



National Council of Jewish Women

NCJW 2020-2023 RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

National Council of Jewish Women’s (NCJW) Resolutions are the public policy platform on which we stand as an organization. They are the foundation for NCJW’s work, directing and controlling our action for the ensuing three years.

NCJW’s Resolutions are meant to be broad and enabling rather than taking specific positions on particular legislation or administrative regulations. They express the organization’s views on the broad issues underlying legislation and public policy related to our mission.

This year, the NCJW Resolutions Committee received submissions from 12 sections and eligible NCJW leaders, primarily pertaining to either our key policy priorities or timely issues of concern. The committee considered every submission, working hard to develop a set of Principles and Resolutions which reflect the suggestions received and the committee’s best thinking on how to enable NCJW to fulfill its mission and continue its pioneering action agenda. This report is intended to provide insight into the rationale behind some of the decisions reached by the NCJW Resolutions Committee. Please reference the committee’s recommendations for the final, suggested wording for each of the changes discussed in this report.

RATIONALE FOR COMMITTEE ACTION ON RECURRING THEMES

The committee adhered carefully to the criteria for determining changes to Resolutions and Principles that were sent to sections and NCJW leaders. As such, each suggested change or addition was weighed as to whether it was broad and enabling and reflected the goal to be achieved rather than a programmatic means of achieving it.

Although the committee considered whether a suggestion was already covered under an existing Resolution or Principle, there were a few issues on which an exception was made. In these cases, the committee recommendation takes into account whether an issue was raised more than once indicating a strong desire to be specific on an issue of current, pressing concern. The committee tried to ensure that the recommended Resolutions reflect current terminology and language as well as the current involvements and interests of the organization. We also tried to ensure the Resolutions remained broad and enabling wherever possible. For example, we rejected requests for new Resolutions related to the ERA and the Census. While important topics, the committee felt our current Resolutions allow us to do this work without the need for specific Resolutions on these particular themes. It’s notable that most of the submissions received pertain to the following themes: using gender-neutral language; defining woman to be inclusive; and applying a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens throughout; as well as the following issues: reproductive freedom, elections, Israel, environment, economic justice, and federal courts.

The following highlights some of the committee’s recommendations. This is not meant to explain every recommended change received or made by the committee; rather, it deals with recurring issues or special changes made by the committee. Please note that items in red reflect the committee’s proposed slate for 2020-2023.



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*We use the terms ‘woman’ and ‘women’ throughout our Resolutions, but these terms are not intended to be exclusionary. We know and appreciate that gender is expansive and larger than a binary. At the same time, language is often limiting. We recognize that the history of women’s organizations has not always been inclusive of transgender and non-binary people, and we are making steps to change that. We are striving to build a home for advocates of all marginalized gender identities and to include transwomen, ciswomen, and trans femme people at the center of our work.

Since our founding, NCJW has fought against patriarchal oppression. We welcome everyone — women, non-binary and agender people, gender fluid people, and beyond — to join us, advocate with us, and fight with us.

In response to a number of requests to define the word woman, the committee chose to clarify what we mean when we use the word woman/women.

► **Principles**

The committee spent quite some time discussing the tone of the Principles, and agreed the organization was better served by broad, aspirational language. In response to the submissions overall indicating a desire for more inclusive language, the committee incorporated these ideas in Principle 5 “A democratic society **must value and promote diversity, inclusion, mutual understanding, and respect for all,**” Principle 6, “**Equal rights and opportunities for all people must be guaranteed, and all forms of discrimination must be eliminated,**” and Principle 9, “The continuity of the Jewish people and its heritage, and respect for and among **all Jews from every background** and stream of Judaism, must be assured from generation to generation.”

Given the organization’s historical and ongoing commitment to reproductive health, rights, and justice as well as the current political climate, we felt the issue was important enough to warrant its own new Principle 7, “**Every individual has the right to bodily autonomy and privacy, free from government, political, and religious interference in all health care decisions.**”

► **I. Advance the Well-being and Status of Women** **We endorse and resolve to work for...**

The submissions suggested adding maternal health, menstrual products and equity, and culturally competent in addition to adding “All” to the priority, “Advance the Well-being and status of ALL Women.” As the priority is a board directive and decision, the committee could not change this language. Further, submissions suggested the language of this priority focused solely on women was too limiting, and the committee accepted proposals expanding the meaning (see new language below). While we agreed with using more inclusive language overall, we felt it important to leave the word “woman” in specific places as opposed to when we used the word people (meaning all people). For example, Resolution I.1 “Laws, policies, programs, and services that protect every woman from all forms of abuse, exploitation, harassment, discrimination, and violence.” In this #MeToo era, the committee felt it important to leave the word “woman,” comfortable that our clarification of the word signifies our overall intention to be inclusive of all who identify.

The committee agreed with the recommendations and made the following changes addressing these very real issues faced by people accessing health care services and products, particularly communities of color whose agency over their own decisions is threatened by health care systems and policies (see I.4 below).

- Resolution I.2 “Comprehensive, affordable, accessible, **appropriate, confidential, equitable, and quality** health products and services, **inclusive of** family planning, reproductive, sexual, and maternal health.”
- Resolution I.3 “**Health services based on** full and unbiased **medically accurate** information, **supported by inclusionary and scientific research and funding.**”
- Resolution I.4 “Laws, policies, and programs that protect every **person's right to make decisions about whether to have or not have children and to birth, adopt, and/or parent with dignity.**”

▶ **II. Advance the Well-being of Children and Families**

We endorse and resolve to work for...

The committee both removed a Resolution — II.12 “Laws, policies, programs, and services that promote wellness” — determining it was redundant and added a new Resolution II.10, “**Fair housing laws, policies, and programs that promote equal access to healthy, safe, affordable, quality housing,**” emphasizing the importance of housing for children and families, previously unaddressed in our Resolutions. In addition, please note the following:

Youth: A submission suggested adding “youth” to the priority, “Advance the Well-being of Children, Youth, and families.” Per the above, while the committee is not at liberty to adjust the priorities, we agreed to add “youth” to Resolutions in this priority where appropriate (II.1, II.2, II.4, and Priority IV.4) as adolescence (e.g. youth, ages 11-18) is a critical stage of development during which physical, intellectual, emotional, and psychological changes occur. Major national and international health organizations (e.g. CDC, WHO) recognize adolescence as a distinct period of development with the requisite professional focus on health practice, programs, and policies. Recognizing adolescence in our Resolutions will align the organization with the scientific evidence and current thinking, allowing us to bring the power of the organization in support of young people.

Environment: We received five submissions related to the environment, ranging from a request to delete to submissions suggesting we prioritize climate change above other issues. Informed by the submissions and our discussion, we propose slightly broadening Resolution II.2 beyond health, “Environmental laws, policies, and programs that protect and promote the health, **safety, and** well-being of children, **youth,** and families.”

School Vouchers: The committee spent the most time discussing public charter schools, and decided to keep Resolution II.3 as is to incorporate charters and similar efforts: “II.3 Quality public education for all, utilizing public funds for public schools only.” The committee is comprised of SPAs and section leaders from across the country where school vouchers continue to be an issue. Funneling public funds towards parochial school under the guise of “scholarships,” “opportunity scholarships,” or opportunity grants,” is an insidious way in which the states and the federal government are tearing down the wall separating religion and state.

Human Needs: The committee strongly agreed with a submission to re-word Resolution II.8 from “Laws, policies, and programs that provide a level of services that meet basic human needs while encouraging self-sufficiency” to “**Laws, policies, and programs that provide a basic level of services that meet basic human needs.**” The idea of “self-sufficiency” as the goal of public benefits and services felt both insensitive and put the onus on individuals rather than laws, policies, and programs.

Gun Violence: Numerous submissions addressed gun violence, and the committee agreed to expand Resolution II.5 to reflect current reality. The Resolution previously read: “Laws, policies, and programs that regulate firearms and ammunition to promote gun safety and prevent gun violence, and now reads, “**Expansion and enforcement of laws, policies, and programs that regulate firearms and ammunition, ban assault and other military-style weapons and accessories, and prevent gun violence and promote gun safety.**”

▶ **III. Enhance the Quality of Jewish Life**

We endorse and resolve to work for...

Among the submissions in this priority, anti-Semitism garnered the most discussion among the committee, and specifically whether or not we should add white nationalism and/or white supremacy. We rejected both submissions, ultimately deciding to leave Resolution III.1 as is, “The elimination of anti-Semitism,” given that we are engaged in efforts to combat white nationalism and supremacy enabled by the Resolution as written and to ensure we weren’t limiting ourselves. And, in response to submissions to clarify that Resolution III.4, “The acceptance, fair treatment, and participation of all Jews, in all aspects of Jewish life, according to their individual beliefs,” meant the inclusion of LGBTQ folks, Jews of color and both economic and marital status, the committee proposes the following new III.4 incorporating the ideas of identity and status — “The acceptance, fair treatment, and participation of all Jews in all aspects of Jewish life, **regardless of individual identity, status, or belief.**”

▶ **IV. Ensure and Advance Individual and Civil Rights**

We endorse and resolve to work for...

A lot has changed over the last three years since the last adoption of these Resolutions, and as a result the committee’s proposals in this priority area reflect the most change, due in equal parts to the will of the field as well as updated language, messaging, and framing.

Immigration: In response to both submissions and changes in the current immigration goals, the committee discussed about how to broaden Resolution IV.9 — “Comprehensive, humane, and equitable immigration, refugee, asylum, and naturalization laws, policies, and practices that facilitate and expedite legal status and a path to citizenship for more individuals” — beyond citizenship, recognizing that in our system today there are problems far larger than the path to citizenship. We agreed that our vision should be comprehensive even if that isn’t the case with every policy. And, by shortening the resolution, we felt we were able to make it broader: “**Comprehensive, humane, and equitable immigration, refugee, and asylum laws, policies, and practices.**”

Elections: Given 4 submissions and our deliberations smack in the middle of the president’s impeachment, the committee agreed to enhance Resolution IV.12 “Election laws, polices, and practices that ensure easy and equitable access and eliminate obstacles to the electoral process so that every



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vote counts and can be verified” to “Election laws, policies, and practices that ensure — **without foreign or domestic interference — safe, easy, and equitable access to the ballot** and eliminate obstacles to the electoral process so that every vote counts and can be verified.”

Human Trafficking: The committee agreed with a submission to include a survivor-centered approach, and re-worded Resolution IV.13 to include this notion: “The recognition, prevention, and elimination of all forms of human trafficking **and the promotion of survivor-centered policies.**”

Courts: The committee spent some time discussing updates to Resolution IV.14, “A fully staffed federal judiciary where vacancies are filled in a timely manner by judges who keep faith with constitutional values,” given the seven submissions on this topic. The committee’s proposal, “**A qualified, fair, independent, unbiased, and diverse federal judiciary with a commitment to the constitutional guarantee of equal justice for all,**” addresses the concerns of our field about the current state of judicial nominations — there’s a lack of diverse, qualified, unbiased, and independent judges who are committed to equality for all being confirmed too quickly without time for proper vetting.

Criminal Justice Reform: We agreed with a submission to shorten the current Resolution IV.15 “The enactment and enforcement of comprehensive, humane, and equitable criminal justice reform, including programs and practices that build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve,” to “**The enactment and enforcement of comprehensive, humane, and equitable criminal justice reform.**”

► **V. Support a Secure Israel and the Well-being of All Its People**
We endorse and resolve to work for...

With four submissions on V.2 “A two-state solution with the state of Israel, a democratic Jewish homeland, living side by side with a state of Palestine in mutual respect, peace, and security,” the committee agreed with a suggestion to acknowledge that the parties themselves need to engage directly to determine a viable solution. The new V.2 reads, “A **negotiated** two-state solution with the state of Israel, a democratic Jewish homeland, living side by side with a state of Palestine in mutual respect, peace, and security.” We received five submissions related to V.4 “Recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel,” and we agreed with proposals to remove the resolution given that Jerusalem is now recognized by the US as the capital of Israel. And, the committee rejected a submission to include “BDS” in the renumbered V.4 “Efforts that counter attempts to delegitimize Israel,” as the current language is broad enough to include it.

The NCJW Resolutions Committee appreciates all of the input received from sections and NCJW leaders. While we know that this report does not cover all of the recommendations made to the committee or by the committee, we look forward to answering any questions that may arise during the Resolutions hearing on March 12, 2020, from 7-8:30 pm ET on zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/431950157>
Meeting ID: 431 950 157, Call-in: 1 646 876 9923.

We look forward to the thoughtful and lively deliberations that are the hallmark of NCJW’s Resolutions adoption process.

February 2020