



## 2008 National NOW Conference Resolutions

passed July 20, 2008

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### BACKLOG OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

**WHEREAS**, the National Organization for Women (NOW) has a continuing commitment to the rights of people with disabilities; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1985, NOW first called for modernizing Social Security in order to resolve all Social Security inequities; and

**WHEREAS**, it is a travesty that the Social Security Administration has a three-year backlog in processing disability claims and has a high rate of initial denial of claims;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NOW membership be informed of this problem by the National Action Center in a regular leadership mailing, in the National NOW Times (NNT), and by other means with the assistance of the Disability Rights ad hoc committee; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the National NOW Action Center and NOW members be encouraged to pressure Congress and the federal government to reduce the Social Security claims backlog.

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### COMBATING RACISM

**WHEREAS**, the National Organization for Women (NOW) is committed to ending racism, both individual and systemic, in our society as a key element of bringing full equality to all women; and

**WHEREAS**, women of color continue to face the double discrimination of sexism and racism and experience great disparities in access to healthcare, education and jobs.

**WHEREAS**, issues important to women of color that may improve their quality of life are sometimes different from those of white women and may not be included as priorities in the drive for equality, resulting in their not gaining the same attention and the resources needed to address them; and

**WHEREAS**, it is important for NOW to engage with women of color in a dialogue to understand and articulate the plight of women of color in the United States in order to improve their quality of life and that of their families and to promote policies that will address the pervasive discrimination that inflicts pain and suffering; and

**WHEREAS**, having at all levels of NOW active task forces to combat racism helps to develop leadership among women of color; and

**WHEREAS**, as long as one woman remains oppressed by the evils of discrimination, racism, homophobia and xenophobia, equality will never be reached;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that NOW recommit itself to eradicating racism in our society and to working toward full equality for ALL women by developing an action agenda that specifically reflects the work needed to bring equality and justice to women of color; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this action agenda be developed by a newly formed committee dedicated to combating racism, the majority of whose members are people of color who are NOW leaders, and that encourages the growth at all levels within NOW of multiracial task forces to combat racism; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this committee's work include soliciting input from women of color organizations and political leaders, both national and local, through face-to-face meetings, e-mail and other means of communication, and that the results of these conversations be the basis for committee discussions aimed at producing recommendations for an action program.

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## GLOBAL FEMINIST ACTION RESOURCES

**WHEREAS**, the Global Feminist Issues Track at the 2008 National NOW Conference reaffirmed our membership's commitment to global feminist activism, and activists are calling for more resources to assist in global feminist work; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States has neither ratified nor acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the National Organization for Women (NOW) repeatedly has pressured the United States to do so, while the NOW PAC is working to elect progressive feminist candidates to the U.S. Senate, which would increase the possibility of U.S. ratification and accession; and

**WHEREAS**, a number of U.S. communities have organized to endorse and implement CEDAW obligations and opportunities-including gender responsive budgets-on the local and state levels in parallel with a national ratification and accession strategy; and

**WHEREAS**, NOW made a thorough presentation in Geneva in June 2006 at the United Nations Human Rights Committee on the human rights of women in the United States under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international mechanisms such as the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), while venues for activism to advance women's rights in the U.S. and globally are available and activists want to utilize them;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NOW Feminist Global Issues and Strategies ad hoc committee (the Committee) work with the NOW Executive Committee and staff to develop educational tools and organizing kits for its members, state leaders, and chapters about CEDAW's and CERD's provisions and opportunities for endorsement and implementation at the local and state levels; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Committee will work with the NOW Executive Committee and staff to develop educational tools and organizing kits for its members, state leaders and chapters on utilizing international mechanisms to advance the rights of women regardless of status in the U.S. and globally; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the NOW Conference urge the Committee to explore with the NOW PAC ways to incorporate support of feminist global issues, drawing upon NOW's priorities, as part of the criteria for NOW PAC endorsement of candidates for national offices.

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## HEALTHCARE FUNDING CRISIS

**WHEREAS**, since 1993, the National Organization for Women (NOW) has advocated that single-payer healthcare cover the full range of women's healthcare needs throughout their lives; and

**WHEREAS**, access to quality healthcare in the United States has markedly deteriorated for many decades-under Democratic and Republican administrations alike-and is inferior now to access to quality healthcare in almost all other industrialized countries; and

**WHEREAS**, the spiraling military budget has resulted in a projected 30.9% cut in social services block grants for 2009, while the U.S. military budget is larger than that of all other countries in the world combined, and the \$720,000,000 spent every day on the war in Iraq would be enough to supply one year's health insurance for 423,529 children; and

**WHEREAS**, some financially strapped states are reducing both eligibility and funding for State Children's Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP) and Medicaid, causing approximately 1.5 million people to lose coverage over the past five years;

**WHEREAS**, decisions about the choice and duration of medical treatments have been usurped by the insurance industry from the healthcare providers and patients who should be making those decisions; and

**WHEREAS**, tens of millions of full-time workers are uninsured, while those with insurance are saddled with increasingly high premiums, deductibles, and copayments; and

**WHEREAS**, this decline in healthcare delivery has had a disproportionate impact upon populations of color-over two-thirds of the uninsured being nonwhite, and hospital closings occurring disproportionately in urban communities-and single-parent families headed by women-37.5% of the uninsured being families with less than \$10,000 annual income-thereby resulting in a pattern that is both racist and sexist; and

**WHEREAS**, while both major political parties now acknowledge the need to address the healthcare crisis, both continue to place the burden of healthcare on those unable to afford it;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that NOW make universal single-payer healthcare, including comprehensive coverage of all women's healthcare needs, a major campaign issue;

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that NOW call for universal single-payer healthcare to be financed by a drastic cut in the Pentagon's bloated share of the national budget.

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## IMMIGRATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

**WHEREAS**, raids on undocumented immigrants by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have increased sevenfold over the past three years, resulting in the incarceration and deportation of parents of U.S.-born children; and

**WHEREAS**, migration is being feminized, with more women entering as primary wage earners and entire families attempting to cross the militarized U.S.-Mexican border under increasingly dangerous conditions, resulting in 473 deaths in the year 2005 alone; and

**WHEREAS**, "border security," the criminalization of illegal migration, and the expansion of detention centers have turned the border patrol into the largest nonmilitary, arms-bearing operation of the federal government and provided a bonanza for private corporations (such as the \$8 billion contract awarded to Boeing for its "virtual fence" in 2006); and

**WHEREAS**, women held in immigrant detention centers are subject to sexual humiliation and abuse, pregnant women have been shackled with metal waist restraints that endanger both mother and unborn child, and family detention centers do not put families together and harm the well-being of mothers and children; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which empowers local, county and state police to act as agents of ICE, results in racial profiling, creates an atmosphere

of terror in immigrant and citizen communities alike, and prevents women from seeking protection in cases of domestic violence because of fear of deportation; and

**WHEREAS**, the criminalization of undocumented immigrant workers-many of whom leave their homes because of the destructive economic effects on their countries of origin of NAFTA and other U.S.-based policies-amounts to a campaign of scapegoating that falsely blames immigrants for the economic woes of U.S. citizens and residents;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Organization for Women (NOW) speak out boldly in opposition to the criminalization and deportation of undocumented workers, the awarding of lucrative immigration-related security contracts to private corporations, and the expenditure of taxpayers' monies in funding the growth of a police state along the Mexican border; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NOW continue to work to end the exposure of female immigrant detainees to physical harm and sexual abuse at detention centers and to oppose the use or establishment of new family detention centers; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that NOW oppose all pending and future requests by local, county and state police to enter 287(g) agreements with ICE; that NOW work at the chapter, state, and national levels to eliminate section 287(g) altogether from the Immigration & Nationality Act; and advocate local and state policies limiting the power of police to inquire into the immigration status of victims and witnesses of crime.

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## NOW FEMINIST MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

**WHEREAS**, the National Organization for Women (NOW) is one of the greatest networking organizations for newer and experienced feminists via chapters, task forces, and other resources and tools; and

**WHEREAS**, NOW has expressed commitment to engaging and recruiting new feminists and providing them with useful resources to further develop their skills as feminist activists; and

**WHEREAS**, mentoring programs in the feminist movement will help to create a pipeline for feminists both professionally and personally as well as helping to grow and strengthen NOW chapters and activism; and

**WHEREAS**, NOW already has an excellent base of newer and experienced feminists committed to achieving the same goals for women and society; and

**WHEREAS**, the 1996 National NOW Conference resolved to support feminist mentoring programs for young feminists;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that NOW create and develop a feminist mentoring program between newer and experienced members; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a prototype of the mentorship program be developed by a group of volunteers coordinating with the Young Feminist Task Force to be implemented at the state and local levels; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the mentoring program be structured in a circular manner so that both newer and experienced feminists benefit from it; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the program include both online and in-person events and connections to help foster national mentoring goals.

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## **OPPOSE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO FLORIDA, CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA CONSTITUTIONS**

**WHEREAS**, there is a proposed Protection Amendment to the Florida state constitution that could cancel existing rights and limit future rights and responsibilities for all unmarried Floridians; and

**WHEREAS**, language in the amendment states that “inasmuch as marriage is the legal union of only one man and one woman as husband and wife, no other legal union that is treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent thereof shall be valid or recognized” in Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, this “treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent” language threatens to abolish existing health and other domestic partnership benefits used by thousands of Floridians; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed amendment could adversely impact enforcement of domestic violence laws in Florida; in Ohio, as many as 80 domestic violence defendants took their claim that a similar amendment barred the state from pressing charges all the way to the state supreme court; and

**WHEREAS**, on November 4, 2008, Arizonans will be required to vote for a second time on a constitutional amendment that would bar equal marriage rights; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2006 Arizona was the first state in the nation to defeat a ballot measure to constitutionally bar equal marriage rights; and

**WHEREAS**, on November 4, 2008, Californians will vote on a proposal to repeal equal marriage rights under that state’s constitution; and

**WHEREAS**, defeat of these Florida, California and Arizona ballot measures will represent a major rejection of the religious, political extremists’ agenda and their fomenting of fear and prejudice to turn out their vote;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Organization for Women (NOW) strongly oppose the passage of Amendment 2-the so-called Marriage Protection Amendment-in Florida, which will appear on the ballot on November 4, 2008; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NOW join more than 200 other organizations representing labor, civic, and religious communities as a member of Florida's SayNo2 campaign to defeat Amendment 2;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NOW officially oppose passage of Arizona Proposition 102, which will appear on the ballot on November 4, 2008.

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that NOW strongly opposes Proposition 8, the measure to repeal equal marriage rights in California that will appear on that state's ballot in November 2008.

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## WOMEN'S RIGHT TO PROTECT THEIR OWN HEALTH

**WHEREAS**, support for abortion rights and women's reproductive justice has long been one of the National Organization for Women's (NOW) core issues; and

**WHEREAS**, NOW has organized demonstrations and marches in support of abortion rights throughout our history, the most recent national example being the 2004 March For Women's Lives; and

**WHEREAS**, the landmark *Roe v. Wade* U.S. Supreme Court decision and subsequent court rulings have upheld mental health exceptions to abortion bans; and

**WHEREAS**, the ideological balance in the Supreme Court has shifted to the right, as reflected in its recent ruling in *Gonzales v. Carhart*, where it showed a shocking disregard for a pregnant woman's right to the procedure that is most medically appropriate to protect her own health; and

**WHEREAS**, opponents of abortion rights often make dubious distinctions between physical and mental health when addressing the "health exception" in bans on late-term abortions, even to the point of suggesting that women will impulsively seek late-term abortions on the nonverifiable (thus, supposedly trumped-up) justification of depression or other emotional conditions; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. President, the Executive Branch, and the Legislative Branch have significant power to affect reproductive justice for women;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NOW conference reaffirms that a woman's right to choose abortion to protect her physical or mental health is a fundamental right that cannot legitimately be abridged by any court or other governmental entity; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the NOW conference encourage NOW chapters to educate their members about any attempts to limit the “health exception” to late-term abortion bans.