their past year and setting goals for the coming year. The 2015 report may be submitted online at <http://now.org/leaderdoc/filing-your-chapters-2015-annual-report/>.
- f. **Grievance Procedure**
- g. **Brochure Order Forms**

V. NOW Declaration of Sentiments

CONVENOR AUTHORIZATION FORM

TO: The National NOW Vice President / Chapter Development: The

persons listed below intend to convene _____
name of chapter chapter of NOW:

Convenor's Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: (D) _____ (E) _____

E-mail: _____

Treasurer: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Telephone: _____

Third Member: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Telephone: _____

The Convenor understands that requirements for chartering - bylaws, officers, reports, etc. - should be sent to the National NOW Vice President within one year and that guidelines for convening chapters are included in the Convenor's kit.

In addition, the Action Center should be placed on the chapter mailing list along with the State Coordinator. Any questions regarding the convening or chartering process should be directed to the Chapter/State Development Services Department. A Chapter Organizing Manual will be sent upon receipt of this form.

_____ Date _____

Chapter Convenor's Signature

FOR THE STATE COORDINATOR:

Signing for my state, I hereby authorize the convening of this chapter. The convening chapter should be assigned a number in the database system in order to begin receiving leadership mailings, and to use in processing memberships.

_____ I have already sent a Convenor's kit to this chapter

_____ Please send a Convenor's kit to this chapter

_____ Date _____

State Coordinator/President's Signature

(Note: After all parties have signed this form, please send to the National NOW Vice President, 1100 H St NW, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20005. If the convenors are new members, they may join online at www.now.org/join before submitting this paperwork, or membership application forms and checks to National NOW for each person's membership should be included. (Please see processing directions in the Convenor packet for amounts and sliding scale information.) If the convenors are at-large members who wish to transfer into the chapter, send their member identification numbers, if possible, or complete addresses. NO CHAPTER CAN BE CONVENED WITHOUT THREE MEMBERSHIPS OR TRANSFERS!

The National Organization for Women (NOW) is the largest organization of feminist activists in the United States. NOW has more than 550,000 contributing members and more than 450 chapters in all 50 states including the District of Columbia. Since its founding in 1966, NOW has been committed to taking action for equality, justice, dignity, and opportunity for women and girls.

NOW has six priority issues, listed below. These are explained in further detail on the next page. Please check out www.now.org to learn about the wide array of issues that fall within and span across these six priorities.



- Constitutional Equality
- Reproductive Rights
- Racism
- Lesbian Rights
- Violence Against Women
- Economic Justice

NOW activists use both traditional and non-traditional means to push for social change. They do extensive electoral and lobbying work and bring lawsuits. They also organize Twitter storms, Facebook campaigns, mass marches, rallies, pickets, non-violent civil disobedience, and immediate, responsive “zap”

actions. NOW re-instituted mass marches for women’s rights in the face of the conventional wisdom that marches were a technique that went out with the 1960s. The March for Women’s Lives, which took place in Washington, D.C. in April 2004, was the largest abortion rights demonstration ever.

These efforts, which continue today, established NOW as a major force in the sweeping changes that put more women in political posts; increased educational, employment, and business opportunities for women; and enacted tougher laws against violence, harassment, and discrimination.

* * * * *

NOW, Inc. was established on June 30, 1966 in Washington, D.C. by women attending the Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women. Set up in 1961, the Commission reported in 1963 that despite having won the right to vote, women in the United States were still discriminated against in virtually every aspect of life. Among NOW’s 28 founders was its first president, Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

Visit NOW’s website at www.now.org for more information about the organization’s work on these and other issues.

Constitutional Equality Amendment

Equality in pay, job opportunities, political structure, social security and education will remain an elusive dream without a Constitutional Equality Amendment. The progress we have made -- and must continue to make -- towards women's equality can be lost at any time because women are not granted equal rights in the Constitution. Without constitutional equality, women workers face repeated and varied forms of discrimination, and the patterns of sex discrimination in the workplace will never change. Winning a constitutional guarantee of equality for women remains one of NOW's top priorities.

Reproductive Justice

NOW affirms that reproductive justice, health, and rights are issues of life and death for women and their families. NOW fully supports policies and programs that provide opportunities for women to have healthy families, access to quality, affordable health care including safe and legal abortion and effective birth control and to education that leads to opportunities for all women.

Racism

NOW condemns the racism which inflicts a double burden of race and sex discrimination on women of color. Seeing human rights as indivisible, we are committed to identifying and fighting against all barriers to equality and justice that are imposed by racism. A leader in the struggle for civil rights since its inception in 1966, NOW continues to fight for equal opportunities for women of color in all areas including employment, education and reproductive rights. NOW recognizes these multiple forms of discrimination and is committed to eliminating racist and sexist policies that oppress women of color.

Lesbian Rights

NOW is committed to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression in all areas, including employment, housing, public accommodations, health services, child custody and military policies. NOW is committed to educational efforts which combat the adverse effects of discrimination, promote positive images in the media of lesbians and transgender individuals and ultimately ensure civil rights protection for all. NOW asserts the right of lesbians to live their lives with dignity and security.

Violence Against Women

NOW is unique in its approach to the issue of violence against women, emphasizing that there are many interrelated aspects to the issue: domestic violence; sexual assault; sexual harassment; clinic violence; hate crimes across lines of gender, sexual orientation, gender expression and race; the gender bias in our judicial system that further victimizes the victims of violence; and the violence of poverty emphasized by the radical right's attacks on poor women and children.

Economic Justice

NOW has repeatedly taken clear stands on the wide range of economic justice issues affecting women, from the sticky floor to the marble ceiling. These include welfare reform, livable wage, comparable worth, and pay equity. To address poverty and social justice, NOW uses domestic policies and international treaties to work on economic issues affecting women globally.

Frequently Asked Questions About Starting A NOW Chapter

What is NOW?

The National Organization for Women (NOW) is a multi-issue, multi-tactical, grassroots feminist organization dedicated to taking action to advance and protect women's rights. For more than 50 years, NOW has been a major force in the sweeping changes that have put more women in political posts; increased educational, employment and business opportunities for women; and enacted tougher laws against violence, harassment and discrimination.

NOW's issue priorities include winning equal rights for women and securing those rights with an amendment to the U.S. Constitution; championing reproductive freedom, including abortion and birth control; opposing racism; fighting bigotry against lesbians and gays; and ending violence against women. We have chapters in every state, and work at the local, state and national level to bring about positive change for women.

What do you mean by "Taking Action?"

The focus of NOW's work is taking grassroots-led action within our communities, and developing the skills that activists need to make positive change at every level.

Action can take a lot of forms, and we use all of them – both traditional and non-traditional. Actions may include lobbying elected officials, pressuring corporations or public bodies, pushing for legislation, taking direct action such as pickets or rallies, focusing media attention on a problem, filing a lawsuit, putting a public spotlight on discrimination, and much more.

By getting involved in a NOW chapter, you'll develop organizing skills that will make you a more powerful and effective advocate for women, and for yourself!

How is NOW Organized?

NOW is democratically organized, in that NOW leadership at every level is elected. As a member with at least 90 days membership, you have the right to vote not only on your own chapter leadership, but on state officers and your district representatives to the National NOW Board of Directors. Voting occurs at annual national conferences, where the organization's issues and priorities are determined. National Board members are elected every two years and national officers every four years at the National Conference.

NOW CHAPTERS: Chapters are the "building blocks" of NOW, and carry out our most important work. Chapters are connected structurally to the state in which they are located, and to a geographic district. Your state's bylaws give your chapter representation on a state council or governing body that makes decisions about NOW work at the state level.

NOW STATES: State organizations are led by state officers elected at a statewide conference, as well as a state council of chapter representatives. All members who meet the length-of-membership requirement may vote for state officers at the state conference where these elections are held. The NOW state organizations develop chapters, coordinate statewide activities and provide resources to the chapters. Many NOW states also take on the responsibility for legislative work at the state level.



Frequently Asked Questions About Starting A NOW Chapter

NOW DISTRICTS: There are six districts which may hold conferences every two years to elect members to the National Board of Directors, the body which governs the organization between national conferences. Every person who has been a NOW member for at least 90 days is eligible to vote for national board members from their district.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP: The national level of the organization is led by two or three elected national officers and the national Board of Directors, and is advised by national issue committees. These national leaders are responsible for implementing policy as formulated by the annual National Conference, for coordinating national actions, and for providing membership and chapter services.

Your participation at the state, district and national levels of NOW is important, since it also gives you an opportunity to learn what other successful chapters are doing to organize.

Can a Powerful Few Make a Difference?

You only need three members to get a NOW chapter started – and once you start reaching out and getting active in your community, you'll find lots of support. There may already be NOW members in your community who will jump in and help! Don't forget the famous Margaret Mead quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has!"

There are three especially effective ways to recruit new members: (1) ask, (2) ask, and (3) ask. You'll be surprised how many people are willing to get involved in speaking out and making a difference. Think about ways to let your community know about the new chapter. Be sure to hold your meetings in a public place that is accessible and easy to find – your local paper may announce your meetings in a community calendar.



The most successful chapters reflect the diverse makeup of their communities. There are many ways to begin your outreach. Start by attending meetings of community allies and let them know you look forward to working with them. Seek support and help in getting started. Post meeting notices everywhere – at community colleges, local libraries, community centers and even laundromats

– be creative! Keep diversity in mind when reaching out to new members.

How Can We Become a Chapter?

You'll be a convening chapter for the first year, and by the end of that time you should have:

- grown to at least ten members,
- outlined your chapter's structure by developing bylaws, operating rules, and an affirmative action plan,
- scheduled chapter meetings on a regular basis, at least eight meetings per year, and
- planned and carried out at least three actions in your community on NOW issues.

You'll be surprised how easy it is to become a successful, productive chapter. The National Action Center provides lots of help and ideas and is happy to share structures that work!

Frequently Asked Questions About Starting A NOW Chapter

How Many Issues Should NOW Chapters Work On?

NOW's special strength is that we are a multi-issue organization – we know that sexism, racism, homophobia, and other “isms” spring from a similar source, and that they are interconnected in many ways.

Even so, many people come to NOW with a passion for a particular issue. Your activist core might even be primarily made up of folks committed to one issue. So, you will surely take strong and effective action on that issue! But that doesn't mean that must be your only issue – find ways to structure your chapter so that you can be active on several issues that affect women's lives, and you'll attract even more involvement from women and men who care about a wide range of feminist issues.



What Do We Need to Do to Get Started?

To become a Convening chapter you'll need at least three NOW members – either current members or interested folks you recruit to participate. Our non-profit corporation status requires that every new chapter designate a president and a treasurer, though you are not required to use those exact titles. If you're starting the chapter in a high school or on a college campus, you may also need to comply with your school's requirements.

If it is impossible to reconcile your school's requirements with the requirements to become a NOW chapter, you can always start a NOW Campus Action Network group or NOW CAN. NOW CANs are set up using a different structure from NOW chapters. However, NOW CANs are entitled to many of the same benefits chapters receive, such as access to guidance, support and materials from the Action Center. To learn more about NOW CANs, please visit <http://www.now.org/campus>.

Since one of your first goals as a chapter will be to build your membership, you'll need to open a checking account so that you can accept membership dues. The bank will require you to have a tax identification number for your chapter. We have easy instructions about how to get one.

We have lots of written materials, as well as a knowledgeable staff at the NOW Action Center – we're available to answer your questions and help you brainstorm solutions. We can provide you with a Chapter Convening Manual, membership recruitment materials, and Chapter Development tip sheets that cover a wide range of potential chapter activities. Some of these are available for download from the “NOW Leaders” section of the NOW web site, which is password protected. To access this web site, please call 202-628-8669 and ask for Chapter Development to obtain the username and password. For security reasons, these can only be given over the phone.

What Can We Name Our Chapter?

Your chapter's name should carry the geographic designation of the area in which you're organizing. In most areas, the name will be obvious – e.g. Smalltown NOW. But in a large urban area, you should be as specific as possible. Most people won't want to drive long distances through traffic to meetings on

Frequently Asked Questions About Starting A NOW Chapter

weeknights, and a very specific name helps assure them that you're going to be active (and meeting) in their specific community or area. If there are several chapters already in your metropolitan area, you may want to talk with state leaders about choosing a name.



We've Got Great Plans – How Can We Fund Our Efforts?

Chapters raise money through dues from new and renewing members, and by creative fundraising. Your chapter keeps a portion of the dues paid by new members, and when existing members renew, you'll receive a portion of their renewal dues as well. But no chapter can afford to operate on dues rebates alone. While some people are shy about fundraising, remember that giving money is an important way many women and men contribute to our cause. Many members can't come to meetings or take a leadership role, but ARE willing to succeed in raising funds.

Your state organization may be able to help with a grant or loan to get you started. Some states help new chapters by waiving their obligation to pay the state's share of new member dues for a period of time. But the most effective way to raise funds is the same as the most effective way to

recruit members: Ask, Ask, Ask.

Are there any other resources available?

The future of our movement depends on the success of our chapters – including yours! The “NOW Leaders” section of www.now.org includes many resources for chapters, including brochures, webinars, organizational, and issue materials. The distinctive NOW “rounds” and signs you've probably seen in our demonstrations can be ordered online.

I'm pretty busy already. How much time does all this take?

That's up to you. The more people you have, the less time each will need to contribute. Especially in the early days of organizing your chapter, you should expect to spend at least three or four hours per week doing outreach to build a core of support. Once you have a core of 5 or 6 members, you can each schedule your time contributions more easily. Member jobs and responsibilities based on people's interest – the tasks will get done more quickly that way. Remember that everyone is busier than ever before, so be sure that your efforts are planned to make the most of everyone's limited time – including yours!

Neighboring chapters and/or your state organization may offer assistance, and the NOW web site www.now.org has many documents and webinars available in the “NOW Leaders” section.

Frequently Asked Questions About Starting A NOW Chapter

It is perfectly normal to feel nervous, even hesitant, about starting a NOW chapter in your area. We understand that many circumstances can contribute to these feelings of doubt. Maybe you are worried about creating controversy in your community. Maybe you aren't confident in your abilities to organize people. Whatever your reasons, we want you to know that the NOW Action Center staff is here to help in any way we can!

It's true that your new chapter's actions might incite some hostile reactions from some members of your community. However, that is precisely the reason we need NOW chapters! Change always starts at the local level and we would love for you to be the person who gets things started! You could inspire other progressive members of your community, who perhaps felt isolated before they attended your meeting or action, to speak up or get involved. Many chapters have told us they didn't realize they had so many allies in their communities until they started a NOW chapter. Whether you

live in a progressive area or a conservative one, there is absolutely a need for a NOW chapter to bring to light women's issues. We can do it!





NOW's Structure

NOW's purpose is to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspect of social, political, and economic life.

NOW's Priority Issues

- ◆ Reproductive rights and justice
- ◆ Ending violence against women
- ◆ Economic justice
- ◆ Racial justice
- ◆ LGBTQIA rights
- ◆ Constitutional Equality

Other NOW issues:

- ◆ Affirmative action
- ◆ Voter mobilization
- ◆ Disability rights
- ◆ Title IX and education equity
- ◆ Global feminism
- ◆ Immigrant women's rights
- ◆ Custody and family law
- ◆ Body positivity
- ◆ Women in the military

----- National NOW Entities -----

NOW Inc.

NOW Inc. is the national membership organization dedicated to grassroots organizing and political action on behalf of women's rights. When you become a NOW member, this is the entity you join. Because NOW Inc. encourages its members to lobby their representatives in Congress, contributions to this entity are not tax-deductible. Although NOW Inc. shares the same priorities with NOW Foundation, they are separate entities.

NOW Foundation

The NOW Foundation is the educational and legal arm of NOW. The Foundation works to further gender equality through advocacy and litigation. Its litigation efforts include taking anti-abortion terrorists to court. The Foundation is well-known for promoting body positivity with its Love Your Body campaign. Its Crisis in Family Courts project provides valuable resources; and it also advances women's equality with its work on global policy, media issues and much more. Donations to the NOW Foundation *are* tax-deductible.

NOW PAC

The Political Action Committee is the electoral politics arm of NOW. NOW PAC endorses and supports feminist candidates for federal office. In order to be endorsed, the candidate must be committed to NOW's values and priorities. The PAC is comprised of National NOW officers, and board and at-large members appointed by the president. Per Federal Election Commission rules, only NOW members may contribute to NOW PAC.

----- **Member Involvement** -----

Local Chapters

NOW's grassroots power comes from its local chapters. These chapters are deeply involved in their communities. Among other things, they hold meetings, organize actions, lobby, develop educational programs, talk to the local media, write letters to the editor, do social media, and coordinate with progressive allies to achieve common goals.

Chapters are required to follow NOW's national bylaws and the policies that are passed at the national conferences. Otherwise, they are fairly autonomous, setting their own agendas and objectives that best suit their communities.



State Organizations

Each state has its own NOW organization which focuses on state-level issues, such as state legislation. They elect officers at state conferences and have state council meetings with representatives from chapters.

Most state and local chapters do not have actual offices, and their elected leaders are volunteers. In a few large cities and states, officers are paid and an actual office may exist.



Electoral Districts and the National Board

NOW is divided into six electoral districts, whose main purpose is to elect two to three members to sit on the National NOW Board. The number of seats is based on the number of members in the district.

The National Board, including the national officers and advisors, meets at least three times a year to manage the affairs and control the funds and property of the organization. It also has the authority to pass agenda-related policy during the period of time between the annual national conferences.



National Officers

The national officers are elected at the national conference every four years and serve at the NOW Action Center in Washington D.C. There are two national officers– a president and a vice-president. A second vice-president can be added at the discretion of the board. They speak on behalf of the organization, make policy decisions between board meetings and supervise the government relations, communications, membership, fundraising and field programs. The president is also the CEO of NOW Inc.

NOW'S National Conference

Held every June or July, the National Conference is the “supreme governing body of NOW,” as specified by the national bylaws. Decisions made at these conferences are binding to all members and sub-units of NOW. Those who have been members for 90 days or more are eligible to vote.

Members debate and adopt the goals of the National NOW strategic action program and how to implement them. They also vote on a wide range of resolutions that address both external issues, such as legislative attacks on reproductive rights, and internal issues, like membership recruitment practices. In addition to electing the NOW national board every four years, voting on proposed bylaw amendments, and advancing NOW's priority issues, attendees of the national conference attend inspiring plenaries and informative workshops.

----- You have the power to ignite change. -----

Become a Member

- **R**OW's mission to achieve equality and justice **e**lies upon our 500,000 grassroots members and **t**contributing supporters. With chapters and state **u**rganizations across the country, our activists **m**ake a real impact on real lives.
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Our success is made possible by volunteer hours, **r**ecruitment, membership dues and individual donations. Your **r**ecruitment gift allows NOW to fulfill its mission: **e**qual, intersectional equality for women and girls.
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Get Involved Locally

NOW chapters welcome new members year round to help fight for women's rights on the local and grassroots level. By working with a local chapter, you can directly impact your community in a powerful way. To find your chapter, visit www.now.org/get-involved.

Get politically active on the local level. Contact your U.S. Senators, Representatives and local legislators to make your voice (and vote) heard.

Encourage others to vote– not just in the national elections, but in local and state elections as well!

Become Active Virtually

An online presence can reach a mass audience quickly to further your cause or campaign. Share/like/comment/retweet/follow our social media accounts... and create your own content!



Convenor Authorization Form to the State Coordinator, to be forwarded to National NOW. You will be assigned a number for your chapter (XX0000), which you will use in processing new members.

- **Hold a meeting** for interested people, tell them to invite their friends. Discuss how people would like to proceed. (see the Sample Agenda for suggestions)
- **Adopt chapter bylaws and operating rules** which are in agreement with National bylaws.
- **Elect chapter officers** and send their names to the State Coordinator and the National Action Vice-President. (Remember that they must be members of NOW.)
- **Open a bank account.** You will be sent a packet of information to help you in applying online for a Federal Tax ID (EIN) number. Most banks will allow you to use a member's social security number until you receive your EIN number from the IRS.
- **Open a Post Office Box or choose a chapter officer's home as the chapter address.**
- **Add Us to Your List.** Include the National Action Center, district Board Members, State Officers, and other chapters on your mailing list.



A convening chapter:

- Must **identify at least three people** who are committed to forming and joining a chapter. Of these three people there must be a lead convenor and a treasurer. All three names must be submitted to National NOW and State Coordinator before a chapter number will be assigned.

And the state organization:

- Will **send the convening authorization form** to the National office, at which time the chapter will be assigned a chapter number and be added to the national leadership list.

What To Think About Next

- **Organize committees and task forces** to carry out your action plans.
- **Develop plans for an email newsletter** and/or media plan to tell your community about your chapter.
- Establish good **relationships with the local press.**
- **Attract new members!**
- **Send representatives** to state council meetings.
- **Apply for a bulk mail permit**, if you will be doing regular paper mailings to more than 200 people. (Application instructions are available from the National Action Center.)
- **Organize chapter actions** around local, state and national NOW issues.
- **Download materials** from the National Action Center's web site. We have resource and lobby kits, Consciousness Raising Guideline, Chapter Development materials. Better yet, design your own chapter recruiting materials! Neighboring chapters and/or your state organization may offer assistance, and the NOW web site www.now.org has many documents and webinars available in the "NOW Leaders" section.
- Plan a **fundraising program.**
- Establish an ongoing **member recruitment program.**
- **Complete actions and projects** with the intent of advancing NOW's Issues. Chapters are expected to complete at least three actions a year, each on a different issue. At least one of these actions must address racism, reproductive rights, lesbian rights, or abortion. Completion of three actions is required in order to receive your provisional charter. Remember, you do not need hundreds of people to bring about change.
- Implement a **member education program on NOW's history and policies.** This should be an ongoing part of the chapter's agenda, not just something you do at the beginning of the chapter's work in the community.
- **Act in a financially responsible manner** toward the organization, including the obligation to remit dues in accordance with National and State dues policies.
- **File an annual online report of chapter status and activities** with the state coordinator and National Vice President. The report will include a statement of chapter income and expenses, significant actions, membership education program, affirmative action program, plus goals and activities for the upcoming year.
- Think about **setting up a webpage** to provide easy access to information and attract new members! Many chapters use a Facebook page.
- Think about **setting up a Facebook account** to network, make mass invitations, inform people etc...

- You will receive regular email communication from the Action Center
- Monthly leadership emails that may include:
 - Up-to-date information on issues
 - Chapter Development materials
 - National Board Meeting Minutes
 - Policy changes within the organization
- Access to the Chapters Only, “NOW Leaders” website, which may include:
 - National and model chapter bylaws
 - Lists of current state coordinators and National Board members
 - Brochures for action and attracting new members
 - Press releases concerning national issues
 - Resource kits on issues
 - Membership forms
 - Resource materials concerning chapter development and leadership development
 - Information on national legislation on NOW’s priority issues
- Current membership information as Excel files including:
 - Monthly chapter transaction reports
 - Monthly membership lists
 - At-large membership lists for recruitment
 - Membership renewal notices to individual members
 - Chapter records
- Assistance and materials to convene chapters
- Information on issuing charters
- Invitations to trainings and conferences
- Staff expertise to facilitate workshops for local conferences
- Staff assistance with chapter development problems or action planning



Policy on Naming Chapters

Except in unusual circumstances, chapters shall be named by a geographic designation consistent with the community in which the chapter will function and draw its membership.

No chapter may indicate a geographic area larger than or subsuming neighboring chapters, unless all such affected agree.



If a chapter name other than a geographic location is desired, the rationale (how the name will help to advance NOW's goals in the particular community will be addressed) for selection of the name shall be given in writing to the State Coordinator, who is responsible for presenting it with a recommendation to the National Vice President for approval or disapproval.

The chapter name, if approved, must include a geographic designation after the name (i.e., De-Colores-East LA NOW). NOW chapters may not be named after living persons or fictitious characters.

If the name is not approved, the National Vice President will notify the chapter in a timely manner, giving the reasons for disapproval.

Geographic designations are strongly encouraged as a means of best conveying the image of a political action organization rather than a club and because of the economic impact it has for chapters and states on central dues collection, the value for media recognition, and the ease with which potential new members can locate chapters.

(Passed by the National NOW Board of Directors – July, 1981)

NOW, Inc. at the National level, holds and retains the right and obligation to assign and remove chapter names and numbers based on established practice and procedure. (See Administrative Policy.)



(Passed by the National NOW Board of Directors – February, 2002)

NOW is not a service or support organization. Instead, NOW adheres to the principles of an action organization. Our Statement of Purpose says: “NOW's purpose is to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life.”

Items shown that are not “actions” can certainly be used to make a total project effective. For example, if the chapter is working on a reproductive rights project, actions such as picketing, lobbying and petitioning, can often be used in conjunction with educational programs. For example, a program meeting on reproductive rights can be key in educating the public on the issue.

ACTIVITIES THAT ARE ACTIONS:

- Pickets/marches/protests/vigils
- Lobbying public officials/legislators
- Petition drives/action teams
- Phone banking to encourage people to attend actions
- Drafting legislation and proposing improvements to state laws
- Walk-a-thons to raise funds and educate the public
- Street theatre
- Speak-outs on NOW issues
- Letter writing parties/post card campaigns
- “Zap” actions to call attention to discriminatory practices
- Court watch/media watch projects
- “Bad Ad” campaigns

ACTIVITIES THAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH ACTIONS:

- Press releases on issues and events
- Letters to the editors
- Program meetings with guest speakers
- Membership meetings
- Book discussion groups
- Consciousness-raising groups
- Attending conferences
- Create a Myspace or Facebook account
- Create a Zine to be distributed to the community
- Brown bags with other organizations



Get Active!

Taking action should be fun and not overwhelming. Here are six steps to help you successfully plan and accomplish an action.

#1 Pick an issue – Choose an issue to focus on. It can be local, statewide, national or international, as big or small as you'd like.

#2 Educate Yourself – Find out NOW's policy (if there is one) on your issue. What do people

Sample Actions

have to say on your issue and who else has spoken out about it. Try putting together a fact sheet or talking points on the issue. Also, don't forget your local NOW chapter can be an excellent resource!

#3 Decide on Goals – Decide what type of action would be most effective (for example a candle-light vigil is rarely considered a celebratory event!) It will also help to identify your target audience. After this, discuss tangible goals so you can measure the success of your event. Do you want to attract a certain amount of people, hand out a certain amount of flyers, raise an amount of money?

#4 Set logistics – Pick a date, time, and location. Decide on a publicity plan, budget plan, fundraising plan etc...Set up volunteer sheets with shifts and don't forget to plan the setup and cleanup.



#5 Act – Take a deep breath and try to stick with your plans. Some improvising will probably be necessary but staying calm and trying to have fun will make the day and your event more enjoyable for everyone.

#6 Follow up – Don't forget to give thanks to volunteers, donators, organizers etc...

Be creative and HAVE FUN!

Apply for a Provisional Charter

To Apply for a Provisional Charter, the chapter agrees to do the following:

Pass and adhere to chapter bylaws and operating rules which are in agreement with National bylaws.

Elect chapter officers and, upon assumption of office, send their names to the State Coordinator and the National Action Vice-President. Remember that they must be members of NOW.

Hold at least eight (8) publicly announced meetings a year for the purpose of conducting chapter business. The business and action agenda of the chapter can be advanced in a number of ways. Please contact us if you have questions.

Adhere to NOW's policies and purpose through actions and projects, with the intent of advancing NOW's issues. Chapters are expected to complete at least three (3) actions, each on a different issue, during the twelve-month period. At least one of these actions must address racism, reproductive rights, lesbian rights, or abortion. Completion of three actions is required in order to receive your Provisional Charter. Remember, you do not need hundreds of people to bring about change -- please contact your State President if you have questions or problems with this part of convening.

Implement a member education program on NOW's history and policies. It is strongly recommended that this include NOW Feminist Consciousness Raising. It is also important that this be an ongoing part of the chapter's agenda, not just something you do at the beginning of the chapter's work in the community.

Implement an affirmative action program in accordance with National bylaws. Diversity is critical to the development and success of your chapter. Please let your State President know if you need help with this.

Act in a financially responsible manner toward the organization, including the obligation to remit dues in accordance with National and State dues policies. We have included information about processing memberships through National NOW with your convening kit -- please go over this information with all of the leadership of the chapter. Be sure to contact your state to learn what dues they require be paid for new members.

File the online annual report of chapter status and activities; this goes to the State Coordinator, and National Vice President. The report will include a statement of chapter income and expenses, significant actions, membership education program, affirmative action program, plus goals and activities for the upcoming year.

You may use this list for reference, and you can expect any help you need from your State President in completing the above requirements for your Provisional Charter.

Sending in Memberships

When someone wants to join your NOW chapter, it doesn't have to be hard to get their memberships processed and their names on your roster in a timely fashion. (Note: If you received materials from a previous chapter you may have incorrect instructions if they were written when we had a different database service provider). It would be helpful if you would discard any other membership processing instructions you might have in your chapter files so as not to confuse future chapter leaders. Please see the "New Chapter" section to learn how to process memberships. Here's a quick summary!

PLEASE SEND ALL MEMBERSHIPS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT MEMBERSHIPS DIRECTLY TO:

**Membership Department
National NOW Action Center
1100 H Street NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005**

DO NOT USE ANY OTHER ADDRESS OR POST OFFICE BOX IN SENDING MEMBERSHIPS TO BE PROCESSED!

DO INCLUDE A NAME, email address, AND DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER OF THE PERSON WHO PROCESSED THE MEMBERSHIPS, SO WE CAN CONTACT THEM IF WE HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

NEW MEMBERS: Send in \$10 or \$15, depending on how much the new person paid to join**. Send us their name, address, phone and email address all printed carefully so they can be easily read by our processing staff. **If you send in more money, we cannot refund it to you later.** Also, we cannot cash checks made out to chapters unless they are endorsed over to National NOW.

PREVIOUS MEMBERS: If a person who's been a member in the past re-joins, their membership is termed a "Reinstatement." The amount you send to reinstate their membership is the **same** as for a new membership – \$10 or \$15 -- and depends on how much the person paid to re-join. However, **it is important** to let us know that the person may already be on our database, especially if it's a different address or under a different name.

RENEWALS: Please encourage members to send in their own renewal dues with the correct form. Please DON'T suggest that members send their renewals to your chapter's address. We include a business reply envelope (BRE) with every paper renewal notice; we also send email renewal notices when we have a member's email address. However, you may have someone in your chapter who thinks they are due to renew and gives renewal dues to a chapter leader. You must send

**NOW's sliding scale requires that chapters send \$10 for members who pay \$20 or less to the chapter, and \$15 if the member pays more than \$20 to join the chapter.



us **their** check, so that your State and National entities can also receive their share of this renewal, according to NOW policy. Just send us their check and any information you may have about how their name appears on your roster, including their membership ID number, and any changes in name, address, email address, or phone number may be included.

Additional Tips:

1) NOW has a sliding scale for new members. You need to make this information known in the most prominent way on your forms. Please don't list this as "Low Income" or "Hardship" categories. If you want to create other categories, like a "senior" or "student" rate, that's OK, but this simple statement would also send the message about sliding scales: "NOW dues (\$35 or \$40) sliding scale is available to



any person for any reason." Your lowest amount can be as low as you want, but you must send at least \$10 to the Membership Department, regardless of what the person pays. (Many chapters maintain a "scholarship" fund, transferring small amounts of money into their general fund for low-cost memberships.)

2) The U.S. population is a very mobile one! Folks move all over the country, but usually bring their feminist interests with them to their new city and state. Sometimes they let us know about their address changes and maintain a current membership in NOW, regardless of where they live. (They will appear as "Transfer In" in the Excel chapter transaction reports you will receive if requested. However, having been a member of a chapter previously, they might come to your chapter

meeting and join again as a new member, which can be confusing. It's helpful to include a check box or note on your membership forms: "Please let us know if you've been a NOW member in the past."

New Chapter Memberships: There's a bit of financial confusion about sending in those first memberships when a new chapter is just getting started, since it may take a few weeks to get a bank account set up and to get a Tax ID number from the IRS. At first, members probably won't object to making out two checks for their membership - one check made out to National NOW for their minimum amount (\$10 or \$15) and one made out in the new chapter's name for the rest of the amount they can pay. Your treasurer can deposit the funds into the chapter's account when it's ready.

Please note: NOW does not officially offer joint memberships because a membership is a right to vote. If two people want to share a membership, please make it clear to them that only one of them can vote at chapter, state and national meetings and conferences. That name should be listed first on the form.

Down the Road: Our organization's national bylaws require that chapters process membership dues in a "timely fashion." From the time we receive your new member names and correct amounts of money for processing, or a member's renewal notice and their check made out to National NOW, that material **is processed in less than 10 days.** Please remember that when you accept money from Get Active: Starting Your Own Chapter

Sending in Memberships

an individual you are actually legally responsible as well as organizationally responsible to process it quickly and correctly. It's against most state laws to accept money from individuals for something like organizational dues and not do what you're required to fulfill your contractual obligation. At the least, new members are irritated when they pay and don't get anything in the way of correspondence from us. The Action Center – and your state offices – can't send them a member card unless we have their names and membership fees. In addition, that new member may someday want to run for NOW office. It's certainly been the case for a person to be ineligible – or their qualifications questioned – for such a position because their membership money wasn't processed appropriately. Make sure your chapter treasurer understands the responsibilities, and set up some processes so that if memberships aren't being sent in and money isn't being processed correctly, chapter leadership can address the problem.



There are several places where we describe the membership processing system in more detail, and we can also provide you with a detailed explanation of the various codes and fields on the computer reports we send to your chapter. If you have questions, please contact the Action Center:

by phone: 202-628-8669 and ask for Membership Processing

by e-mail: member@now.org (Membership)

write us: Membership Department
National NOW Action Center
1100 H Street NW, 3rdFloor
Washington, DC 20005

Writing Your Chapter's Bylaws and Operating Rules

These sample bylaws and operating rules were developed to help you write your own bylaws and rules. These documents are an important part of organizing and running the chapter. They become the official documents that you may need to open a bank account or to meet requirements for a bulk mail permit. Chapters are urged to use the samples as a guide. We hope the notes below will help you expand on the sample documents to develop effective bylaws and rules to support your chapter.

What are bylaws? Chapter bylaws serve as a guide to structure the chapter, including how the chapter is governed, its purpose, how someone can become a member, the duties and obligations of members, the officers and how they are elected and for what term of office, how often there must be business meetings, the names of standing committees, the name of the parliamentary authority, and how the bylaws are amended. Chapter bylaws provide a framework to protect the chapter's members, and for that reason they should be hard to change, perhaps limiting the ability to amend by specifying a longer period of notice (than for operating rules) to members for approving changes, or stating that they can only be approved, with specific notice, at the chapter's annual meeting.

What are rules? Operating rules govern process and procedure within the limits set by the bylaws. Your chapter operating rules can be easier to change than bylaws, perhaps by requiring that notice be put in an every-member email notice thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting. Operating rules also help the chapter adapt to changing circumstances by listing more detailed officer responsibilities, and including provisions that allow officers to shift or share tasks or jobs.

Legal requirements for bylaws. Some of the provisions of the bylaws are actually required by law for a 501(c)(4) organization. Organizations are required to have a designated president and treasurer. Some chapters may title the President as "Coordinator" but laws refer to president and treasurer. The name of your chapter is filed with the IRS when you apply for your chapter EIN or Tax ID number. If your chapter wants to officially change your chapter name in the future, you must amend your bylaws and you must notify the Action Center so that the change can be noted on the IRS filings. There are very good reasons to state in your bylaws (and in practice, require) that officers of the chapter must be members of NOW.

Fiduciary responsibility. Members pay dues to NOW, and they expect the provisions of the chapter bylaws to be followed. Chapters with bylaws and rules, that are followed, allow members to participate and to join in the decision making process. While it has only happened a few times, it has been necessary for bylaws to be considered in a civil court; and banks and financial institutions often require a copy of the chapter's bylaws if you need to change signers on your account in light of a problem.

Parliamentary Authority: National bylaws state that Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall be the parliamentary authority for meetings, and – by virtue of our structure - that also applies to chapters and states. You can include this in your bylaws – or not – leaders are welcome to develop their own personal style of chairing that provides for orderly debate and governs voting.

How to use this guide. Activists can use this guide for writing a new chapter's bylaws in their entirety or to re-write existing bylaws and rules. These "sample chapter bylaws" serve only as a guide for your chapter to consider in writing your own bylaws and rules. The rationale that accompanies each section provides ADDITIONAL details you may want to consider adding, and also note areas that should be covered in the chapter's operating rules.

Sample Chapter Bylaws

| SAMPLE LANGUAGE | RATIONALE |
|---|--|
| <p>Article I. Name. The name of the organization shall be the _____ Chapter of NOW.</p> | <p>Name. Your chapter name must comply with NOW's policy on naming chapters, and be approved by your state president or your state's council when you apply as a convening chapter. State approval is required if you decide to change your chapter's name.</p> |
| <p>Article II. Purpose. NOW's purpose is to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. This includes, but is not limited to, equal rights and responsibilities in all aspects of citizenship, public service, employment, education, and family life, and it includes freedom from discrimination because of race, ethnic origin, age, marital status, sexual preference/ orientation, or parenthood.</p> | <p>Purpose. The sample bylaws use this language from a corresponding section of the National NOW bylaws. You can use other words, but consider that you might have to make this language public. Ensure that your chapter's official wording includes anti-discrimination language.</p> |
| <p>Article II(a). Affirmative Action. The Chapter is committed to the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences, and to that end commits to affirmatively act to achieve a diverse membership and leadership. Specific goals and affirmative measures shall be outlined in the Chapter's operating rules.</p> | <p>Affirmative Action Plan. Your chapter needs to have an affirmative action plan in order for you to receive your provisional chapter charter. This should be mentioned in the bylaws and spelled out in more detail in the operating rules. The plan applies to the behavior of the entire chapter and not just to quantify a percent of officers being people of color. You may include a goal of working with diverse members and organizations in your community, hosting diversity workshops and consciousness raising sessions, You may include direction to reach out to other groups (attending their meetings, subscribing to their newsletters, and urging your members to participate in their events), as part of a comprehensive goal of inclusion.</p> |
| <p>Article III. Membership. Any person who subscribes to its purpose and who is a member of National NOW may be a member of the _____ Chapter of NOW. A new member may join National NOW and the chapter simultaneously upon payment of dues.</p> | <p>Membership. Our national bylaws state that anyone who subscribes to our purpose (essentially, anyone who agrees with our issue positions) may join upon payment of dues. This section is important as it spells out who is (and is not) entitled to make decisions (i.e., vote) on chapter policy, budget or actions.</p> |
| <p>Article IV. Policy. The Chapter shall be bound by the National NOW bylaws and policy.</p> | <p>Policy. In addition to saying that the chapter is bound by National NOW policy and bylaws, you may want to state that the chapter may pass policy governing your own chapter structure and activities. You may want to state that an officer (usually the Secretary or an</p> |

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

RATIONALE

Administrative Officer) will be responsible for keeping a file of chapter policies up to date, and include that responsibility in that officer's job description or list of duties in your operating rules.

Article V. Meetings.

The Chapter shall hold at least eight (8) membership meetings each year. One of these meetings, designated the annual meeting, shall be the meeting at which election of officers shall take place. All members must receive at least _____ days notice of the annual meeting at which elections will be held. *Additional requirements regarding the number of types of meetings, and notice for those meetings, shall be contained in the operating rules of the Chapter*

Meetings.

The purpose of chapter meetings is to give the membership access to the leadership and to decision-making processes within the chapter. Eight (8) meetings per year is a suggested chapter standard. Any meeting at which decisions are made regarding spending money or creating policy for the chapter, or at which a substantive decisions are considered, such as the chapter planning a march or endorsing a local initiative, should be advertised to all chapter members, not just the ones with email. Some chapters prefer to do their work through standing or ad hoc committees. Provide a variety of opportunities during the year for members to meet with officers and with other members, and to be involved. Inclusion of all members is a basic underlying tenet of NOW, and writing it into your bylaws and operating rules can avoid a host of problems in the future.

Note: It is very important, both in the bylaws and operating rules of the chapter, to define how many days' notice must be given before a meeting at which decisions are to be made. Standard in most bylaws and operating rules is thirty (30) days. In the present day with electronic communication, that may seem unnecessary, but keep in mind that every member of the chapter (or every member of the chapter board) must receive the same amount of notice regardless of the method by which the notice is sent.

Notice can also protect the chapter against hasty decisions, made by too few people, and sometimes not in the best interest of all the members or the organization.

Neither these sample bylaws or operating rules provide for a chapter committee or the board to vote in an emergency situation online or by phone, with the major problem being that all members can't join in any discussion about what is being voted upon. You might address issues around emergency votes in several places in your operating rules. Robert's Rules permits emergency decisions to be made in a telephone conference call, but only by unanimous consent of all members of the group making the decision, such as a chapter board.

Article VI. Dues.

Section 1. Dues and specifics relating thereto shall be set forth in the operating rules of the Chapter.

Section 2. The fiscal year shall be January 1 to December 31.

Dues.

Dues are set by the national and state organizations and the amount could change. You must make a sliding scale available to any person for any reason. This might be a good place to emphasize your commitment to including all women by putting in writing the fact that your chapter has a sliding scale and that it is available to anyone for any reason. Your chapter's fiscal year

Sample Chapter Bylaws

| SAMPLE LANGUAGE | RATIONALE |
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| <p>Article VII. Officers/Board. Section 1. The officers shall be a President and a Treasurer and such other officers as may be determined by the operating rules. The composition and duties of the Board of Directors shall be specified in the operating rules of the Chapter. Section 2. The officers and board shall be elected annually at the annual meeting. The time and date of the annual meeting shall be set forth in the operating rules of the Chapter.</p> | <p>can begin with the month of your annual meeting and election of officers, or not. Many chapter leadership teams want to pass their own budget based on their own goals, rather than have the fiscal year reflect the calendar year.</p> <p>Officers/Board. You must have a president and treasurer, and these must not be the same person. This is a legal requirement. Spell out officer duties, or even what additional positions you want to have as chapter officers, in your operating rules so you can adapt to the changing needs of the group. If you feel strongly about your leaders having some experience with the organization (having attended a certain number of meetings or having been a member for a certain length of time) you could put that here, or in the “officers” section of your operating rules. Also, some chapters prefer to have two year terms for their leaders. This is also where you would specify term limits, if any, for your chapter officers.</p> |
| <p>Article VIII. Committees. Type of committees, their purpose, leadership, and membership shall be determined by the operating rules of the Chapter. Committee chairs are appointed by the president of the chapter, with the advice and consent of the board of directors, for a one year term.</p> | <p>Committees. While you probably shouldn’t mandate specific committees here in your bylaws, it’s more important to describe how their chairs are appointed, and to do it here if you want it to be uniform. Does the president recommend appointment to the chapter board, with the board voting whether to approve the person, or does the president appoint individuals based on who she or he prefers to work with? Can committees be created by the president over and above the ones named in the operating rules? Do committee chairs vote on your chapter board? These issues can be addressed here or in the operating rules.</p> |
| <p>Article IX. Nominations. The nominating procedure shall be determined by the operating rules of Chapter.</p> | <p>Nominations. The procedure should be spelled out directly in the operating rules of the chapter, but the requirement of having some kind of specific process for nominating people for election to chapter office (perhaps how many months a nominations chair is to be appointed in advance of your chapter’s annual meeting), how the chair and members are chosen, should be spelled out here. (For example, “A nominating committee chair and at least two members will be elected/appointed by the (president) (chapter board) (X months) prior to the chapter’s annual meeting, and specific processes involving the committee’s work shall be determined in the operating rules of the chapter.”)</p> |

| SAMPLE LANGUAGE | RATIONALE |
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| <p>Article X. Elections. Officers and board members must be elected by a majority vote or a majority of preferences counted in the final tally, if preferential voting is used. All members of the Chapter [who have been a member for more than ___ days] are eligible to vote and all members must be notified at least ___ days in advance of the election by the procedure prescribed in the operating rules of the Chapter. Other specific provisions relative to elections are detailed in the operating rules of the Chapter.</p> | <p>Elections. National NOW and NOW’s six districts all use preferential voting when more than two people are running for an office or position. This process is spelled out in National NOW policy, so that particular system doesn’t have to be outlined in your chapter bylaws or operating rules, only a stipulation that this is a way you will proceed if you have more than two people running for the same office. The bylaws should specify how long someone must be a member in order to vote in a chapter election, and how and how much notice (see section on “Notice” above in Article V. Meetings) about the meeting needs to be given to members. They should specify how the elections committee chair (or perhaps the whole committee) should be chosen.</p> |
| <p>Article XI. Voting at the National Conference. A. Any member of the Chapter who has been a member for at least 90 days may vote at the National Conference.</p> | <p>Voting at the National Conference.</p> |
| <p>Article XII. Grievance Procedure. <u>There must be a grievance procedure specified in the operating rules of the Chapter.</u></p> | <p>Grievance Procedure. The best time to consider a grievance policy for the chapter is <i>before</i> there are any problems that arise between or among members. It’s suggested that you put details in the operating rules so if the process you choose initially doesn’t work well for your group, you can change it without too much trouble. Review the national grievance policy for information.</p> |
| <p>Article XIII. Operating Rules of the Chapter. There shall be a set of operating rules for the Chapter which must detail the items referred to in these bylaws and may contain any other operating rules determined by the Chapter. The operating rules must be accepted by a 3/5 vote of the Chapter members present and voting and must provide a method for amending the rules to give the membership advance written notice of an intended change and requires a 3/5 vote of the members present and voting.</p> | <p>Operating Rules of the Chapter. This language from the Sample Bylaws is fine, although you may want to put the notice requirements here (number of days of advance notice of the meeting at which the proposed amendments will be voted on) in this section also.</p> |

Sample Chapter Bylaws

| SAMPLE LANGUAGE | RATIONALE |
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| <p>Article XIV. Amendments. These bylaws may be amended by a 2/3 vote at (any) (the annual) meeting of the Chapter providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) The proposed amendment has been submitted to the president 60 days in advance of the meeting.b) The proposed amendment has been mailed to the members 30 days in advance of the meeting or published in an every member publication 30 days in advance of the meeting. | <p>Amendments. Most chapters prefer to make bylaws difficult to amend. Members who don't participate regularly appreciate knowing that there is certain stability to the chapter's operation. Making bylaws harder to amend, and operating rules easier to amend, is recommended. Change your bylaws when they don't work. If you inherit bylaws and operating rules that appear to be current but don't make sense to you, chances are they were written many years ago. Change them to fit the way you want to structure the chapter, but follow the rules to make those changes.</p> |
| <p>Article XV. Dissolution. The Chapter may be dissolved upon a 2/3 vote of its members present and voting, after advance notice of no less than _____ days to every member that dissolution of the chapter will be considered at that meeting. Upon dissolution of the Chapter, the board and officers shall, after paying or making provisions for payment of all liabilities of the Chapter, remit all remaining assets to the state NOW organization, National NOW, or any local Chapter of NOW.</p> <p>Date adopted: _____</p> | <p>Dissolution. If the chapter leadership decides it is in the best interest of the group to dissolve, they cannot take this step without notifying the entire chapter membership (U.S. mail is best), and asking them to approve taking this step. Please discuss this step with national chapter development staff before you start the process – you'll need to keep documentation of the letter you send, with the date and the minutes of the meeting at which the vote was taken, and proof of the decision's transmittal to state NOW and to National NOW. All assets of the chapter must remain within the organization, either being given to other chapters, your state organization or National NOW.</p> |
| | |

These are suggested operating rules – they are not official. Chapters are urged to give serious thought to their structure and to adapt these as they wish. Questions may be referred to the National NOW office.

| SAMPLE LANGUAGE | RATIONALE |
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| <p>Article I. Meetings. Chapter meetings shall be held at least eight (8) times a year, at such dates, times, and places as determined by the Chapter board. Any number present shall constitute a quorum, except for the annual meeting at which a quorum shall consist of at least 10% of the actual Chapter membership.</p> | <p>Meetings. You might want to specify quorums for meetings other than the annual meeting, or to say what combination of officers or what number of officers must be present. Also consider numbers of meetings your chapter must have, and to whom those meetings are directed, since the purpose of a quorum is to make sure that a healthy percentage of people are involved in the ongoing operations of the chapter, or are at least informed and involved for serious decisions.</p> |
| <p>Article II. Dues. New members' dues shall be \$35.00 or as changed by the state organization. Reduced dues are available on a sliding scale beginning at (\$10.00 or \$15.00). Renewing members' dues shall be determined by National NOW.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">As of February 2006, dues are \$40 in California, Arizona, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Indiana, Connecticut and Missouri.</p> | <p>Dues. NOW's national dues have remained at \$35 for most states for quite a while, but a number of states have set their dues at \$40. This would be a good place to specify a bottom amount that someone can pay (\$10 or \$15), and to specify that the chapter should create a new member fund into which contributions can be put to help supplement the chapter treasury when new members come forward who might not be able to pay even the sliding scale minimum. You should not call these "hardship" dues or any other such offensive term, or set up a process through which someone has to call or specifically ask to pay this lower amount. It is strictly "honor system" regarding paying the minimum dues. You should also not ask someone to do work for the chapter to "make up" being "allowed" to pay a lower amount (this is essentially workfare, which NOW opposes). Note: You cannot charge chapter members a higher amount for dues than your state's official dues, but you can certainly ask people for additional contributions to support the chapter.</p> |
| <p>Article III. Officers and Board. A. The officers and their duties shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The President, who shall be the spokesperson and administrator of the Chapter and manage the day-to-day affairs of the Chapter between board and Chapter meetings. The president shall preside at all board and Chapter meetings. 2. The Vice-President, who shall assist the president and shall chair meetings in the absence of the president. 3. The Secretary, who shall take and retain the | <p>Officers and Board. You may designate as many officers as you wish, but a president (or coordinator) and treasurer are the minimum. The descriptions of their duties should be fairly straightforward. They can also state additional responsibilities, or divisions of work, such as having an action vice-president who coordinates the issue or action agenda of the chapter with committees or task forces who want to work specifically on an issue through the chapter, and having an administrative vice president who works with task forces or committees</p> |

Sample Operating Rules

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

minutes of both board and Chapter meetings and attend to general Chapter correspondence.

4. The Treasurer, who shall receive all funds of the Chapter and shall deposit them in such bank as may be designated by the board, and who shall disburse the funds by check in accordance with the budget or vote of the membership, and who shall make regular written reports to the board and membership.

B. These officers shall constitute the board. The board shall meet at least _____ times a year. The president or a majority of the board may call board meetings.

C. Vacancies. In the event of a vacancy in the office of president, the vice-president shall assume the office of president. Vacancies in other elected positions shall be filled by appointment by the board as soon as possible after the vacancy occurs.

D. Qualifications and terms of office.

- 1 All officers shall have been members of NOW for six (6) months prior to election. Each officer shall serve a one-year term, and no officer may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.
2. No person may hold two offices concurrently.
3. Officer's terms shall begin on following the meeting at which they are elected and shall run through _____ of that year.
4. Any person who is appointed to fill a vacancy or who assumes the office of president due to a vacancy shall be eligible to serve two full consecutive terms in that office.

Article V. Committees.

Ad Hoc Committees. The Board shall have the power to appoint committees for specific purposes and dissolve them when those purposes have been fulfilled. Chairs of ad hoc committees shall be members of the Chapter and shall be appointed by the Board.

Standing Committees. The Board shall have the power to appoint standing committees for the purpose of collaborative work on issues or administrative tasks. Chairs of said committees must be members of the Chapter and shall be appointed by the Board [or by the president with the consent of the board]. Committee chairs serve for a _____ year term (and are members of the board ex officio).

RATIONALE

to address the administrative work of the chapter, for example, the newsletter, the budget, new member recruitment and retention, and publicity or press.

- 1) You should specify, if you wish, how many terms the individuals may serve in a given office. This forces the chapter to pay attention to leadership development and bringing in new people as a priority. You will need to specify when the officers begin their duties – at the end of the meeting at which the election is held? Or at some date following the meeting, sometimes in conjunction with a transition meeting or goal setting meeting.
- 2) Because of the nature of activists' lives, many chapters have found it helpful to add a section that creates the opportunity for officers to redistribute tasks (the secretary who is supposed to do the newsletter hates to create publications, but the VP Administration loves these types of tasks -- rather than amend the operating rules just for this set of officers make it possible for them to trade off). Such a section could read: "The officers of the chapter may redistribute various tasks assigned to them, but not the responsibility for seeing that they are completed."

Committees:

This section should elaborate on the process of delegating work in your chapter. It might seem easier to function as a "committee of the whole," but it doesn't help development of new leadership, and doesn't encourage leaders to delegate. You should consider requiring committees to submit budgets for events they plan, and designate that the chapter receive the proceeds from fundraising they may do. Committees also offer good opportunities for newcomers to get involved in the chapter, but make sure committee chairs restrict decision-making to actual chapter members. (Note: Some chapters use the word "committees" to refer to groups addressing administrative responsibilities, and the term "task forces" for groups working on issues, such as violence, reproductive rights, or diversity within the chapter.)

| SAMPLE LANGUAGE | RATIONALE |
|---|--|
| | <p>Keep in mind that, if you give committee chairs a vote on your chapter board, the outcome may affect a) the number of officers and leaders required for meetings (i.e., your quorum), and b) any balance on your board of differing viewpoints, especially if the president nominates these chairs for approval by the board. Some chapters place limits on the number of committees functioning at any given time.</p> |
| <p>Article VI. Nominations. The Chapter board shall approve an election committee at least ninety (90) days prior to the annual meeting. The election committee shall solicit nominations for offices from the entire membership beginning at least sixty (60) days prior to the annual meeting. At least thirty (30) days before the annual meeting, the names of those persons who have been nominated [and a candidate statement of up to _____ words] shall be mailed to each Chapter member with a notice of the date, time and place of the annual meeting. Nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting.</p> | <p>Nominations. The sample bylaws appear to assume that the election and nominations committees are one and the same. You might spell out here whether you want them to be separate. This might also be a good place to specify that a member of the nominations or elections committee may not be a candidate for office or part of a candidate's campaign. Nominations have to be taken by the chair from the floor of the elections meeting, so in your annual meeting rules you may want to spell out what proof of membership someone planning to run must offer in order for their nomination to be accepted by the chair.</p> |
| <p>Article VII. Elections. A. The election of officers shall take place at the annual meeting, which shall be held in _____ of each year. B. Elections shall be conducted by the Elections Committee. Preferential balloting shall be used if more than two persons are running for the same office.</p> | <p>Elections. This section can add additional specifics about the elections process for the chapter, such as how materials of the candidates can be distributed to members (Emailing? Posting on web site?). Things to consider for policy may include how ballots from members whose qualification to vote might be in question are to be handled, and how the results will be announced to the candidates and chapter members.</p> |
| <p>Article VIII. Voting at the National Conference. B. Any member of the Chapter who has been a member for at least 90 days may vote at the National Conference.</p> | <p>Voting at the National Conference.</p> |

Sample Operating Rules

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

Article IX. Grievance Procedure

In the event of a grievance involving the violation of a specific NOW policy or bylaw, each side to the controversy will designate one arbitrator and these two arbitrators will select a third arbitrator. Any person who has a conflict of interest may not serve as an arbitrator. The arbitrators, acting as a grievance committee, will conduct a private hearing on the matter at which both sides to the controversy may present their case. The arbitrators shall endeavor to resolve disputes to the mutual satisfaction of the parties, but if they are unable to do so, the majority's decision becomes the decision of the grievance committee. If a party is dissatisfied with the decision, they may utilize the state NOW grievance procedure.

Article X. Amendments to Operating Rules.

A. These operating rules may be amended provided that such amendments are proposed by the board or by any five (5) Chapter members. Written notice of proposed amendments must be given to all Chapter members at least thirty (30) days before the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be voted on.

B. Amendments to these Operating Rules must be approved by 3/5 of those members present and voting.

RATIONALE

National Action Center.

Grievance Procedure.

In detailing how you want this procedure to happen, keep in mind that it must be fair to all parties including to people outside the chapter. Typically it's easiest to have a three member (if for some reason you want to include more people, be sure to specify an odd number) group, with a member chosen by each side in the dispute, and a chair chosen by those committee members, as is spelled out above. Also keep in mind that individuals cannot "skip" a level of the organization, for example going straight to the National NOW Board of Directors, just because they think they will not prevail at a chapter or state level. They must start at the level at which the grievance occurred and appeal to the next level if they believe the first level has not correctly decided their grievance.

- a. It is important to spell out that a grievance is a violation of a specific NOW policy or bylaw, and you may want to require that the grieving party specify a requested remedy. Problems that have resulted in hurt feelings or ongoing problems unrelated to policy violations (someone who is rude in meetings or perhaps someone who is overly negative or dismissive of new ideas) are more appropriately dealt with through mediation by an outside group or at a special meeting devoted to resolution or management of this type of situation.
- b. You may also want to address that disputes involving money must be addressed confidentially.
- c. You may want to also specify whether the committee has the power to ask that results of the grievance be kept confidential.

Amendments to Operating Rules.

Be sure to state an alternative in addition to the chapter leaderships' proposal of amendments (this can also apply to bylaws if the chapter leaders wish it), such as a number of chapter members who are required to propose a change.

- a. Very importantly, be sure to write down the date the operating rules and bylaws of the chapter they were adopted. Most word processing programs allow you to indicate a date on each page. Number each page. If a meeting was called to approve change to the

Sample Operating Rules

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

RATIONALE

operating rules, include in the chapter's file a copy of the newsletter or other notice used to let members know about the meeting. With bylaws, include a copy of the method of notice. With change adopted to either document, include minutes of the meeting at which the vote took place.

- b. Be sure to send copies of your new or newly revised chapter bylaws and/or operating rules to your state leadership, and to the chapter development department at the National Action Center, again being sure to date the materials you send.

Article XI. Affirmative Action and Diversity Outreach.

The chapter's affirmative action and diversity outreach plan shall consist of the following (this is an example of a plan):

- 1) The chapter shall maintain current demographic information about the area in which we are located.
- 2) The chapter shall conduct
 - a) at least (2) workshops or sessions per year devoted to general diversity and/or coalition building work
 - b) have a standing committee which directs this activity as well as other work and outreach
- 3) The chapter will have the following procedures in place for outreach:
 - a) membership in coalitions dedicated to community diversity
 - b) urge diverse membership in coalitions with which we work
 - c) inclusion of organizations dedicated to diverse groups on newsletter mailing lists, speakers lists, and event planning committees or task forces
 - d) requests of organizations dedicated to diverse groups to include us in their outreach
- 4) The chapter will set specific and realistic goals for membership, participation, and leadership of a diversity that reflects the community and our issue work.

According to the National NOW bylaws, "Subunits shall have an affirmative action plan aimed at increasing diversity of participation at all levels of NOW." The above language is vague because your goals will (and should) differ based on your own community and your chapter makeup. Your chapter can fulfill this requirement in any way you find to be successful, but it is suggested that this be in your operating rules so that you can easily revise the plan as you become more successful in your approach to diversity.

Date of Adoption: _____

NOW Strategy Summit and Bylaws Convention

New Orleans, Louisiana

June 19-21, 2015

Total: 139

Yays: 105

Nays: 34

BYLAWS REVISION

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this national membership organization of women and men is "National Organization for Women, Inc." (NOW).

ARTICLE II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

NOW's purpose is to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Any person who subscribes to NOW's purpose shall be eligible to become a member of NOW and upon payment of national dues shall be enrolled as a member, with all rights, privileges, and responsibilities thereof. All members of subunits of NOW must be members of the national organization. No person who subscribes to NOW's purpose shall be excluded from membership, segregated, or otherwise discriminated against within the organization.

Article IV. SUBUNITS

Section 1. Chapters

A. Members residing or working in a given state, county, municipality, or a regional or metropolitan area shall be encouraged to form a chapter, or members may join or form virtual chapters that are not tied to a geographic region. A chapter shall consist of no fewer than ten members, formulate bylaws consistent with these bylaws, convene and operate for the stated purpose of NOW, and elect its officers. Chapters shall be chartered by the national organization upon meeting these requirements.

National NOW Bylaws

B. The policies and programs of each chapter shall be defined by its members so long as such policies and programs are not contrary to those enacted by the national bylaws, National Conference or National Board.

C. Membership in a chapter and voting privileges in the election of chapter officers shall be open to all NOW members who meet the chapter dues and length-of-membership requirements, if any; provided however that members may be voting members of only one chapter. All persons elected to leadership positions in the chapter must be members of NOW.

D. The local, grassroots chapters are the building blocks of NOW, serving as the focus of feminist action.

Section 2. States

A. Each state and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (hereinafter referred to as a state) which does not now have an existing state organization may apply to convene a state organization with the approval of a majority of the chapters or members of that state. States shall be convened and chartered upon meeting requirements set by the National Board or National Conference. States must continue to meet such requirements to maintain their state status, subject to the removal of their state charters in accordance with the procedures set forth in Article XIII, Section 2. State organizations shall convene chapters within their state, with the exception of virtual chapters, which shall be convened with the authorization of a national officer. If a state organization fails to approve or disapprove a convening request within 60 days, the national organization may convene the chapter. State organizations may convene and support local networks or task forces within the state which are not independent entities.

B. The policies and programs of each state organization shall be defined by its members and chapters so long as such policies and programs are not contrary to those established by the national bylaws, National Conference or National Board.

C. Membership in state organizations and voting privileges in the election of state officers shall be open to all NOW members who meet the state dues and length-of-membership requirements, if any; provided however that members may be voting members of only one state organization. All persons elected to leadership positions in the state organization must be members of NOW.

D. In states without a state organization, that region's Regional Director, in consultation with the regional Board members, may appoint a State Coordinator/President to serve until elections are held, not to exceed one year.

National NOW Bylaws

Section 3. Electoral Districts

A. There shall be electoral districts, each of which shall elect National Board members (hereinafter referred to as Board members or, collectively, the Board or National Board).

B. Membership in an electoral district and voting privileges in the election of National Board members shall be open to all NOW members who meet the length-of-membership requirements set forth in Article VII, Section 5 hereof; provided however that members may be voting members of only one electoral district. National Board members from each electoral district shall be elected in accordance with Article VII, Section 5 hereof, and such other requirements as may be proposed by the National Board and adopted by the National Conference.

Section 4. Affirmative Action

Subunits shall have an affirmative action plan aimed at increasing diversity of participation at all levels of NOW.

ARTICLE V. INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATES

The national organization may establish affiliates or may affiliate with existing organizations in other countries to promote feminism worldwide.

ARTICLE VI. OFFICERS

The national officers may delegate such duties as may be necessary to allow them to implement the performance of their office, but they may not delegate their responsibility. The officers shall constitute the Executive Committee and be responsible at all times to the full National Board and to the members.

Section 1. Titles and Duties

A. President. There shall be a President who shall be salaried and shall be a voting member of the National Board. The President shall be the principal spokesperson and chief executive and financial officer of the organization, shall call the meetings of the Board, the Executive Committee, and the National Conference and shall preside at these meetings. The President shall also serve as the Chair of the NOW PAC.

B. Vice President. There shall be a Vice President who shall be salaried and shall be a voting member of the National Board. The Vice President shall preside at all meetings in the absence of the President, keep the minutes of the meetings of the Board, the Executive Committee and National Conference, be custodian of the records, and perform such other duties as may be delegated by the President and Board. For corporate purposes, the Vice President shall be designated Secretary/Treasurer. The Vice President shall serve as the Treasurer of the NOW PAC.

National NOW Bylaws

C. Upon a three-fifths (3/5) vote of the National Board at least 180 days before a national conference at which officers are elected, the Board may, after taking into account the organization's projected 4-year budget and other factors it deems relevant, establish one or more additional Vice President positions, which may be salaried and which shall have the responsibilities and duties as determined by the Board.

Section 2. Qualifications and Terms of Office

A. All national officers shall have been members of NOW for at least four years immediately prior to election and shall have served at least one year as a chapter or state officer or National Board member. Each term of office shall be four years and shall begin 30 days following the election at the National Conference. Each officer shall serve no more than two consecutive terms.

B. In the case of officers elected to fill a vacancy under Article XII, their partial terms shall not be considered in determining the term limitation.

Section 3. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be composed of the national officers. Where action is necessary between meetings of the Board, the Executive Committee may act on behalf of the Board, provided that the action is consistent with existing NOW policy. The Executive Committee shall report all of its actions and decisions to the Board. A meeting of the Executive Committee shall be held only after adequate notice to all officers. The Executive Committee may meet by any means, such as a conference telephone call, which will allow the officers to confer as a body.

Section 4. Nominations

Nominations for officers tickets shall be submitted to the Nominating Committee in writing at least 90 days before the election Conference, provided that nothing in this shall be interpreted to require tickets for the election of national Board members in the electoral districts. Each officer ticket submitted to the Committee must contain a nomination for every officer position. Nominations shall not be taken from the floor.

Section 5. Elections

One of the proposed officer tickets shall be elected by a majority vote of the eligible members present whose preferences are counted in the final tally at the National Conference. If there are more than two officer tickets nominated preferential voting shall be used, and balloting shall be conducted according to the parliamentary authority prescribed in these bylaws.

Section 6. Salaries and Fees

A. The Board shall set the salaries of the paid officers for the next term, except that officers may not vote on matters of officers' salaries.

National NOW Bylaws

B. All officers who receive honoraria as a result of their elected position shall remit to the NOW general fund one hundred percent of the said honoraria minus expenses.

ARTICLE VII. THE NATIONAL BOARD

Section 1 Composition

The National Board shall be composed of the national officers and the Board members elected by members of the electoral districts.

Section 2 Duties and Powers

A. Administrative

The Board shall manage the affairs and control the funds and property of the organization; approve all appointments; and adopt necessary rules and regulations, provided that none of the Board's actions shall conflict with or modify the actions or directives of the national Conference or be inconsistent with the purpose of the organization.

B. Action

The Board shall develop and plan the action agenda and submit it to the National Conference for approval, implement conference resolutions, and facilitate national actions and the exchange of information.

C. National Board members shall be responsible to present the concerns (including actions and programs) of the states and chapters within their regions to the National Board and to report National Board decisions to the states and chapters within their regions. Further duties of National Board members within their regions may be defined by their region's bylaws and policies.

D. At the beginning of each Board term, each Board member shall declare their personal commitment to give or get contributions and/or NOW memberships, taking into consideration the Board member's resources, including contacts, geographic location, existing responsibilities and other relevant factors.

Section 3 Meetings

The Board shall meet at least three times each calendar year at the call of the President or at the request of one-fourth of the Board members. At least thirty days' notice shall be given for regular meetings of the Board. At least seven days' notice shall be given for special meetings.

National NOW Bylaws

Section 4. District Election of Board Members

A. There shall be six electoral districts which shall be drawn every ten years, following publication of the U.S. Census information, by the National Board with the approval of the National Conference. The electoral districts shall have roughly equal numbers of NOW members and such other characteristics as the Board and Conference may approve. The first such districts shall be:

Pacific - Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington;

Western - Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada New Mexico, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Utah, Texas

Heartland - Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin;

Southern - Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee;

Eastern - Delaware, District of Columbia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia;

Northern - Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont.

B. Each electoral district shall have no fewer than two (2) members elected to the National Board. Any electoral district with a delegation that includes a person of color shall be entitled to three (3) members elected to the National Board. No more than one (1) National Board member shall be elected from any one state.

Section 5. Procedures and Standards for Elections

A. Any NOW member who has been a member in good standing for at least two years immediately prior to the date of election shall be eligible to serve on the National Board. Board members must remain residents of the electoral district from which elected in order to remain on the Board.

B. All National Board members shall be elected at district caucuses held during NOW's annual national conference in even-numbered years or at a district conference held in March, April or May of even-numbered years. All members of the electoral district in good standing whose dues are received by the national organization or its appropriate subunits at least ninety days prior to the national, district in-person, or online district conference and who are present may vote. Minimum procedures shall be:

The National Board members must be elected by a majority of the votes cast. Preferential or cumulative voting is permissible. In preferential voting, Board members must be elected by a majority of preferences counted in the final tally.

At least sixty days' notice in an every-member NOW publication must be given of elections for National Board members.

National NOW Bylaws

Electronic voting in accordance with procedures adopted by the national Board and approved by the National Conference is permitted, provided that it must be conducted in a secure, affordable and accessible manner.

The procedure for nominating National Board members in the electoral districts shall be the same as that for nominating officers of the national organization. The State Coordinators in each electoral district or their designees shall serve as the nominating committee for that district.

Districts must notify the National Action Center no later than January 1 of an election year that the election will be held at a district conference. The State Coordinators and National Board members in each district who are not running for election or re-election shall select the site for a district election conference.

Section 6. Term of Office

A. National Board members elected in the electoral districts shall hold office for a term of two years or until their successors are elected.

B. Board members shall take office at the close of the National Conference in the year in which they are elected.

C. No Board members shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms. In the case of Board members elected to fill a vacancy under Article XII, their partial term shall not be considered in determining the term limitation.

D. Any National Board member who is absent from three consecutive National Board meetings for which reimbursement is provided shall be automatically removed from the National Board without recourse to Article XIII, Section 2, Removals.

Section 7. District Directors

One National Board member from each electoral district may be designated by the district to serve as the District Director of the district.

ARTICLE VIII. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Section 1. National Conference

A. There shall be an annual meeting of the membership (hereinafter referred to as the National Conference or the Conference) which shall rotate through the regions, with separate rotations for election and non-election conferences, and shall be held for the purpose of transacting the business of the organization.

B. The National Conference shall be the supreme governing body of NOW.

C. The Conference shall be held in the month of June or July, and at such other times as the membership may decide by written petition of ten percent of the membership or a

National NOW Bylaws

majority vote of the National Board. The Board shall fix the exact date and place of the national Conference and give at least sixty days' advance notice thereof in an every-member NOW publication. It shall make arrangements for hotel and meeting place accommodations and determine the Conference agenda.

D. In the even-numbered years, the National Conference shall include a special issue or constituency summit in the event that NOW Foundation does not sponsor such a summit.

E. No membership meeting at any level of NOW shall require NOW members in good standing to pay a registration fee or any other fee in order to participate in the business events or activities of said meeting. No distinction of any kind shall be drawn by the Conference or the Committee between those able to pay fees over and above basic dues and those unable to pay such fees.

Section 2. Voting Privileges

A. Only members in good standing whose dues are received by the national organization or its appropriate subunits at least ninety (90) days prior to the Conference and who are duly registered and in attendance shall be eligible to vote at the Conference. Each member in attendance shall have one vote.

B. Use of the unit rule is prohibited. There shall be no proxy voting.

C. A quorum shall be twenty-five percent of those members registered and eligible to vote and shall include one officer and two other National Board members.

Section 3. Participation in Conference

The National Conference shall be open to all NOW members, who shall be entitled to speak whether or not eligible to vote.

ARTICLE IX. COMMITTEES

Section 1. Nominating Committee for the Election of Officers

A. Election. The members of the Nominating Committee shall be elected in their electoral districts. There shall be one member from each district. The committee shall designate the chair from among its members.

B. Duties. The Nominating Committee shall not endorse an individual officer ticket and each member shall maintain strict neutrality regarding all tickets. The Nominating Committee shall:

Publicize and distribute in an every-member NOW publication information on the

National NOW Bylaws

deadlines for submission officer ticket information. These deadlines shall be set by the National Board.

Accept officer ticket nominations from members.

Determine each nominee meets the qualifications as described in these bylaws.

Provide uniform information sheets to be submitted by the officer tickets.

Assume responsibility for the distribution of information on all eligible officer tickets.

Publish and distribute officer ticket information in an every-member NOW publication at least thirty days before the Conference.

Section 2. Standing Committees of the National Board

A. The Board shall organize itself into committees so as to best accomplish its work. Committees may include but are not limited to:

Membership

Action and Programs

Structure and Process

Fundraising

Finance and Budget

B. The members of the standing committees shall serve for the duration of the term of the administration under which they serve.

C. The standing committees shall report to the Board at regular intervals and to the membership at the annual Conference or through an every-member NOW publication.

D. The President shall designate the chair of each committee subject to the approval of the National Board.

E. The chair of a standing committee shall be any NOW member unless otherwise provided for in these bylaws.

F. The members of the standing committees shall be appointed by the Board.

G. The functions and duties of the standing committees shall be designated by the Board.

Section 3. Advisory Committee

There may be a National Advisory Committee appointed by the Board which shall consist of a chair appointed by the Board and not more than one-hundred NOW members who shall serve two years. The Advisory Committee shall be available to the Board for advice and consultation as requested and for assistance in fundraising. The chair shall be a non-voting member of the Board and shall serve for a term of two years, the completion of the term to be at the close of the National Conference in odd-numbered years. The Advisory Committee shall assist in the identification and cultivation of potential major donors to

National NOW Bylaws

NOW. At the beginning of every Board term, each Advisory Committee member will declare their personal fundraising commitment for NOW, taking into consideration the Advisory Committee member's resources, including contracts, geographic location existing responsibilities and other relevant factors.

Section 4. Special Committees of the National Board

There shall be other committees which do not have the authority of the Board for management of the corporation, but which may advise the Board, officers, and membership-at-large, or may perform such other duties as the Board, National Conference, or President may wish to assign. This will include a permanent task force of young feminists aged 30 or under to be appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the board to advise the Board of Directors and National Conference on matters of agenda, leadership recruitment and issue prioritization regarding young feminists in NOW, and a permanent task force on racial justice to be appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Board to advise the Board and National Conference on matters of agenda, leadership recruitment and issue prioritization regarding feminists of color in NOW.

Section 5. Committees to Implement Conference Resolutions

There shall be committees to implement Conference resolutions. Such committees can be established and their membership and direction be determined by the National Conference, the President, or the Board. Chairs of such committees shall be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Board.

Section 6. Composition

Although a committee or task force may allow participation by non-NOW members in its activities, all positions of responsibility or decision making authority shall be held by current NOW members.

ARTICLE X. FINANCE

Section 1. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year shall begin January 1 and end December 31.

Section 2. Dues

A. Annual dues shall be paid on the anniversary date of the day on which the member joined. The amount of dues shall be set by a two-thirds vote of the Board, which shall establish regular and hardship dues. Any member whose dues are in arrears for one hundred and eighty (180) days following the anniversary date on which the membership was first recorded in the national records shall be dropped from membership rolls one month after the mailing of a warning notice that the membership has become delinquent.

National NOW Bylaws

B. NOW members shall pay annual dues to National NOW, which shall be responsible for forwarding state and chapter portions (rebates) to the appropriate units. Rebates shall be sent at least monthly.

D. The membership of persons who remit national dues during a National Conference shall take effect upon adjournment of the Conference.

Section 3. National Budget

The Finance and Budget Committee shall prepare a proposed line-item budget for the fiscal year by October 1 of the prior year. The budget, after having been published in a NOW leadership mailing, shall be approved by a majority vote of the members of the Board present and voting at a meeting preceding the commencement of the fiscal year on January 1. After the budget is adopted, an abbreviated version will be printed in an every-member NOW publication. Review and revision of the budget may occur at any regular or special meeting of the Board by a majority vote of those present and voting, with subsequent notification to the membership indicating a summary of the revision and current financial experience to date.

Section 4. Audit

The results of every audit shall be available to the members upon request.

ARTICLE XI. GRIEVANCES

Grievance procedures shall be determined by the National Board.

ARTICLE XII. VACANCIES

Section 1. President

In the event of a vacancy in the office of President, the Vice President-Executive shall immediately assume the office and duties of President.

Section 2. Other Officers

In the event of a vacancy in any other national office, the Board shall appoint any member of NOW who meets the criteria for elective office in the national organization. Officers so appointed shall take office within thirty days of the appointment.

Section 3. National Board Members Elected from the Electoral Districts

National NOW Bylaws

A. Vacancies in electoral district National Board positions shall be filled by any member of that district who meets the criteria for national office and is elected by a vote of two-thirds of the State Coordinators and the remaining Board member(s) of that district.

B. The existence of a vacancy shall be consistent with the provision of Article VII, Section 4, B.

ARTICLE XIII. RECALL AND REMOVAL

Section 1. Recall

A. National Board Members Elected in Districts.

A petition signed by ten percent of the membership of the region shall initiate the recall of a National Board member elected from that region. The petition shall designate either a Conference vote or a postal ballot as the method of recall. The National Board has the responsibility to carry out the mandate of the petition. In the case of a postal ballot, the voting procedures shall be in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.

B. Officers

1. A petition signed by ten percent of the NOW membership from each region shall be necessary to initiate the recall of a national officer. Recall charges shall be filed with the Vice President-Membership. Time for collecting signatures shall be no more than 120 days from the date of publication of charges in an every-member NOW publication. Petition signatures shall be filed with or mailed to the Vice President-Membership. Mailed petitions shall be postmarked no later than midnight of the 120th day.

2. Grounds for recall must be stated in writing and submitted to the Vice President-Membership. Stated grounds for recall must appear on each individual petition. Petitions shall be limited to no more than thirty signatures per page.

3. A petition containing the required number of signatures, after having been filed with the Vice President-Membership, shall be certified by the VP-Membership within fourteen calendar days. Both the officer subject to recall and the person(s) filing the signatures shall be notified in writing of the status of the recall petition by the Vice President-Membership within three days of the date of certification or failure thereof. The required number of signatures shall be determined by the total national membership at the time of the National Conference prior to the date of the filing of recall charges with the Vice President-Membership. After certification, recall notice must be published in the next every-member NOW publication.

4. The original filing of charges and each petition shall designate a postal ballot as the method of recall so long as the recall vote shall be in accordance with the procedures for election. In case of a postal ballot, voting procedures shall be in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised. The National Board has the responsibility to carry out the

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mandate of the petition.

5. The postal ballot shall be mailed to all delegates elected to attend the prior national Conference. The recall vote shall be approved by an absolute majority of delegates. The time for delegates to return ballots shall be no more than seventeen calendar days.

6. Under no circumstances shall the time for recall extend beyond ninety days after the date the recall signatures have been certified by the Vice President-Membership.

Section 2. Removals

After notice and opportunity for a hearing, the National Board, by a two-thirds vote of its actual membership, may remove any officer, Board member, chapter charter, or membership if the Board determines the actions in question are contrary to the purposes of NOW and injurious to the organization.

ARTICLE XIV. AMENDMENTS

Bylaws Revision Draft:

Section 1. National Conference

These bylaws may be amended by a three-fifths vote at the national Conference, provided that:

A. The amendment is proposed by either a majority vote of the National Board, 500 members, two state organizations, or fifty chapters.

B. The proposed amendment is submitted to the Board at least 120 days in advance of the national Conference for publication in an every-member NOW publication.

C. The existent bylaw plus the proposed amendment is published in an every-member NOW publication at least sixty days prior to the meeting of the National Conference.

Section 2. Postal Ballot

These Bylaws may be amended by a referendum of postal ballots in which a majority of the valid returned ballots show approval of the change, provided that:

A. The amendment has been proposed by either a majority vote of the National Conference, the majority of the Board, 2,000 members, seventeen state organizations, or one hundred-fifty chapters.

National NOW Bylaws

B. At least sixty days before the mailing of the ballots, an announcement is made in an every-member NOW publication, including the existent bylaw, the proposed amendment, and pro and con arguments written by representatives of opposing sides.

C. The above announcement is repeated in the ballot mailing.

Section 3. Publication of Amendments

The National Board shall print in an every-member NOW publication announcements of all amendments submitted to it within proper deadlines by proper bodies as defined in Sections 1 and 2 above.

ARTICLE XV. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

Except as herein provided, all proceedings of NOW shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.

ARTICLE XVI. DISSOLUTION

Section 1. Method

The corporation may be dissolved in the following manner: A petition for dissolution signed by ten percent of the members of each of a minimum of fifteen chapters spread across at least three electoral districts shall be submitted to the National Board. Upon the certification of the signatures on the petition a postal ballot to dissolve the organization shall be sent to all members and shall require a two-thirds vote of those valid returned ballots to uphold the petition to dissolve. Costs for this are to be covered by those chapters that are petitioning.

Section 2. Disposition of Assets

Upon the dissolution of the organization, the National Board shall, after paying or making provisions for payment of all liabilities of the corporation, dispose of all the assets in a manner appropriate to that purpose or to such organization or organizations as shall at the time qualify as devoted to the purpose of NOW.

Policy for Interaction Between Chapters Sharing the Same Geographical Area

- 1. New Chapter Formation in Areas Where There is an Existing Chapter(s):** The chapters are encouraged to issue a joint media release, in which the media is advised of the convening of the new chapter, and that it is being formed for these reasons: 1) expanding of NOW, 2) diversity of programs and actions, 3) expanded choice of meeting nights and locations. The release may also include meeting information for all chapters and a listing of official spokespeople and contact telephone numbers for each chapter.
- 2. Membership:** No chapter should actively solicit for funds or membership the members of other chapters. Any person wishing to transfer membership from one chapter to another may do so by making a written request to the other chapter. No chapter may transfer a member from other chapters onto its own rolls without first transmitting to that chapter a copy of the member's written request.
- 3. Communication:** Each chapter is encouraged to put the other chapters on its mailing list, and each chapter is encouraged to send the other chapters copies of its newsletters, meeting notices, media releases, etc., to avoid date conflicts and duplication of efforts. In the event that chapters regularly publish a newsletter, each should make a reasonable effort to include information about the other chapter's events, if requested to do so by that chapter.
- 4. Public Criticism:** No representative (meaning officer, board member, or official spokesperson) may publicly criticize any statement, activity or representative of other chapters, unless the statement or activity is contrary to NOW policy (e.g., Administrative or Issues Policy Manual, conference resolution, etc.); even then, the "aggrieved" representative must first attempt to meet with the "offending" representative, to resolve the conflict and make a joint statement if possible.
- 5. Local Area Council:** In multi-chapter metropolitan areas, each chapter shall be encouraged to form a local area council for the purpose of exchange of information, ideas, press, and scheduling of events on NOW actions where those chapters have decided to participate in the same action, although this does not bind any chapter to participate in any particular National action.
- 6. Issues Positions:** On an issue which is not addressed in National NOW policy, or on which National NOW has not taken a position, a chapter or state may only identify their position as their chapter's or state's position on such an issue.
- 7. Defunct Chapters:** The existing treasury of defunct chapters, if any, shall be forwarded to the state organization, earmarked specifically for the purpose of chapter development in that state.

Passed by the National NOW Board of Directors, May, 1987

Sample NOW Chapter Annual Report

| | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Chapter Name: | |
| Chapter Address: | |
| Chapter Number: | |
| Public Phone: | Public E-mail |
| Public Web Address: | Public Fax: |
| Report Completed By: | |

Chapter Officers: Please add as many officers as you would like us to list.

| Office Title | Name | NOW ID# | E-mail/Phone |
|----------------|------|---------|--------------|
| Chapter Leader | | | |
| Treasurer | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Chapter Status:

1. What methods have you used to attract new members? Check all that apply.

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tabling | <input type="checkbox"/> Petition Drive | <input type="checkbox"/> Canvassing (door-to-door) | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone banking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> House parties | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | | |

2. When was the last time you elected new leadership?

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2010 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2009 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2008 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2007 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

NOW Chapter Annual Report

Meetings:

1. How frequently does your chapter hold meetings?

- More than 8 times a year 8 times a year Fewer than 8 No meetings

2. How many times a year does your officers meet?

- More than 8 times a year 8 times a year Fewer than 8 No meetings

3. Does your chapter have task forces or committees?

- No, we do not have any committees.
 Yes. Please list your chapter committees: _____

4. How are your events/meetings publicized to the NOW membership? Check all that apply.

- Mailings Email Phone Community bulletin boards
 Websites Fliers MySpace/Facebook Other _____

5. How do you reach out to the community to attract new activists/members? Check all that apply.

- Actions Presentations/Visibility at community events Forums
 Other _____

6. On which issues have you met to discuss this past year? Check all that apply.

- Abortion Rights/Reproductive Justice
 Promoting Diversity/Ending Racism
 Violence Against Women
 Lesbian Rights
 Constitutional Equality
 Economic Justice
 Mothers/Caregivers Economic Rights
 Working for Peace
 Disability Rights
 Global Feminism
 Women-Friendly Workplaces
 Immigration
 Young Feminist Programs
 Love Your Body
 Media Activism
 Other _____

Actions:

1. Which actions were most effective for your chapter growth? Check all that apply.

- March Rally/Vigil Lobbying Petition drive Phone banking
 Speak outs Sidewalk visibility GOTV Other _____

2. Which kinds of actions does your chapter want to do more of?

Education:

1. How did you raise awareness about NOW's priority issues in your community? Check all that apply.

- Issue briefing Conference panel Workshop Issue brochure
 Website article Community forums Other _____

2. How did you raise awareness about NOW's priority issues within your chapter? Check all that apply.

- Chapter brochure New member packet Roundtable chapter discussions
 Issue brochure Website articles Other _____

Conference Participation:

1. Did your chapter participate in a District Women of Color and Allies event?

- Yes No Did not have one

2. Did your chapter participate in your State Conference?

- Yes No Did not have one

3. Did your chapter participate in your District Conference?

- Yes No Did not have one

Affirmative Action:

1. How has your chapter implemented its affirmative action plan?

- Our chapter has attracted a diverse group of members across: Check all that apply.
 Race Ethnicity Economic status Persons with Disabilities
 Sexual Orientation/Gender Expression Gender Religion Age
 Other _____
 We need help with our affirmative action plan.

2. Other outreach to diverse groups includes:

- Work in coalition with organizations of diverse members
 Join actions led by women-of-color
 Invited diverse community leaders to lead issue discussions at our meetings
 Other _____

Income, Expenses, and Finances:

1. 2009 approximate income: _____

2. 2009 approximate expenses: _____

3. Total assets as of 12/31/2009 (this includes cash on hand, savings, CDs, etc.) _____

4. Total liabilities as of 12/31/2009 (bills still owed, unpaid loans, etc.) _____

5. What are the top three biggest expenses for your chapter? Check three:

- Actions Conferences Lobbyists/staff Publicity Rent Phone
 Postage Food Other _____

6. Does your chapter require more than 1 signature on large checks?

- No Yes
If yes, what amounts?
 \$50 \$100 Other _____

NOW Chapter Annual Report

7. Your chapter's primary bank account (bank name): _____
8. Bank account number: _____
9. Signer(s) on the account:
Primary: _____
Secondary: _____
10. How often does your treasurer make financial reports to the membership?
 Never About once a year About once a month Other _____

Article XI, of the National Bylaws:

“Grievance procedures shall be determined by the National Board.”

[Grievance procedure as amended by the National Board, July 2004]

- 1) All grievances brought to the NOW board shall be in writing. Grievances shall contain a statement setting forth the nature and basis of the grievance, specifying who or what unit(s) of NOW have violated what specific policy, procedure, bylaw, or regulation of NOW or its various sub-unit(s); the remedy requested; and shall indicate whether, and the manner in which, all available remedies at the local, state and/or district levels have been exhausted. All local, state and/or district remedies must be exhausted before invoking this article unless good cause is shown why the grieving party has not done so. A copy of the grievance shall be mailed by the grievant to the party or parties against whom the grievance is filled at the same time that the grievance is filed with the national office. Grievances must be submitted within six months from the date of the grievable incident or within six months from the time that the member involved first knew or should have known of the grievable incident or from the date that all attempts at local resolution have been exhausted. Grievances shall be filed by certified mail with the Executive Committee which shall determine within 30 days after the date of receipt whether the grievance meets the requirements set forth in this paragraph. A decision by the Executive Committee not to invoke the grievance procedure for failure to meet these requirements may be appealed to the National Board. If a national officer is involved in a grievance, that grievance will go to the National Board in executive session to determine if the grievance meets the requirements set forth in this paragraph.
- 2) If any part of the grievance is accepted, within 7 days thereafter the Executive Committee shall serve copies of the grievances upon the sub-unit officer(s) or individual member(s) about which the grievance complains advising them that the grievance has been accepted. Service shall be by certified mail to the last known address. The grieving party or parties must be current members of NOW at all times during the grievance procedure. Should the membership of any grieving party or parties expire at any time during the grievance process, that party shall no longer have standing to utilize the grievance process nor shall any further steps of the grievance process be necessary with regard to the non-member party. (Party to be defined as an individual or group where multiple individuals are involved on a “side.”)
- 3) Upon receipt of a grievance which meets the requirements set forth in paragraph 1, a grievance committee consisting of three members of the National Board shall be selected to hear the grievance. Once selected, the members shall have continuing authority to serve on the committee, notwithstanding the end of their terms on the National Board. The Grievance Committee shall have full authority to hear and resolve the grievance. Each party (“side”) to the grievance shall select one member of the grievance committee and one alternate within 14 days of notification by the Executive Committee. Those Board members who are also Executive Committee members shall not be selected as members of the Grievance Committee. For purposes of this section, a party shall be deemed notified on the date actual notice is given or if notice is by certified mail, on the fourth business day following the date notice is mailed. If the grieving party fails to select a member and/or an alternate, their grievance will be dismissed. If the party being grieved against fails to select a member and/or alternate, the Structure and Process Committee of the National Board (or its successor committee responsible for bylaws issues) shall select a member and/or an alternate. The two members selected by the parties are not to function as representatives of the parties by whom they are selected, but as impartial members of the committee. The two members

Grievance Procedure

shall select the third member within 14 days of being notified of their selection as committee members. If the committee members are unable to reach agreement as to a third member, the National Board may select the third member, either by drawing lots or by another appropriate means. Alternates may be present at the hearing as observers. If an alternate must fill a vacancy, she/he shall have 7 days to review any/all grievance documents, minutes and/or transcripts and take up her/his duties. If necessitated by a vacancy, a new member and/or hearing date may be chosen using the procedures described herein. A vacancy may be declared by two members of the Grievance Committee or by the Structure and Process Committee or its successor if a member is unable to or fails to participate in the grievance process as outlined. Members of the Board shall disqualify themselves from the committee should they feel they have a conflict of interest. The selecting party has an additional three days to select a replacement should a member who has already been selected disqualify her/himself. The Executive Committee shall mail notice to all parties that a Grievance Committee has been selected, within 7 days of the selection of the third committee member. All of the deadlines for action within this grievance procedure may be waived by agreement of the parties. The deadlines may also be waived by vote of the National Board, upon request of the Grievance Committee. Any such waiver shall be communicated to the Committee, to all parties, and to the National Board.

- 4) The committee shall select a chair from its members within 7 days of the selection of the third committee member. The chair shall notify all parties of the following steps which must be followed.
 - 1) The chair of the Grievance Committee will meet with the parties involved in person or by other appropriate means to determine if the grievance can be mediated and then attempt to mediate it. The chair shall complete the mediation attempt no later than 90 days following notification that the grievance has been accepted. If no agreement can be reached by the grievance chair and the parties involved, the Grievance Committee will proceed with a hearing.
 - 2) The Grievance Committee shall after consultation with the parties set the site and time and conduct a hearing on the grievance at the earliest practicable date. The Grievance Committee shall act to set a date for the hearing no later than 30 days after the end of the attempted mediation period. The hearing shall be held in the state from which the grievance originates or in some other place acceptable to the parties to the grievance. If a date and/or site cannot be agreed upon by the parties, then the committee will notify the parties of three (3) dates/sites and will then choose the date and site based on the response by the parties. For purposes of this section, a party shall be deemed notified on the date actual notice is given or, if notice is by certified mail, on the fourth business day following the date notice is mailed. If after these procedures have been followed, a party refuses to accept the chosen date or site, the committee may deem the party to have defaulted on the grievance. The parties shall be given notice of the date and place of the hearing at least thirty days prior to the hearing date. Changes in the hearing date may be granted by the Grievance Committee for good cause shown. Each party must bear its own expenses. Any NOW member may attend a grievance hearing as an observer.
 - 3) All parties may submit documents and other materials. These documents and materials must be sent by the submitting parties to each member of the committee, each party and the Executive Committee. Documents and other materials postmarked fewer than 14 days prior to the hearing (or not submitted to the committee, each party and the Executive Committee) may be excluded from the grievance proceedings at the discretion of the Grievance Committee.
 - 4) The Grievance Committee must notify all parties if additional documents, materials or

clarification are needed. A request for additional materials by the Grievance Committee may be made prior to and/or at the hearing. This material must then be submitted to the Committee, each party, and the Executive Committee and bear a postmark within 14 days of notification by the Grievance Committee. For purposes of this section, a party shall be deemed notified on the date actual notice is given or, if notice is by certified mail, on the fourth business day following the date notice is mailed.

- 5) Each party is responsible for presenting its own case. The failure of any party to provide evidence or testimony under its control, which is requested by the committee, may be considered as a factor by the Grievance Committee in reaching its determination.
 - 6) The Grievance Committee must issue and mail a written decision within thirty days of the hearing or within thirty days of the expiration of the two week notification for submission of additional materials, whichever is later. The decision will be mailed to each party and the Executive Committee.
 - 7) The Grievance Committee may recommend to the Board removal pursuant to Article XIII, Section 2.
 - 8) Grievance committee decisions shall be made available to the National Board, and shall be retained on file with the national office for the use of future grievance committees.
5. This procedure can only be amended by 30 days' notice of the proposed change and a 3/5 vote of the National Board.

NOW brochures are available online at www.now.org/_____





Declaration of Sentiments

1998 DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN JULY 12, 1998

On this twelfth day of July, 1998, the delegates of the National Organization for Women gather in convention on the one hundred and fiftieth year of the women's rights movement.

We bring passion, anger, hope, love and perseverance to create this vision for the future:

We envision a world where women's equality and women's empowerment to determine our own destinies is a reality;

We envision a world where women have equal representation in all decision-making structures of our societies;

We envision a world where social and economic justice exist, where all people have the food, housing, clothing, health care and education they need;

We envision a world where there is recognition and respect for each person's intrinsic worth as well as the rich diversity of the various groups among us;

We envision a world where non-violence is the established order;

We envision a world where patriarchal culture and male dominance no longer oppress us or our earth;
We envision a world where women and girls are heard, valued and respected.

Our movement, encompassing many issues and many strategies, directs our love for humanity into action that spans the world and unites women.

But our future requires us to know our past.

One hundred fifty years ago the women's rights movement grew out of the fight to abolish slavery. Angered by their exclusion from leadership and public speaking at abolitionist conventions and inspired by the power of the Iroquois women, a small dedicated group of women and men built a movement. After its inception, the movement was fractured by race. Our history is full of struggle against common bonds of oppression and a painful reality of separation. Nevertheless, these activists created a political force that achieved revolutionary change. They won property rights for married women; opened the doors of higher education for women; and garnered suffrage in 1920.

In 1923, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the historic Seneca Falls convention, feminists led the demand for constitutional equality for women to win full justice under the law in order to end economic, educational, and political inequality.

Our foremothers -- the first wave of feminists -- ran underground railroads, lobbied, marched, and picketed. They were jailed and force fed, lynched and raped. But they prevailed. They started with a handful of activists, and today, the feminist movement involves millions of people every day.

Declaration of Sentiments

Standing on their shoulders, we launched the National Organization for Women in 1966, the largest and strongest organization of feminists in the world today. A devoutly grassroots, action-oriented organization, we have sued, boycotted, picketed, lobbied, demonstrated, marched, and engaged in non-violent civil disobedience. We have won in the courts and in the legislatures; and we have negotiated with the largest corporations in the world, winning unparalleled rights for women.

The National Organization for Women and our modern day movement have profoundly changed the lives of women, men and children. We have raised public consciousness about the plight of women to such an extent that today the majority of people support equality for women.

In the past 32 years, women have advanced farther than in any previous generation. Yet still we do not have full equality.

We have moved more feminists than ever before into positions of power in all of the institutions that shape our society. We have achieved some measure of power to effect change in these institutions from within; yet still we are far from full equality in decision-making. We demand an equal share of power in our families and religions, in law, science and technology, the arts and humanities, sports, education, the trades and professions, labor and management, the media, corporations and small businesses as well as government. In no sphere of life should women be silenced, underrepresented, or devalued.

Today, we reaffirm our demand for Constitutional equality for women and girls. Simultaneously, we are working with sister organizations to develop and pass a national women's equality act for the twenty-first century. And we participate in and advance a global movement for women and demand that the United States join the overwhelming majority of nations of the world in ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women without reservations, declarations, or understandings that would weaken this commitment.

We reaffirm our commitment to the power of grassroots activism, to a multi-issue, multi-tactical strategy.

We are committed to a feminist ideology and reaffirm our historic commitment to gaining equality for women, assuring safe, legal and accessible abortion and full reproductive freedom, combating racism, stopping violence against women, ending bigotry and discrimination based on sexual orientation and on color, ethnicity, national origin, economic status, age, disability, size, childbearing capacity or choices, or parental or marital status.

We will not trade off the rights of one woman for the advancement of another. We will not be divided. We will unite with all women who seek freedom and join hands with all of the great movements of our time and all time, seeking equality, empowerment and justice.

We commit to continue the mentoring, training, and leadership development of young and new activists of all ages who will continue our struggle. We will work to invoke enthusiasm for our goals and to expand ownership in this movement for current and future generations.

We commit to continue building a mass movement where we are leaders, not followers, of public opinion. We will continue to move feminist ideals into the mainstream thought, and we will build our

Declaration of Sentiments

media and new technology capabilities to control our own image and message.

How long and hard a struggle it was to win the right for women to vote. Today, we fight the same reactionary forces: the perversion of religion to subjugate women; corporate greed that seeks to exploit women and children as a cheap labor force; and their apologists in public office who seek to do through law what terrorists seek to accomplish through bullets and bombs. We will not submit, nor will we be intimidated. But we will keep moving forward.

Those who carried the struggle for women's suffrage through to its end were not there at the start; those who started the struggle did not live to see the victory. Like those strong feminist activists, we will not let ourselves be dispirited or discouraged. Even when progress seems most elusive, we will maintain our conviction that the work itself is important. For it is the work that enriches our lives; it is the work that unites us; it is the work that will propel us into the next century. We know that our struggle has made a difference, and we reaffirm our faith that it will continue to make a difference for women's lives.

Today, we dedicate ourselves to the sheer joy of moving forward and fighting back.