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Be It Resolved 2011

A compendium of Soroptimist International of the Americas' resolutions

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FOREWORD

Resolutions proposing awareness, advocacy and action to promote Soroptimist aims have been adopted by clubs since the federation was formed in 1928. The American Federation of Soroptimist Clubs (as the federation was known then) adopted two resolutions at its first convention in Washington, DC, in 1928. The federation adopted three more resolutions during the Philadelphia convention in 1930.

Resolutions have been numbered according to the year and order in which they were adopted. For instance, resolution number 2004:1 Parliamentary Procedure was proposed in 2004, and was the first one adopted. When referring to a resolution, you should use both its number and its title.

This compendium was developed in conjunction with the federation's 75th anniversary project to establish an archives at federation headquarters. Staff archivist/records manager Lisa Mangiafico compiled, in chronological order, every resolution adopted by the federation. These were then grouped into categories by topic and reviewed by the 1994-95 Laws and Resolutions Committee. The committee eliminated resolutions that had been accomplished, and those that were superseded by a subsequent resolution. This compendium represents those resolutions considered to be currently in effect until their purpose is deemed accomplished or they are amended, reaffirmed or rescinded by the clubs through action at convention and a mail ballot.

Resolutions become an important and integral part of the program at the federation level. They guide the use of limited federation resources, and focus awareness, advocacy and action on those subjects of greatest importance across the federation. To encourage clubs to participate more fully in this process, the federation Board of Directors has adopted procedures governing resolutions (see page 3). This book is updated each biennium.

Federation resolutions are not meant to duplicate the position statements adopted by Soroptimist International and published in "Where We Stand." Clubs undertaking a study of the Soroptimist position on a topic should be aware of any pertinent position statements and/or resolutions in existence.

We hope you will find this booklet interesting, and that it will encourage your club to propose new resolutions or to comment on existing ones.

PROCEDURES GOVERNING FEDERATION RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolutions shall be related to matters of great importance, have broad concern and be international in scope. Topics should be of relevance and significance to the Soroptimist mission of improving the lives of women and girls. There shall be no resolutions on partisan political matters, resolutions commending living individuals or memorializing deceased members. Resolutions regarding Federation policy, administrative or structural matters will be referred to the Federation Board of Directors for prompt consideration and disposition.
2. Resolutions shall continue to be active until rescinded, or until their purpose has been deemed accomplished by the Laws and Resolutions Committee, with the concurrence of the Federation Board of Directors.
3. Clubs and regions are encouraged to review all resolutions and submit comments and recommendations to the Laws and Resolutions Committee. In addition to receiving all new proposals, the Laws and Resolutions Committee shall review all existing resolutions that have been in force for ten years for relevance to Soroptimist programs, timeliness, change of opinion and new information. By recommendation of the Laws and Resolutions Committee, notice to reaffirm, amend or rescind such resolutions shall be included in the call to convention at which action is to be taken. Resolutions in force for fewer than ten years may also be reviewed and recommended for action by the clubs.
4. When drafting proposed resolutions, the preparer should be aware of germane existing resolutions and Soroptimist International position statements listed in "Where We Stand" to avoid redundancy. Include measurable objectives and timeframes.
Questions to be answered when considering topics include:
 - What, precisely, is the concern, problem or opportunity implied by the topic?
 - How does the topic relate to the objects of Soroptimist?
 - What specific awareness, advocacy or action by Soroptimist clubs is needed?
 - How would accomplishing the resolution benefit women or girls or the organization?
5. Resolutions of an emergency nature that may arise after the deadline for submission, may be introduced for consideration at convention in accordance with Federation Bylaws, Article XIII, Section 12.02.

GENERAL

2004:1 Parliamentary Study

WHEREAS, there is a universal need for training in general parliamentary procedure to ensure the efficient conduct of meetings, protect the will of the majority and the voice of the minority, and to allow orderly debate of issues and motions, and

WHEREAS, the rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* is the parliamentary authority for all matters not specifically covered in Soroptimist laws,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that

1. Workshops in parliamentary procedure be encouraged at convention and conferences;
2. Club presidents be encouraged to learn how to prepare a basic agenda and handle simple motions and debate;
3. Parliamentarians be appointed to advise on such matters at all levels of the federation.

(adopted 1954, amended 2004)

2004:3 Women's Opportunity Awards

WHEREAS, "Making a Difference for Women" has been the permanent identifying focus of Soroptimist International of the Americas since 1994, and

WHEREAS, the Women's Opportunity Awards program is SIA's major service project because it best exemplifies the aims of the organization by helping women to lead independent lives through improved employment opportunities, and

WHEREAS, less than 60% of SIA clubs participate in this program, which negatively affects the organization's ability to gain publicity and build an identity around its major service project, and

WHEREAS, the inability to create a public identity negatively affects efforts to recruit and retain members and, more importantly, the organization's ability to accomplish its mission of improving the lives of women and girls,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that in order to positively contribute to SIA's identity building activities, which will help the organization accomplish its mission to help women and girls, participation in the Women's Opportunity Awards program by all clubs shall be encouraged and be facilitated by all means available at region and federation levels.

(adopted 2004)

2010:3 Ethnic Diversification of Soroptimist Membership

WHEREAS, there have been major changes in ethnic culture and composition, particularly in North America, since the founding of Soroptimist in 1921; and

WHEREAS, women are assuming positions of leadership in management, business and the professions more often; and

WHEREAS, diversity of occupations, cultures and ethnic groups promotes different perspectives, raises tolerance and increases understanding through a heightened awareness of needs; and

WHEREAS, the Soroptimist organization seeks to continue its service to society as a representative and powerful force in advancing human rights and the status of women; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Soroptimist clubs in all nations of the federation shall invite to membership eligible representatives of all ethnic segments of the community that they serve; and

RESOLVED, that Soroptimist International of the Americas supports these efforts by including ethnically diverse women in all membership and public relations material.
(adopted 1990, amended 2000, reaffirmed 2010)

PROGRAM

2004:4 Corruption

WHEREAS, According to United Nations sources, programs that focus on women account for only a fraction of total national budgets and women suffer disproportionately when resources are subverted through corruption;

WHEREAS, Gender discrimination is reinforced in a corrupt legal system;

WHEREAS, Corruption reduces public resources for education which is crucial for advancing the status of women and girls;

WHEREAS, Studies have shown that corruption is less severe when women comprise a larger percentage of government positions;

WHEREAS, Corruption and bribery permit environmental degradation to continue which adversely affects the health and well being of poor women and their families by limiting access to clean water, clean air and fertile land to grow food; and

WHEREAS, Corruption allows organized crime to flourish which increases prostitution and the trafficking of women and girls;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Soroptimists:

1. Advocate for open and honest political and legal systems;
2. Support the increase of women serving in governments, civil service, police and legal systems;
3. Support judicial systems whereby those that are responsible for corruption can be prosecuted and punished.

(adopted 1954, amended 2004)

2004:5 Women in Public Office

WHEREAS, Soroptimist International is the largest classified service organization for executive business and professional women in the world, and

WHEREAS, women compose 51% of the world's population, but presently hold comparatively few policymaking posts, and

WHEREAS, women must be encouraged to participate more fully in decision making on all levels of government; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that Soroptimist clubs

1. Identify and encourage competent and qualified women to seek decision making roles in all levels of government;
 2. Support non-partisan coalitions of women's organizations that provide lists of qualified and competent women for public office and corporate boards of directors;
 3. Encourage women's political participation and leadership in all areas of policy decision making;
 4. Urge national governments to support the commitments made at the 4th World Conference on Women to increase the representation of women in decision making;
 5. Advocate for ratification and follow through with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) action plan for ending discrimination against women relative to political life;
 6. Encourage individuals to support laws that promote gender equality in all SIA countries;
 7. Recognize the power of women voting to effect change;
 8. Include political education and awareness in programs for mentoring girls.
- (adopted 1982, amended 2002 and 2004)

2006:1 Domestic Violence

WHEREAS, Soroptimists are engaged personally and financially in the development and support of community service projects that improve the status of women; and

WHEREAS, domestic violence is an act that endangers the welfare of another or causes individuals to fear for their safety as a result of physical, sexual or psychological abuse; and

WHEREAS, domestic violence perpetrated against women and children is a serious social problem that exists in all economic segments of society, in all cultures, and in all countries of the world; and

WHEREAS, incidents of reported domestic violence cases continue at an alarming rate in most countries - with some incidences resulting in permanent injury and death – while available resources to prevent violence and assist victims are not sufficient; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, Soroptimist International of the Americas adopted the issue of domestic violence as an identifying focus for action;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the issue of domestic violence continue to be an identifying focus for action in order to prevent domestic violence from being perpetrated against all women, and to assist victims of violence throughout the federation; and further

RESOLVED, that clubs be encouraged to undertake the following activities in support of the identifying focus on domestic violence:

1. Develop or support counseling programs, homeless, or battered women's shelters, and crisis centers that assist victims in crisis situations due to domestic violence.
2. Develop or support domestic violence prevention and support services including training programs for law enforcement personnel, legal and medical professionals and government officials.
3. Develop or support prevention projects including those that teach boys and girls about healthy relationships.
4. Develop or support programs that assist victims who have left their batterer – including job training, job placement, victim protection programs and counseling services.
5. Advocate, through letter-writing campaigns to legislators, community awareness programs, and coalition building with other organizations for laws that protect victims, prevent domestic violence and punish criminals.

6. Develop awareness, advocacy and action for the Soroptimist position on domestic violence through letter writing and other appropriate means to the media, e.g. newspapers, magazines, radio, television, motion picture and music industries, and advertisers of consumer products; and further

RESOLVED, that the federation will support the club efforts through the following activities:

1. Providing resources on domestic violence to regions and clubs, including a model program on domestic violence.
2. Participating in national and international advocacy efforts pertaining to domestic violence.
3. Coordinating region-level and club-level networks of domestic violence projects to assist in project development.

(adopted 1994, amended 1996, amended 2006)

2006:3 Heart Health Awareness

WHEREAS, the Program Focus of Soroptimist International champions optimal mental and physical health throughout the life span of women; and

WHEREAS, promoting wellness, preventing illness and providing early detection of and intervention in diseases, as it applies to women, is the goal of Soroptimist International; and

WHEREAS, across the globe, heart disease is the number one killer of women, accounting for 8.5 million deaths annually, which is one third of all female deaths worldwide; and

WHEREAS, eighty percent of the burden of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in the form of heart attacks and strokes lies in the developing countries; and

WHEREAS, major risk factors of CVD such as hypertension, high cholesterol, high blood sugar, obesity, smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol are largely preventable; and

WHEREAS, Soroptimist International advocates the promotion of healthy lifestyles through better nutrition and exercise, and prevention of substance abuse such as tobacco and alcohol through promotion of health education for women and girls;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Soroptimist clubs be encouraged to undertake the following activities to fight the risks of CVD:

1. Raise awareness of the risks of CVD in Soroptimist members and their local communities through meetings and programs, newspaper articles and fundraisers such as heart walks; and
2. Develop and support prevention efforts including programs for girls and women with regards to nutrition and exercise and prevention of tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption; and
3. Develop awareness, advocacy and action for the Soroptimist position on heart health awareness (e.g. LOVE YOUR HEART) through letter writing and other appropriate means to the media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, radio, television) and advertisers of consumer products.

(adopted 2006)

2010:1 Prostituted Women and Girls

WHEREAS, prostitution is a form of violence against women; prostituted women and girls are repeatedly beaten and raped with 68% of them meeting the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder; and

WHEREAS, selling one's body to 5-20 men per day is not a career "choice," and

WHEREAS, studies show that 89% of prostituted women would leave prostitution immediately if they could; and

WHEREAS, there is no other occupation with a higher homicide rate than prostitution; and

WHEREAS, prostitution allows the trafficking of women and girls to flourish; and

WHEREAS, most prostitutes are beholden to others who control them and their earnings; and

WHEREAS, many in society continue to think of prostitution as a crime with no victims; and

WHEREAS, violence against women will not be stopped nor gender equality achieved as long as there is tacit approval for buying and selling the bodies of women and girls: and

WHEREAS, the only country to criminalize the buying of sex and decriminalize the selling of sex (Sweden) is also the only country that has decreased trafficking and prostitution; and

WHEREAS, the legalization of prostitution with the goal of “reduction of harm” is insufficient protection of basic human rights;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Soroptimist clubs condemn prostitution as violence against women and undertake the following activities in order to end the prostitution of women and girls and decrease trafficking:

1. Support laws and programs that assist the victims of prostitution and do not treat them like criminals
2. Advocate for laws that criminalize the buying of sex
3. Encourage education (including workshops with former prostitutes) for purchasers of sex
4. Promote school programs that teach young people about healthy intimate relationships
5. Fight efforts to legalize prostitution
6. Work to change the attitudes about prostitution from the “world’s oldest profession” to the “world’s oldest oppression”
7. Have frank and open discussions about prostitution with the men and boys in our lives and the effect it has on women, girls and relationships
8. Oppose efforts to treat prostitution as a legitimate occupation
(adopted 2010)

2010:2 Vote

WHEREAS, Soroptimist International of the Americas believes in the power and importance of voting in order to effect change at the local and national level; and

WHEREAS, informed citizens exercising their right to vote is a cornerstone of democracy; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that each and every Soroptimist exercise the right to vote and encourage other citizens in the community to become informed about the issues, register and vote.
(adopted 1950, amended 2000, reaffirmed 2010)