

GRAY PANTHERS

Issue Resolutions Summary

March, 2009

I. HEALTH CARE

A. Guaranteed Health Care & Patient's Rights

WHEREAS, health care is a basic human need and a right that everyone is entitled to receive, regardless of ability to pay; and

WHEREAS, it is a disgrace that the United States is the only industrialized country in the world which doesn't provide comprehensive health care to all residents and visitors with funding equity gaps in mental health services, patient counseling services, alcohol and chemical dependency treatment services among other critical services needed; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. spends a higher portion of its gross domestic product on health care than any country, a World Health Organization study (in 2000) ranked our health system a shameful 37 out of 191 countries and revealed it ranked 20th in longevity and 18th in infant mortality; and

WHEREAS, 46 million Americans have no health care insurance at all and 42 million or more are significantly underinsured; and

WHEREAS, the American health care system is in crisis, and with the most advanced health care technology in the world, only a few can afford it; and

WHEREAS, the current U.S. health care system is excessively costly because it does not make preventative care a priority, treats symptoms instead of the whole person, uses disjointed and antiquated information systems and fails to eliminate excess profits and administrative waste; and

WHEREAS, the private insurance industry fails to provide affordable, adequate coverage, while profiteering to its own advantage and state initiatives for "universal healthcare" through private insurance companies have proven unsuccessful.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports a single payer, nonprofit, publicly-funded and universal health care system that covers all health care needs, including preventative care, dental care, mental health, alcohol/chemical dependency services, patient counseling, prescription drugs, and long-term care, as examples; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers' Networks in each state pursue the development of a single-payer system in each state, as well as working for passage of national single payer legislation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls on all civic organizations, communities of faith, health care providers and institutions in America to collaborate for a universal health care system that guarantees comprehensive, quality, affordable health care for every person in the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports a Patients' Bill of Rights at the state and federal levels.

B. Reproductive Choice

WHEREAS, women of all ages, together with their health care providers, should have the right to make decisions about their own bodies; and

WHEREAS, access to reproductive health care, including contraception and pre-natal care, is limited for low-income women all over the world.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports funding for all aspects of family planning nationally and internationally.

C. Medical Marijuana

WHEREAS, several states have passed laws that legalize cannabis for medical purposes; and

WHEREAS, while the federal government vehemently opposes the concept of using cannabis for medical purposes, it acknowledges the positive effects of its use for medicinal purposes.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports legalizing medical marijuana, federally and locally.

D. Funding for Stem Cell Medical Research

WHEREAS, Congress authorizes and funds research on various diseases and health problems, and for therapies to eliminate or to mitigate those conditions; and

WHEREAS, recent studies demonstrate that stem cell research is likely to lead to new means to fight disease, including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Disease, diabetes, metabolic disorders and more; and

WHEREAS, limitations on stem cell research have been based on political rather than scientific concerns.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urges Congress to remove legal and policy barriers to stem cell research; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that patents, benefits of research and direction of research should remain under public/consumer supervision and shall accrue to the benefit of the consumer/public.

E. Repeal the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act

WHEREAS, the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) contained the Medicare Part D Drug Plan that has upset, confused, and even endangered the health of seniors and disabled people, disrupting their access to medicines, making them buy drugs from private companies with restricted formularies and inadequate or confusing information, and making the poorest pay more than before, while drug companies get \$139 billion in additional profits; and

WHEREAS, the MMA is a plan to first entice and later coerce healthier Medicare recipients out of traditional fee-for-service Medicare and into private plans like HMOs, PPOs and private FFS plans, which will profit since their patients will need little care. Traditional Medicare would be left with the sickest, most expensive patients, and would have reduced funding because of fewer patients and stringent new cost controls; and

WHEREAS, the MMA is a plan to encourage higher income seniors to leave Medicare, both by charging higher premiums if they stay, and by giving tax reductions if they leave to set up Health Savings Accounts. Converting Medicare into a program for low-income seniors will make it politically vulnerable to further cuts; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, the Act calls for suspending Medicare coverage in ten test areas, and forces people in those areas to accept vouchers to purchase either private coverage (through a Medicare Advantage Plan which is marketed to healthier people) or traditional Medicare (which must accept sicker, more expensive patients.)

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers advance the position that the entire 2003 Medicare Modernization Act must be repealed, and that this position be emphasized whenever we discuss Medicare in our national or local groupings; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers advance the position that the way to solve Medicare's problems, and the healthcare problems of the nation, is not to restrict Medicare, but to improve its benefits, including a drug program under Medicare without gaps, based on fair and affordable prices; and extend them to everyone in the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that until affordable prescription drugs are available to people in the United States, that there be no constraint on governments from negotiating for lower prices or purchasing lower cost prescriptions from other countries.

F. Pharmaceutical Patents

WHEREAS, the U.S. Pharmaceutical Industry has accumulated immense wealth and with it, political power; and

WHEREAS, the industry clearly influences the direction and outcome of government funded research, effectively compromising public mechanisms which are intended to ensure safety and to direct public resources to high priority problems; and

WHEREAS, the Pharmaceutical Industry benefits from the basic medical research performed under government auspices and with public funds; and

WHEREAS, the Pharmaceutical Industry's use of the patent system effectively converts the results of publicly funded research, a "public good", into private property for the economic benefit of members of the industry; and

WHEREAS, the industry uses its power to protect inflated prices and to engorge its profits.

BE IT RESOLVED, Gray Panthers calls for laws and policies through which the National Institutes of Health and related public health institutions will retain an economic share in the patent rights associated with the research that they sponsor; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the proceeds from the share in patents be kept out of the general fund and returned to NIH and related agencies to further health research, especially for orphan drugs, in addition to funds appropriated for this purpose.

G. Community Support for Seniors & People with Disabilities

WHEREAS, millions of seniors and people with disabilities currently need or will need long-term services (including mental health and addiction services), and supports to live in the community; and

WHEREAS, the current long-term care system is fragmented, overly medicalized, bureaucratic, expensive, and laden with an institutional bias that unnecessarily places seniors and people with disabilities in nursing homes and other institutions, and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1998[Olmstead] that people have the right to services in the least restrictive setting; and

WHEREAS, Federal and State governments push for block grants to limit spending on Medicaid services; and

WHEREAS, Americans overwhelmingly want long-term care services and supports in their own homes and communities; and

WHEREAS, the reform of the long-term care system must be a cooperative partnership with the federal government, the states and the disabled & senior communities.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the long-term services and support system must place priority on home and community-based services, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these services be provided through a coordinated system that adequately involves payers, such as Medicare and other insurers, health care providers, state and local government agencies, and community based services, as well as people with disabilities and older people who do or will receive these services, in the design, implementation and review of any such system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers will work with states and other system participants to insure the implementation of the Supreme Court's decision, so as to include documentation of results, including appropriate analyses of the numbers of persons diverted from nursing homes and other institutions, client and family satisfaction with services as provided by the system, and other matters related to the efficacy of this approach; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers will aggressively oppose attempts to “block grant” or privatize in any way the current national Medicaid protections.

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II. FAMILY SECURITY (Resolutions relating to Social Security, state-funded assistance, housing, and family safety).

A. Social Security Benefits and Cap

WHEREAS, in 1935, Americans called upon their government to create a basic social insurance program for the nation, of which Social Security (Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance) is a part; and

WHEREAS, the American people have overwhelmingly supported Social Security through taxation; and

WHEREAS, working Americans have also supported continuing refinement of the program and increases in benefits to reflect the cost of minimally acceptable standards of living for the aged and people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, as a national program, Social Security buffers the costs to State and Local governments for the support of retired and disabled persons; and

WHEREAS, some members of Congress and ideologically-driven theorists propose to cap or decrease benefits, at the same time that a large demographic group approaches retirement age; and

WHEREAS, there are elements in Congress and in American business who would privatize social security; and

WHEREAS, such privatization would destroy the Social Security insurance quality of the program; and

WHEREAS, working Americans have also supported continuing refinement of the program and increases in benefits to reflect the cost of minimally acceptable standards of living for the aged and people with disabilities.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes any and all efforts to reduce the effectiveness and reliability of the Social Security Program.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support efforts to increase outreach to those who are eligible for SSI and expand enrollment to get a greater number of older adults in poverty into the program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports exploration of a variety of methods to safeguard against shortfalls in the Social Security system, including lifting of the cap on income subject to social security tax, inclusion of State and Local government employees, and other measures that enhance the program.

B. Expand Available, Affordable and Accessible Housing

WHEREAS, affordable, accessible, safe, and decent housing is a requirement for a reasonable quality of life; and

WHEREAS, there is a crisis in the availability of affordable, accessible and acceptable housing, especially for those who live on limited or fixed incomes and homelessness and high rents constitute a crisis in America; and

WHEREAS, the number of homeless people and people living in substandard, often dangerous facilities have increased and continue to increase all over the country; and

WHEREAS, the housing problem is compounded for low wage workers, single parents, seniors and people with disabilities by the lack of adequate public transportation to jobs, health care resources and commercial, educational and cultural centers; and

WHEREAS, people without adequate economic resources are being forced out of their neighborhoods because of gentrification, disrupting lives and relationships while making access to job and services difficult and costly; and

WHEREAS, an important part of the quality of life is the ability to be involved in the community and not isolated in one's residence; and

WHEREAS, funding subsidies are needed in order for there to be construction of new affordable and accessible housing and for rehabilitation of existing affordable and accessible housing.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports public and private policies that preserve and expand funding to create affordable and accessible housing for low-income and disadvantaged persons with the goal of keeping them in their existing neighborhoods if that is their choice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports efforts, by and through government, non-profit organizations and the private sector, to increase the supply of affordable housing, and especially, development of housing with the transportation needs of all residents explicitly included in planning.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports expansion of the number of subsidized rental units available to low-income persons, the provision of incentives to property owners to renovate or build new housing for Section 8 needs, and the provision of help to cities and states to build new housing for low income people.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports the current 30% cap of income that an individual with a rent subsidy must pay.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urge Congress to ensure a fair share of senior housing in the administration of the Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act of 2002 and maintain and increase continued funding commitments to the Public Housing Program, Section 202 Senior Housing Program, the Section 515 Rural Housing Program and programs for keeping housing in adequate condition.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers urge Congress to preserve/renew federally subsidized housing programs that have expiring contracts, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports the efforts of states and local governments and civic and charitable organizations to provide affordable housing for low and moderate income persons and support the expansion of Smart Growth models of housing and land use that incorporate livable, walkable, mixed-use, intergenerational components.

C. Housing Community Support and Foreclosures

WHEREAS, it is self-evident that an important part of the quality of life is the ability to be involved in one's community and not isolated in one's residence; and

WHEREAS, human needs are best met in intergenerational communities, where families and individuals can live among households which include persons of all ages and abilities; and

WHEREAS, assisted living services are needed for those on limited incomes, and

WHEREAS, people of all ages and abilities should have the opportunity to live independently in residences of their own choosing for as long as possible; and

WHEREAS, regional economic downturns, dramatic losses in home values and rampant unfair and deceptive mortgage lending practices have combined to create a perfect foreclosure storm in America; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Reserve has seen fit to use tens of billions of taxpayer dollars to “bail out” Bear Stearns, the fifth largest mortgage banker in the United States.

BE IT RESOLVED that Gray Panthers supports legislation at the State and Federal levels to help individual homeowners forestall foreclosures and re-finance home mortgages; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports, encourages and solicits public input into the processes of community development and planning, including issues of transportation, accessibility of public services, and affordability of housing, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers advocate development of intergenerational settings, including such possibilities as providing resident health care and home care workers subsidized housing in the communities and neighborhoods where assisted living care is needed.

D. Welfare Reform & Economic Rights

WHEREAS, President Franklin Roosevelt called for an economic bill of rights in 1944 that affirmed that the federal government has a responsibility to assure that Americans have fundamental economic rights, including the right to a job, to earn enough to secure adequate food, clothing and recreation, the right of every family to a decent home, to enjoy health and have access to adequate medical care and the right to a good education; and

WHEREAS, in order to update President Roosevelt’s Economic Bill of Rights and the Humphrey-Hawkins’s Bill of Economic Rights, Representative Barbara Lee introduced “The Living Wage, Jobs for All Act” (HR 1050) that proclaims rights related to employment, housing, health services, and education as goals of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Welfare Reform Bill of 1996 (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act), imposed cruel hardships on the most vulnerable people in society, especially children and single mothers, the elderly, all immigrants, as well as many people receiving good assistance, focusing only on personal responsibility while abdicating institutional responsibility and providing negligible opportunity or work.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports restoration of federal oversight of welfare administration, the repeal of compulsory “workfare” regulations, while allowing the option of work training and education that provides adequate child care and health care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports restoration of eligibility for welfare in all categories of the population of those eligible prior to welfare “reform”, including legal immigrants, farm workers, the "working poor" and adults over 18 and under 50 formerly eligible for food assistance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers, while opposing the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, supports any amelioration of these “reforms” if they cannot be repealed immediately, specifically the provision of decent-paying jobs, job training, due process, and access to collective bargaining for all participants, greater assistance with child care, stronger federal oversight, and comprehensive studies of the impact of the welfare changes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that to work toward achieving economic justice, the Gray Panthers collaborate with organizations such as the National Welfare Rights Union; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports a guaranteed income for all.

E. Utility Regulation

WHEREAS, deregulation of utilities, e.g., water, electricity, natural gas, has been implemented in many jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, such deregulation has been shown to hurt consumers while unreasonably enriching investors in utilities such as the ENRON debacle being a stellar example; and

WHEREAS, continuing volatility in energy prices nationally and internationally may mask energy market manipulations and inequities.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports public ownership of utilities and regulation that ensures verifiable savings to consumers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports federal and state utility regulations that substantially reduce harmful emissions of particulates, sulfur compounds, mercury and carbon dioxide; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gary Panthers supports federal, state and local programs which provide assistance with utility costs and conserve energy for low income persons; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports regulation to further develop renewable energy resources such as solar, geothermal, wind power, biomass, fuel cells, etc.

F. Transportation

WHEREAS, public transportation plays a vital role in providing access to employment, shopping, religious practice, recreation, etc., for individuals who need an affordable alternative to owning and operating a private vehicle; and

WHEREAS, public transportation provides an essential alternative to assure that 32.5 million Americans (11.5 percent) with a severe disability (U.S. Census, 2002) have equal access to the lifestyles and resources available to other Americans; and

WHEREAS, between 2000 and 2030, America's 65+ population will more than double from 35.1 million to 71.5 million individuals (U.S. Census, May 2004); and

WHEREAS, expanded use of public transit reduces traffic congestion; reduces our dependence on expensive foreign oil (saving more than 1.4 billion gallons of gasoline annually); and produces 95% less carbon monoxide and about half as much carbon dioxide as private vehicles (American Public Transportation Association, 7/25/07); and

WHEREAS, only 54% of American households have access to public transportation of any kind (U.S. Census, 2005); and

WHEREAS, between 1995 – 2006, American's transit ridership grew 30 percent, outpacing the growth of the country's 12% population growth and a 24% growth in highway use (American Public Transportation Association, 7/25/07); and

WHEREAS, the U.S. needs to balance its use of private vehicles with expanded investments in public transit systems so that benefits of these systems are available to more Americans in the future; and

WHEREAS, subjecting people with disabilities and seniors to means testing before being able to access door-to-door transportation would be needlessly burdensome, and would act as a barrier to access for people who need door-to-door transportation without adequate transportation.

BE IT RESOLVED, Gray Panthers affirms a national goal that, by 2050, persons living in every urban area will be served by a high quality, energy efficient, affordable and accessible public transportation system and that persons living in rural areas have an opportunity to use public transportation appropriate to their needs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers oppose means testing for seniors and people with disabilities for door-to-door (point-to-point) transport; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Gray Panther Networks will advocate for expanded funding and access to quality, affordable and accessible public transit systems within their communities, specifically to support continuous efforts to increase annual appropriations and authorization levels for Federal programs that serve rural and urban elderly and disabled populations which include Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 and Section 5311 programs and establish new federal funding sources for operating and capital costs for innovative accessible alternatives to fixed route and rail transit services.

G. Older Americans Act

WHEREAS, the Older Americans Act, passed in 1965 has provided services to millions of poor, needy, and elderly Americans; and

WHEREAS, the Older Americans Act needs continued reauthorization every several years by Congress; and

WHEREAS, the appropriations for the Older Americans Act must match the increase in the percentage of the population that is elderly, and account for the difference in demographic changes in the various states.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls for continued reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, with appropriate increases in funding and flexibility for states and local communities to match the projected increase in the elderly population.

H. National Silver Alert Act (NSAA)

WHEREAS, the National Silver Alert Act (HR 6064) was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on May 18, 2008 [passed on September 17, 2008 and is now in the Senate, the NSAA establishes a system for coordination between the states, through an office within the U.S. Department of Justice, for assistance in tracking and locating lost senior citizens and/or disabled family members suffering from Alzheimer's and/or other disabilities, illnesses; and

WHEREAS, the National Silver Alert Act (projected to function in a similar fashion to the Amber Alert) is strongly supported by Gray Panthers, along with the National Silver Alert Haired Congress, National Alliance to Save Social Security, AARP, and other organizations; and

WHEREAS, the NSAA initiative addressed what Dr. Robert Butler, author of "The Longevity Revolution", describes as the dangerous situation of millions of Americans currently with Alzheimer's and millions more projected at risk.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers strongly support passage of the NSAA by the U.S. Senate and subsequent enactment and approval by the president.

I. Adoption of New Federal Poverty Measure

WHEREAS, the nation requires an official measure of poverty that genuinely helps identify those who are currently and potentially in need of attention and assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) guidelines issued by since 1964 by the Department of Health and Human Services, have been based on the price of food rather than families' real costs have been used to determine income eligibility for public programs and in allocating resources to communities; and

WHEREAS, families who struggle to meet their basic living expenses, but whose incomes exceed the FPL, are not eligible for many public assistance programs and do not have enough income to meet their basic needs; and

WHEREAS, the new Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard provides a more accurate measurement of families' basic costs of living by including the costs of food, housing, transportation, child care, out of pocket health care expenses, taxes, etc; and

WHEREAS, the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Security Standard provides a foundation for a more informed analysis of public policies and proposals and will enable service providers, foundations, and public agencies to evaluate the impact of their programs and services for the growing population of older adults.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports the use of Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Security Standard to more accurately evaluate and respond to the needs of low income families;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that states and the federal governments should adopt this new poverty measure as policy.

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III. PEACE (Issues relating to foreign policy and weapons proliferation)

A. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

WHEREAS, after long opposition by the U.S. government and demands by the international peace movement, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was signed by then President Clinton in late 1996; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. is by far the most powerful nuclear power in the world, its failure to ratify the test ban treaty only serves to dissuade other nations from signing the treaty; and

WHEREAS, although 144 nations have adhered to it, only Japan among 44 nuclear capable nations required to ratify it has done so and the U.S. continues to conduct “sub-critical” nuclear tests in Nevada, thus violating the spirit of the proposed treaty.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urges the U.S. Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and fully implement it, including a halt on all nuclear tests; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers urge the passage of federal law that no president may act on a policy regarding nuclear treaties without prior approval and support of the Congress.

B. Nuclear Weapons & Testing

WHEREAS, the United States plans to go beyond the Stockpile Stewardship program, making plans for rebuilding our entire nuclear arsenal under “COMPLEX TRANSFORMATION” which claims to be “downsizing” of our nuclear stockpile, but will produce up to 125 new plutonium cores per year; and

WHEREAS, the COMPLEX TRANSFORMATION program will cost at least \$150 billion; and

WHEREAS, this program will greatly increase, rather than decrease, the nuclear threat since it violates the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, making other nations feel they too much have nuclear weapons for protection; and

WHEREAS, the U.S., by its laboratory testing to develop new and better nuclear weapons, clearly is in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which states that all signatory nations (including the US) will make "good faith effective measures" to end the world's nuclear arms race.

BE IT RESOLVED that Gray Panthers oppose our Country's rebuilding its nuclear arsenal under any name whatsoever; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Gray Panthers urge the United States to work toward nuclear disarmament, as ordered by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which the United States has signed.

C. Relations with Cuba

WHEREAS, the U.S., despite condemnation by the United Nations, has imposed an economic blockade on Cuba for over forty years; and

WHEREAS, said blockade infringes on the rights of U.S. citizens regarding travel and association; and

WHEREAS, the Pan American Health Organization reports that the U.S. blockade has had a devastating impact on the Cuban health system which has improved and protected the health of the Cuban people, and others throughout the world, and upon the general welfare of the Cuban people.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers condemns the U.S. blockage of Cuba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports the spirit and sense of the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions which ended blockades of other nations, and urges extension of those resolutions to the continuing embargo on trade and travel with Cuba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urges the U.S. president to initiate negotiations with the aim of normalizing U.S.- Cuba relations.

D. Policy on Iraq and Peace

WHEREAS, the United States domination of world affairs includes use of its overwhelming power for preemptive war rather than complying with international law; and

WHEREAS, the United States attacked Iraq using false information without consultation with other organizations and countries; and

WHEREAS, our government's sanctions, war and occupation have damaged Iraqi infrastructure, such as water, health, electricity, and led to many Iraqi deaths;

WHEREAS, the United States occupation of Iraq further damaged the stability, peace and prosperity of the country and region;

WHEREAS, the Iraq war caused many American troop deaths and casualties at enormous taxpayer expense without properly supporting service families; and

WHEREAS, the United States authorizes massive overspending on the military rather than on domestic needs; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution established Congress as the body that declares war and votes for military funds; and

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers strongly opposes all future preemptive wars or invasions that would further the potential for nuclear war and global disaster; and

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers seek to pursue peaceful alternatives to war and reconstruction by strengthening international cooperation and the United Nations.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers ask that Congress and the President bring our troops home without delay; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support the United Nations and peace efforts to rebuild Iraq; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers encourages all concerned citizens to contact their elected officials, write their local press and demonstrate when necessary to demand that this Administration bring our troops home; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers encourages all concerned citizens to work to elect candidates committed to peace and cuts in military spending.

E. Rebuilding Iraq

WHEREAS, too many years of war and economic embargo have left Iraq with a fragile infrastructure, and unable to provide adequately for itself until normal economic and social life is restored; and

WHEREAS, U.S. policies and actions have contributed directly and indirectly to this situation; and

WHEREAS, it is in the mutual interests of the U.S. and the Iraqi people for the infrastructure to be rebuilt and retained by the people as rapidly as possible.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urge the President and Congress to provide generously and expeditiously for the rebuilding of Iraqi systems of public health, education, and medical care, and for the development of a viable Iraqi economy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support the work of non-governmental organizations, such as the International Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders, as they work with the Iraqi people to achieve these ends; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports the work in Iraq of international organizations, such as the United Nations, by encouraging the U.S. President and Congress to provide adequate financial support for their efforts.

F. Military Draft

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers opposes war and advocates just, peaceful resolution of conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers believes military solutions generally create more problems; killing people, flattening buildings and destroying cities rarely wins hearts and minds; and

WHEREAS, service in the military should be a choice that individuals make based on full information about their options, not as a result of compulsion; and

WHEREAS, a military draft imposes involuntary servitude primarily on young persons; and

WHEREAS, a military draft makes troops available even for illegal and reckless war-making.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers oppose legislation and/or administrative actions which impose a military draft in whatever forms that may entail; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Gray Panthers, in partnership with other anti-war groups, provide draft-related literature and counseling to high school and college students subject to military recruitment and/or a draft; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers take part in public demonstrations which oppose a military draft.

G. Victims of War and Role of the United Nations

WHEREAS, military and paramilitary conflicts in our times have increasingly targeted unarmed civilians, as has happened in Congo, former Yugoslavia, Darfur, and the entire area afflicted by the current conflagrations in the Middle East, Central Asia and East Asia; and

WHEREAS, such targeting is an atrocity, violating human rights and sometimes rising to the level of genocide.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers will educate and advocate for effective, rapid response by the United Nations and other transnational organizations to end quickly such conflicts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Gray Panthers commends the U.S. State Department for its recognition of genocidal conditions in Darfur and encourages the U.S. government to continue to lead in this area; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers will advocate for a stronger United Nations to implement more adequately the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all other international Human Rights laws, and the Charter of the United Nations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support non-governmental organizations that work to relieve the suffering and meet the basic needs of civilians affected by military conflicts.

H. Land Mines

WHEREAS, at least 26,000 people, including a high proportion of children, are killed or maimed each year by some of the 100 million active land mines in 68 countries; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. is the largest exporter of land mines; and

WHEREAS, although 125 countries have adopted a treaty to ban land mines, the U.S. government refuses to sign said treaty.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urge the President and the Congress to sign, ratify, and implement the treaty banning land mines; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urge the U.S government to require that land mines and similar ordnance manufactured in the U.S. be designed to deactivate automatically after a specified, short period of time (e.g., days or weeks), and that governments of territories infested with U.S.- made or designed ordnance be given tools, equipment, and instructions as to how safely to remove or render-safe devices which are now in place or which are deployed in the future.

I. Funding the United Nations

WHEREAS, Article VI of the U.S Constitution reads, “All treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land”; and

WHEREAS, the foremost treaty to which the U.S. is a part is the United Nations’ Charter; and

WHEREAS, the U.S is obligated to pay assessments to the annual United Nations budget; and

WHEREAS, the U.S has consistently fallen behind in its dues payments, thus weakening the work of many of the United Nations' committees, depending on adequate funding to function effectively.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urges the U.S. President, Congress, and the State Department to keep dues current with the United Nations.

J. Century of Peace

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers believe that the political power of the military-industrial complex is sufficient to influence public policy, including U.S. foreign policy, to its own advantage; and

WHEREAS, the spread of military contracting to all parts of the country has purposefully ensured that economic dependencies-including the jobs of millions of voters-now exist in every Congressional district; and

WHEREAS, the relationship between military contractors, congressional committees, and elected officials is largely opaque to the media and the public because of technical intricacy and supposed security concerns.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers demand that Congress charter an independent investigation of the so-called Military-Industrial complex, with emphasis on its ability to influence public policy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers further demand an evaluation of current political arrangements, such as the congressional committee structure and the defense contracting system, which will lead to legislation to effectively protect the political process from contractor influence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports the establishment of a Peace Academy and a cabinet-level Department of Peace.

K. NO WAR IN IRAN

WHEREAS, the United States is involved in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq with poorly defined and wrong-headed goals; and

WHEREAS, military action has failed to bring about regional stability and has not eliminated politically motivated terrorism in the world; and

WHEREAS, no evidence demonstrates that Iran is an urgent threat to the United States; and

WHEREAS, foreign policy and military experts within and outside of the U.S. government counsel against war with Iran; and

WHEREAS, U.S. military resources are stressed to the breaking point in the current conflicts, resulting in a rising tide of physical and psychological injuries to military personnel; and

WHEREAS, fiscal responsibility demands that the Federal budget that Gray Panthers demands that the U.S. renounce any and all intentions of waging war in or with Iran.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers demands that the U.S. renounce any and all intentions of waging war with Iran; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers oppose Bush's Doctrine of pre-emptive strikes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers challenge all officeholders who counsel for expansion of the war to Iran; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers opposes any attempt to use proxy agents to expand the war with tacit or explicit U.S. approval.

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IV. CIVIL RIGHTS/CIVIL LIBERTIES/COMMUNITY SAFTY
(Issues pertaining to crime, punishment, civil rights, discrimination, and community safety.)

A. Death Penalty

WHEREAS, the death penalty has been abolished in most of the world's nations as cruel and barbaric; and

WHEREAS, proponents of the death penalty claim it is a deterrent to crime, no evidence supports their assertions; and

WHEREAS, application of the death penalty is arbitrary, ineffective, discriminatory toward the poor and people of color, and is a violation of basic human rights; and

WHEREAS, the world's ethical and moral leaders, and groups like Amnesty International, the Catholic Bishops, ACLU and NAACP all strenuously oppose the death penalty; and

WHEREAS, between 1976 and 2004, the U.S. has executed 916 persons and has had 3,494 people on death rows; and

WHEREAS, many of the condemned have been proved innocent.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes the death penalty under all circumstances; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers joins the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty in active opposition to state-sanctioned killing.

B. Availability of Guns

WHEREAS, a high proportion of emergency room cases involve victims of gun violence, many of the social and economic costs of which are passed on to all of us; and

WHEREAS, research has shown that most shootings in homes are the result of a gun and ammunition kept there by a family member; and

WHEREAS, a gun and ammunition in the home does not protect the family, but has the exact opposite result; and

WHEREAS, we witness a steady stream of innocent victims of gun violence, including children; and

WHEREAS, the only purpose of owning an assault weapon is to kill another human being; and

WHEREAS, a large segment of the population (including children) are accidentally shot by their own guns and by home invaders who use the homeowner's guns against them; and

WHEREAS, the availability of firearms is a factor in the prevalence of violent crime.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support reinstatement of the Assault Weapons Ban and urges that it be made permanent; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panther supports legislation at the state and local levels reasonably to limit the availability and trafficking in guns by unscrupulous gun dealers and manufacturers; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support legislation at the federal, state and local level that requires all purchasers of guns be subject to mandatory training in safe storage, including the mandatory use of trigger locks, and handling of guns and provide penalties for violations of these laws.

C. Police Accountability

WHEREAS, racial profiling, improper searches, false arrest, harassment, and excessive force – even torture – by police are growing problems across the nation; and

WHEREAS, American taxpayers are paying hundreds of millions of dollars to settle civil lawsuits and to hire special prosecutors to address these problems; and

WHEREAS, when abusive police officers remain on the streets, the police force as a whole loses the trust, respect, and cooperation of the community – and with it, a large measure of its effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, an effective justice system must be open, responsible, and fair, and those who work within it must be held accountable for their conduct.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support measures to control police misconduct, brutality, and torture, including:

- **Documentation of police encounters with civilians**, including pedestrian and traffic stops.
- **Analysis of the data collected, and creation of an “early warning system”** to identify and counsel officers acting outside established benchmarks.

- **Videotaping** of police interrogations.
- **A system providing fair and thorough investigations** of civilian complaints and an effective and efficient disciplinary process.
- **Long-term archiving of complaints** – including anonymous complaints – against individual officers.
- **Public reporting of information**, including civilian complaints and the actions that followed.

D. Political Prisoners

WHEREAS, nations worldwide, including the U.S. have political prisoners; and

WHEREAS, the U.S., in recognition of individual freedom and dignity, has traditionally condemned the practice of imprisonment of persons on the basis of their political views or religious background; and

WHEREAS, in the wake of the 9-11 Disaster, the U.S. has arrested and detained many individuals who, in the eyes of the world, are political prisoners; and

WHEREAS, U.S. government leaders and agencies have been slow to differentiate among such prisoners and to identify those who have committed crimes, as opposed to those who have been detained for reasons.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urges the President and Congress to resolve quickly the status of persons detained in the aftermath of the 9-11 disaster affording them protections of the law embodied in the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Human Rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports the work of Amnesty International, the International Red Cross/Red Crescent and other humanitarian organizations who monitor the status of foreign and domestic political prisoners worldwide, and who work for their proper treatment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports those foreign and domestic political prisoners and their advocates who seek justice and freedom for themselves and for others, without resort to violence.

E. Marriage Equity

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers "fight everywhere the injustices of ageism, sexism and racism, and promote peace, and social and economic justice;" and

WHEREAS, equal rights for gays and lesbians is a civil right; and

WHEREAS, decisions about whether and whom to marry are highly personal and private; and

WHEREAS, governmental authorities have an objective interest in those relations only to the extent that their contractual content concerns such civil issues as Property ownership; powers of attorney; survivors' economic rights; the terms and procedures for dissolving marriages; and ensuring the well-being of children of the marriage, should it be dissolved; and

WHEREAS, State laws regarding the licensing of marriages and civil unions create by contract what are essentially two-person legal entities, which are universally valid and recognized within the United States, without any reference to religious approval or disapproval; and

WHEREAS, issues beyond the sorts of civil issues noted above fall within the realm of moral and religious codes which are not regulated by the government; and

WHEREAS, religious marriage ceremonies have no civil effect without licensing according to the laws of each State; and

WHEREAS, couples who are legally old enough to marry can make their own decisions regarding with regard to their domestic arrangements.

BE IT RESOLVED that Gray Panthers oppose amendments to the Constitution and / or statutes which attempt to enforce the restrictions of any religion regarding marriage on any person; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Gray Panthers supports the rights of people who are gay and lesbian to enter into the same legal and personal relationships, including marriage, having all the rights and privileges that accrue to people who are in heterosexual committed relationships, and that we will fight efforts that discriminate against gay couples and that attempt to limit their civil and human rights

F. CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 2008

WHEREAS, Congress has enacted bipartisan laws to ensure that Americans have real remedies when their civil rights are violated and to ensure that federal tax dollars are not used to subsidize discrimination; and

WHEREAS, recent court decisions have weakened these basic protections in ways that Congress never intended; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Act of 2008 (S. 2554) was introduced by Senator Edward Kennedy (co-sponsored by Senators Boxer, Clinton, Durbin, Harkin, Lautenberg, Schumer, Brown, Cardin, Kerry, Mikulski, Obama and others) and Representative John

Lewis (HR 5129) to help strengthen accountability when civil rights and workers' rights are violated; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Act of 2008 will allow individuals to seek relief when federal funds subsidize practices that have a discriminatory effect; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Act of 2008 will require state employers to provide full relief for age discrimination, including back pay; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Act of 2008 will protect students from harassment in schools that receive federal funds; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Act of 2008 will prohibit employers from requiring workers to give up the right to enforce employment laws in court in order to get a job or keep a job; provide effective remedies for victims of discrimination based on gender and religion paralleling those available for race and national origin; and provide relief for workers, regardless of immigration status, who are victims of labor and employment law violations.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Gray Panthers calls for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 2008; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls upon local Networks to urge members of Congress representing their communities to co-sponsor and vote on behalf of the Civil Rights Act of 2008.

G. Solidarity with Immigrants

WHEREAS, the politics of fear, racism, class warfare and divisiveness have fastened on issues relating to immigration; and

WHEREAS, racist rhetoric has led to physical attacks on immigrants, and inflammatory accusations that they are the cause of unemployment, overburdened social programs and violence and such rhetoric results in calls for more border security, rounding up and deportation of immigrants, denial of citizenship to their U.S. born children, and withholding of public protections and services; and

WHEREAS, demagoguery on immigration issues has swept away both valid security concerns and humanitarian concerns and fear-stoked public policies have split neighborhoods and families, imposed impossible documentation burdens for Medicaid (which also affect non-immigrant poor U.S. citizens) resulting in denial of health care; and

WHEREAS, while demagogues attack immigrants, business interests benefit from and seek expansion of a large supply of very low-wage immigrant labor, especially in a

temporary or “guest worker” status and immigrant laborers regardless of their legal status, are vulnerable and unable to form unions or otherwise resist exploitation.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes these developments and that Gray Panthers resist legislative proposals which are not consistent with human rights as expressed in the United States founding documents and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in solidarity with immigrants, Gray Panthers affirms the rights of all persons, whether native-born or immigrant to the protections afforded by the Constitution, including rights to due process of law and rights of equal access to public services and resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers will not yield silently to the politics of fear, racism, class warfare and divisiveness; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports the redirection of the Nation’s resources toward the building of a healthy society for all members wherever they are from and wherever they are; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls upon the Federal Government to implement humanitarian immigration policies which admit refugees from war, natural disasters and persecution, and which provide for the reunion of family members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers further calls upon the Federal Government to implement even-handed border crossing policies, so that visitors from all countries are all treated equally; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls upon government at all levels—Federal, State and Local—to legislate and implement public policies which are blind as to ethnicity, race, creed, national origin, gender, and sexual identification; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, in order to implement these policies, Gray Panthers demands legislated amnesty for immigrants, immediate halt to ICE raids, and release of all who are incarcerated for immigration reasons; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes immigration policies, such as “guest worker” programs, which create new categories of immigrant workers who are more vulnerable to economic exploitation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Gray Panthers calls for training and public education to ease assimilation of immigrants and to promote inter-cultural understanding.

H. Statehood and Full Federal Representation for the District of Columbia

WHEREAS, over a half million Americans reside in the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, there are no provisions for direct federal representation of these citizens.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers continue to support full Statehood for the citizens of Washington, D.C. in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 21:

- Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
- The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will be expressed in periodic and genuine elections that shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

I. Repeal the Patriot Act

WHEREAS, under the guise of fighting terrorism, the Patriot Act and associated measures have weakened and/or abrogated the:

- First Amendment rights of free speech and peaceable assembly
- Fourth Amendment prohibition against unreasonable search and seizure without probable cause
- Fifth Amendment nullifying due process and allowing indefinite incarceration without a trial
- Sixth Amendment, the right to prompt and public trial
- Eighth Amendment, protecting against cruel and unusual punishment by allowing and conducting widespread wiretaps, secret searches, internet surveillance, FBI access to personal data, CIA domestic surveillance, torture, and Justice Department arbitrary designation of domestic organizations as terrorist groups, thereby undercutting the civil liberties guaranteed to the people of the United States of America by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights

BE IT RESOLVED, The Gray Panthers urge the Congress to repeal the Patriot Act and all associated measures which institute domestic terrorism in the name of fighting international terrorism.

J. Hate and Discrimination - Free Country

WHEREAS, the goals of full political, social and economic acceptance of all Americans, regardless of ethnicity, social class, religious commitment, age and sexual identity have yet to be met; and

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers continues to support an inclusive, egalitarian society and to oppose all forms of discrimination in public life and public policy; and

WHEREAS, a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society depend on achievement of these goals; and

WHEREAS, strong and active radical elements in our society work actively against those goals, using the public airwaves, the print media, and the Internet to amplify and gain acceptance for their messages of scorn, ridicule and hatred; and

WHEREAS, continuous effort is needed both to consolidate and maintain the progress that has been made toward acceptance of the gifts of diversity among us and to oppose radical efforts to erode civility in public life, and to marginalize the weakest among us.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urges its members to take active roles supporting, educating, and advocating for inclusiveness in public life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers redouble efforts to reflect inclusiveness in its membership, actively inviting persons of all ages, religions, ethnic backgrounds, sexual identities, and social classes to participate in Gray Panthers activities and to join this organization; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support actions, political, economic, and social that strive for equality and protection of the rights of all persons; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers identify corporate entities and their products associated with the radical, discriminatory propaganda effort, and make known to those sponsors by appropriate means, our opposition individually and as a group, to their message.

L. Challenging Ageism

WHEREAS, one of Gray Panthers founding purposes is to organize people of all ages to fight injustices of ageism, sexism, and racism; and

WHEREAS, Robert N. Butler, M.D., coined the term ageism to mean a “deep and profound prejudice against the elderly”. Ageism, which permeates our society, can more broadly mean discrimination and negative age-related stereotyping of people of all ages; and

WHEREAS, ageist thinking, practices and systems create barriers among people of different ages; it denies opportunities for all people to realize their full potential, with an especially harsh impact on older adults; and

WHEREAS, the problem of age discrimination is growing and is expected to become greater as the baby boom generation ages. The number of claims filed under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act rose 21 percent (from 15.8 million to 19.1 million claims) between 1997 to 2007; and

WHEREAS, the Gray Panthers was founded on the belief that intergenerational connections bring people together across age groups to foster understanding of each other and to provide varying perspectives that strengthen social justice work; and

WHEREAS, ageist attitudes and practices in our society are sustained by myths about growing older and reinforced by negative age stereotypes in news media.

BE IT RESOLVED, Gray Panthers vow to challenge ageism in our society by educating society about the myths of aging and by promoting intergenerational leadership and programming within Gray Panthers networks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, as a fundamental part of our work, Gray Panthers will take action to counter ageism.

V. POLITICAL INTEGRITY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE (Resolutions relating to campaign finance, elections, democracy, taxes, trade, and empowerment zones.)

A. Voter Turnout and Public Campaigns

WHEREAS, political apathy is at a high level in the U.S. due to a sense of disenfranchisement; and

WHEREAS, the political system in the U.S. continues to be corrupted by the influx of large sums of money; and

WHEREAS, select states have passed their own clean money/clean election laws.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panther places a high priority on increasing voting rates as an important aspect of campaign finance reform and that it supports making voting easier; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that broadcast and cable media, as a licensing requirement, provide free and equal time during peak times, to all candidates with ballot status; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports and promotes a designated time period for fundraising; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that federal campaigns be funded by the government and that any other reform measures must take into account their effect on bringing disenfranchised voters to the polls.

B. Election Law Reform

WHEREAS, the U.S. has a tradition of freedom and democracy; and

WHEREAS, our government is based on the tenet of "government of the people, by the people and for the people"; and

WHEREAS, those beliefs lead us to want every eligible voter to vote; and

WHEREAS, voter turnout has been historically low; and

WHEREAS, many voting practices that reflect the technological limitations of times past and/or the social arrangements of another age, discourage or limit voter turnout.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, Gray Panthers support various practices that increase access and reduce barriers to voting, such as same day registration, motor voter registration, making election day a non-work day, allowing for early and open absentee voting (don't need to declare a reason for absentee voting), mail-in voting, and other such practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Gray Panthers support and join with advocates of voting reform at the Federal, State and Local level; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that because exit polling and early TV coverage with calling of results discourages voting across the country, Gray Panthers encourage media to delay calling "winners" until all polls close.

C. Fair and Free Voting

WHEREAS, our democratic form of government depends on the consent of the governed, and is expressed by voting in a free election; and

WHEREAS, our free elections are threatened by voting systems that can be manipulated and mishandled by partisan corporations, in collaboration with those in power; and

WHEREAS, our democracy depends on accurate ballot counts and then a secure transmittal of that vote to election central; and

WHEREAS, some jurisdictions may have unreasonable requirements to get on the ballot; and

WHEREAS, state laws differ from one jurisdiction to the next.

BE IT RESOLVED, that as citizens, we demand that our voting systems accurately register the votes of citizens entitled to vote; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that all parties have a fair opportunity to get on the ballot and that proportional representation voting systems be expanded; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the voting systems be non-partisan, non-profit and non-corporate and that they be secure from manipulation and tampering and that they leave a paper trail that can be verified if a recount is required.

D. Abolish the Electoral College

WHEREAS, democracy is not served by the Electoral College, which was designed to keep power in the hands of an unelected elite; and

WHEREAS, we value the principle of one- person, one- vote and we insist that all votes count; and

WHEREAS, we selected a President in 2000 who did not win the popular vote as has happened at other times in our history; and

WHEREAS, the 2004 election campaign made it clear that candidates focus only on and visit states where electoral college votes are in play and ignore other parts of the country and states and the people in those states; and

WHEREAS, when the popular vote in a state is not close, the votes of the people who support the minority candidate are essentially disregarded and inconsequential.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Electoral College be dissolved and presidents and vice presidents be elected by the will of the people through the popular vote.

E. Protect Media Diversity in this Democracy

WHEREAS, a democracy cannot function without an informed electorate, and independent, diverse media are essential to the health of American democracy; and

WHEREAS, enforcement of anti-trust laws has become lax over recent years, and technological changes in media have weakened those laws; and

WHEREAS, media conglomerates, putting their own financial interests over public interests, are limiting access in the U.S. to the full range of information and opinions necessary in a democracy; and

WHEREAS, because of media conglomeration and homogenization, we do not have ready access to function as citizens to resolve state, national, and global issues—healthcare, education, environment, and issues of socio-economic classes; and

WHEREAS, the airwaves are owned by the people and licensed by the government of the United States, but the profits are accrued almost completely by a small number of

mega-corporations who use the public airwaves at no charge and reap profits of an estimated \$750 billion; and

WHEREAS, corporate media, particularly “talk shows”, are used intentionally to turn working families against one another and to weaken the progressive movement, through the technique of resentment programming which incites fear, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and hatred; and

WHEREAS, the Internet which now provides *net neutrality*, (for those people who have access, all those people have the same access), is under threat of having corporate and commercial users being awarded dominant access; and

WHEREAS, radio and television media continue to ignore the Public Interest Obligations originally established by the FCC, as a result of which, all candidates for President did not receive fair exposure by the corporate media.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers demand that their elected officials act to:

- 1) Enforce existing anti-trust laws as they apply to media conglomerates; and
- 2) Prevent further concentration of the news media; and
- 3) Legislate the break-up of large media conglomerates; and
- 4) Support public access to diversity in the media.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all Gray Panther Networks educate their communities about these issues, since they are vital to preservation of free speech and informed citizen participation in democratic government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers advocate on issues related to print, broadcast and Internet media, especially:

- 1) To oppose concentration of media ownership,
- 2) To denounce ‘fake news’ manufactured at public expense to propagandize in favor of government policies;
- 3) To preserve funding for public education and government access to airwaves;
- 4) To monitor corporate media and their regulatory bodies;
- 5) To increase community awareness of critical broadcast and internet issues;
- 6) To provide free Internet access to all citizens in all areas;
- 7) To raise these issues to all candidates for public office;
- 8) To act with and to support media reform groups such as Media Alliance, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (F.A.I.R.) and others locally and nationally;
- 9) To demand that access to C-Span be included in cable, dish, satellite and other media packages; to preserve “net neutrality” and,
- 10) To preserve *net neutrality* and to oppose practices and policies which give corporations greater or preferential access to the Internet.

F. Privatization of Public Holdings

WHEREAS, the international, national, and local trend is to transfer public holdings to private, corporate-dominated control; and

WHEREAS, the usual result is a decrease in public input on social decisions and a decrease in public benefit, accompanied by an increase in private corporate profit.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers oppose privatization where public money for public purposes could end up as an increase in private corporate profit and a decrease in public benefit.

G. Civil Disobedience

WHEREAS, people of the U.S. were all taught the story of the Boston Tea Party and the concept of no taxation without representation; and

WHEREAS, the necessity of some people putting their bodies on the line is unquestioned as a vital strategy for social change; and

WHEREAS, activists, reporters, and others are increasingly being illegally “drag netted,” arrested, and held.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support Gray Panthers and others who participate in civil disobedience on behalf of causes in keeping with resolutions and principles of the National Gray Panthers.

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VI. EDUCATION (Resolutions relating to education, including curricula, funding and school safety.)

A. Access to Education

WHEREAS, educational access is a right and should be accessible to all regardless of gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, immigration status and age; and

WHEREAS, schools and libraries are physically crumbling and programs in arts and music have been eliminated; and

WHEREAS, the disparity in conditions of school buildings, class size, teacher qualifications, technological equipment and programs, adequate libraries, and availability of art and music, science, and language education is very great all over the country; and

WHEREAS, the federal budget does not reflect these great needs.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Gray Panthers demand increases in the percentage of federal funding for public education at all levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers demand expanded educational opportunities especially for children in low-income families, and that these opportunities include appropriate classroom enrichment, and parent and grandparent education to support children's learning at home as well as in the classroom; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that additional services are provided, including early childhood development programs, literacy and bilingual education, greater support for public libraries, and remedial programs; additionally appropriate technologies should be instituted, class sizes reduced, and library collections increased; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Gray Panthers supports efforts to increase funding for our nation's public schools.

B. Sex and Education

WHEREAS, the social environment is filled with many and diverse threats to health, especially those related to sexual activity; and

WHEREAS, the topic of sex education and the availability of sexuality-related information is under attack by those who would substitute "abstinence-only" viewpoints for balanced sex education, to the exclusion of scientifically based medical, health, and psychological information; and

WHEREAS, abstinence-only programs have been shown to be less effective than balanced sex education programs.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports comprehensive and scientifically-based sex education and health care education in public schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes attempts to impose religiously-based sex education curricula, in whole or in part, in public schools.

C. School Breakfast

WHEREAS, the federal government has a school breakfast program available for every school district in the country; and

WHEREAS, many school districts do not participate in this program and many children go without breakfast.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports a federal mandate providing for school breakfasts for every low-income child who is currently eligible for free or reduced-cost school lunches.

D. Public Education as a Right

WHEREAS, quality education is a right for all students, pre-school to high school, regardless of birth; and

WHEREAS, our public system is under siege from those who would violate and undermine the separation of state and church; and

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers' founder, Maggie Kuhn, was determined that social programs benefit all; and

WHEREAS, well educated students will be prepared for the jobs of the future knowing their rights, being capable of resolving conflicts by peaceful means, and being informed participants in the political process.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers hereby supports public money for public schools only and inform their elected officials as such.

E. Public Funds for Public Education

WHEREAS, legislatures across the nation are enacting legislation to enable people to receive tax dollar-funded vouchers to send their children to private and/or parochial schools; and

WHEREAS, the money used for vouchers would take money away from public education and channel funds into private and/or parochial schools; and

WHEREAS, this violates the spirit of separation of church and state.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes the use of public tax dollars to fund vouchers or voucher-like like programs because it would decimate public schooling.

F. The *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT*

WHEREAS, the original 1965 Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) was designed to compensate for the great disparities of funding and achievement across and within the states; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress passed a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which set punitive conditions for receiving federal financial support based on a rigid system of standardized tests instead of acceptable learning theory, encouragement and incentives; and

WHEREAS, Gray Panthers agree with the NCLB goal to define high expectations so that each child realizes his/her potential; and

WHEREAS, the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements of the NCLB Act are flawed and have caused financial losses and closings of public schools; and

WHEREAS, the NCLB unfairly holds schools with greater concentrations of students with variations in capacities and resources, such as children from special education, poor, rural, urban and immigrant backgrounds, to the same progress norms; and

WHEREAS, NCLB radically reshapes public education in the language of business by adopting accountability standards and production targets of business.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers demand that the federal government adequately fund all federally mandated programs, including Title I special education mandates; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers challenge members of Congress and the President to amend the NCLB Act with meaningful changes that reflect acceptable child development, maturation and learning theory; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that poor districts whose tax bases cannot support the quality of education of richer districts be assisted to provide equal educational opportunities to all the nation's children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Gray Panthers urge Congress to keep its promise and fully fund the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

G. Financing of Higher Education

WHEREAS, education beyond the high school level is important to the economic and social well-being of individuals, families and society; and

WHEREAS, the costs of higher education have not been treated as a basic right, like elementary and secondary education, leaving much of the cost of college and other post-high school education to be paid by individuals and their families; and

WHEREAS, the costs of post-high school education continue to rise faster than incomes; and

WHEREAS, the costs of post-high school education are borne unevenly, pressing hardest on those from straitened economic circumstances, leaving working class and middle class students alike unable to pursue the education and training they need; and

WHEREAS, given trends in the labor market, more and more education will be required to enter and thrive in the job market.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports extension of Pell Grants in number and size; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers call upon their Federal and State representatives to expand opportunities to obtain education and training, and that these expenditures be treated as a long-term investment in the economic and social well-being of the Nation and the States, which will be repaid in future taxes and other social contributions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers especially support higher education and training in fields related to health care, education and stewardship of the environment.

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VII. JOBS & WORKER’S RIGHTS (Resolutions relating to employment, wage and workplace issues, including workplace discrimination.)

A. Full Employment

WHEREAS, U.S. labor markets are subject to major swings of employment/unemployment that are outside the control of workers; and

WHEREAS, industry solutions to competitive demands in the U.S. and abroad often involve downsizing and outsourcing instead of protecting workers’ rights; and

WHEREAS, too many Americans are without jobs, and some communities are particularly hard hit with long term unemployment; and

WHEREAS, age discrimination complaints reported to the EEOC have remained significant since 1997 (from 14,493 in FY 2005 to 17,734 in FY 2007); and

WHEREAS, unemployment fosters racism and bigotry.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports legislation guaranteeing full employment, including job creation bills providing for public service and other jobs.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urge Congress to create a Federal Tax Credit for hiring persons over age 50 to help reduce the cost of hiring older adults and to abolish the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Disincentives – Urge the Federal Government Secretary of Labor, to assess the impact of WIA performance measures on older workers and adjust them to eliminate disincentives to enrolling older workers in programs funded by the WIA.

B. Right to Organize

WHEREAS, the union movement has steadily lost membership and bargaining power for years due to growing trade pressures, employer militancy, technological changes and changes in labor law; and

WHEREAS, the fight for collective bargaining rights and union protections has been one of the greatest for purposes of collective bargaining and workers rights, and that the Gray Panthers ally itself even more closely to this movement and to unions around the country.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support legislation to assist all workers in their right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining and worker's rights, and that the Gray Panthers ally itself even more closely to this movement and to unions across the country.

C. Living Wage

WHEREAS, every working person should receive a salary large enough to provide an adequate standard of living; and

WHEREAS, such a standard of living is a benefit to the individual and society as a whole by improving life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and also by reducing the need for public assistance; and

WHEREAS, public entities such as cities and counties employ people, fulfill contractual obligations, and rent out properties and facilities; and

WHEREAS, over 300 locales across the country have passed living wage laws tying wage and/or benefit requirements to government contract eligibility or other government assistance; and

WHEREAS, efforts to rescind local living wage laws are underway.

BE IT RESOLVED, that all public bodies include a living wage requirement in their employment and contracting and leasing arrangements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a living wage be related to the cost of living of the area.

D. Child Labor and Sweatshop Abuse

WHEREAS, American companies such as Disney, Nike, Ralph Loren, and Wal-Mart operate, or contract to operate, facilities in under-developed countries, and these countries maintain sweatshops that exploit children, teenagers and adults to work under the harshest conditions for a few pennies an hour; and

WHEREAS, the National Labor Council (NLC), the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), and other groups are actively pursuing global efforts to end child labor and sweatshop abuse.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports and actively joins with the NCL, the USAS, and other groups in pursuit of these joint efforts.

E. Global Trade

WHEREAS, economic globalization and transnational corporations are a threat to democracy and national sovereignty, and are part of an effort by international lenders to impose regressive social policies around the world; and

WHEREAS, these policies are aimed at taking advantage of cheap labor and have the effect of accelerating dire economic conditions for people around the world—including the United States—and result in, among other things, the spread of preventable diseases and malnutrition; and

WHEREAS, these policies are accompanied by a downgrading or elimination of various economic bodies in the United Nations to favor the more wealthy countries and undemocratic transnational corporations.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes NAFTA and all other so-called “free trade agreements” which do not include provisions for the rights of labor, for protection of the environment, and for the protection of national sovereignty and democracy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports coalitions, such as 50 Years is Enough!, which oppose destructive policies of the World Bank, IMF and WTO; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports programs that encourage community development, local sustainability, economic empowerment of the poor; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes WTO/IMF (and other) programs that result in the globalization of the food supply, especially where such globalization threatens local health and economic well-being; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers campaigns for the United Nations, for adherence to the United Nations Charter, for the restoration of the economic bodies of the United Nations and for the democratic reform of the World Bank, IMF and WTO to assure that all people have fair and un-oppressive economic opportunity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers conducts a campaign of education to support, foster, and disseminate these positions.

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VIII. ENVIRONMENT (Resolutions relating to urban growth, waste management, energy, pollution, wildlife, and environmental safety.)

A. Environmental Responsibility – Sustainable Environment

WHEREAS, scientists from around the world have issued and increasingly continue to issue warnings stating that, unless we change our stewardship of the earth, particularly the effects of industry and agriculture, various aspects of the environment will likely be changed irrevocably, and with unknowable consequences; and

WHEREAS, disruptions of the environment are already demonstrating such effects as depletion of ocean fish stocks, extinction of native species in estuaries such as the Chesapeake Bay and the San Francisco Bay and elsewhere; evident effects on human health such as disruption of immune system responses, asthma, skin cancers, and possibly reproductive systems; in animal health, in the form of mutations in some species and the extinction of others, such as corals, owing to pollution, ozone depletion and global warming; and

WHEREAS, short-sighted policy development has put agricultural production for fuel into direct competition with production for food, especially heavily subsidized corn-based ethanol.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls on legislators, business leaders, educators, consumers, and faith communities to take responsibility for the quality of the environment individually and collectively, and to develop the basis for sustainable economic systems that will preserve and regenerate our planet for generations to come; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers opposes subsidy programs for production of ethanol to the extent that they distort food prices and availability at home and abroad; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls on government and academia to closely monitor and measure the effects on farm workers who are daily exposed to all of nature's elements plus man made toxic substances; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers advocates for Al Gore's *Environmental Challenge to America* that the U/S reach the goal of 100% renewable and truly clean energy (100% zero-carbon electricity) by 2018; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support the work of international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, which work for protection of the environment and for ecologically sustainable growth in agriculture, aquaculture, industry, and other economic activity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers call upon the U.S. Government to support international cooperation on environmental protection through treaties and alliances; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers call on government and industry to encourage and undertake development of energy sources which will be environmentally benign and sustainable, and which will diminish dependence on petroleum and other non-renewable resources.

B. Environmental Pollution

WHEREAS, environmental pollution from industrial and agricultural sources contaminates water, land, and air; and

WHEREAS, the effects of such pollution contribute to birth defects, cancers, asthma, and other health conditions; and

WHEREAS, programs such as freeing of "brown lands" [recovered pollution sites] for construction of housing may bring adults and children in close contact with dangerous contaminants without their knowledge; and

WHEREAS, agricultural runoff may contaminate rural drinking water with farm chemicals, hormone-laced animal waste and other substances, the presence and effects of which are not known to residents; and

WHEREAS, these hazards affect virtually all people, they disproportionately affect the poor who may not be informed of hazards, or having been informed, may not have options available to protect themselves from danger.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers join and support the efforts of organizations throughout the country that address environmental pollution, and especially those whose concern includes the lopsided impacts of such pollution on the most vulnerable members of our society.

C. Banned Depleted Uranium, Nuclear Testing, and Radiation Experiments

WHEREAS, millions of American children born in the 1950's and early 1960's were exposed to large amounts of radioactive iodine from atmospheric nuclear weapons tests, and between 10,000 and 75,000 may develop thyroid cancer as a result of drinking contaminated milk; and

WHEREAS, new battlefield weapons using depleted uranium have apparently resulted in thousands of illnesses among United States' Gulf War veterans and people living in countries where the U.S. has used depleted uranium weapons; and

WHEREAS, the Pentagon has changed United States' conventional weapons into radioactive weapons by adding depleted uranium to ammunition, and that the depleted uranium in such weapons yet poses a danger to soldiers, presents public health and environmental problems, and is contrary to international law.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls for medical screening and compensation for nuclear test-related cancer victims, as well as victims of radiation from depleted uranium weapons and calls for banning their use; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers calls on Congress to work with the United Nations to ban all weapons that contain depleted Uranium, and also ban transfer of depleted Uranium to other countries.

D. Prohibit Transport of Nuclear Fuel Rods

WHEREAS, the prospect of a "Mobile Chernobyl" looms in the transportation of radiated nuclear fuel rods to an "interim" high level storage site in Uranium; and

WHEREAS, this movement would violate existing environmental laws on radiation exposure.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers oppose the transportation to, and storage in Yucca Mountain in Nevada which has been designated for this purpose.

E. Protect the Old Growth Forests

WHEREAS, only four percent of the original old growth redwood forests remain anywhere on earth, and the old growth forests in Georgia, Michigan, Northern Idaho, Oregon, SW Washington State, and other parts of the U.S. are currently in danger of being cut down by corporations.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers urges the U.S. government to do what is necessary to protect and preserve all old growth forests in the United States.

F. Preservation of Natural Habitats

WHEREAS, natural habitats are fragile and cannot be duplicated; and

WHEREAS, development – both commercial and residential – threatens and jeopardizes the future of natural habitats like the Everglades; and

WHEREAS, all citizens are responsible for sustaining our environment and its ecology for present and future generations.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports legislation and executive orders to designate natural habitats – such as the Everglades – as national and natural treasures to be sustained and nurtured by present and future generations.

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