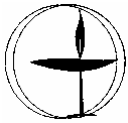


Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations



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Rob Keithan
Director

December 19, 2006

Lover of process that I am, I will claim this to be an historic moment: you hold before you the first ever proposed UUA Public Policy Statement, or PPS. This letter will inform or remind you of what the PPS are, why they are necessary, and offer my understanding of the process by which they are considered. You'll also find the first three proposed PPS, one each in issue areas corresponding to the UUA's Legislative Assistants: Equal Rights for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Persons, International Relations, and Reproductive Health.

What are Public Policy Statements? Currently, anyone seeking to discern UUA policy on a given issue must review numerous statements in different locations. Public Policy Statements, or PPS, will assemble this information in a simple, accessible format. They will be one to two pages in length, with brief introductory text followed by a section of concise statements summarizing our policy on the given issue. For summaries of all the relevant states (from which each PPS was drafted), please see <http://www.uua.org/uuawo/new/article.php?id=906>.

Public Policy Statements will allow the Association, the general public, and the press to readily determine the UUA's policy in a given issue area. While Washington Office and a few other staff are well-versed in Association policy, the process of having to comb an assortment of statements to discern the UUA's position is neither an efficient use of staff time nor an effective approach to public witness. I suspect that the development of PPS will make the Association's social justice policies broadly accessible to UUs for the first time ever.

The creation of Public Policy Statements was recommended by the Social Witness Review Panel in April 2004 and approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2004. The PPS will be drafted by UUA staff and approved by the Board of Trustees to ensure that they appropriately represent the statements from which they are drawn without creating new policy. Since PPS summarize existing statements rather than create new policy, the Board determined that their creation did not require by-law changes or General Assembly action.

The next document, "Public Policy Statements Process," represents my understanding of the next steps, as agreed upon with Linda Olson Peebles. I look forward to hearing your feedback, and to continuing the conversation on how to improve our Association's witness for the values we hold dear. In the future you can expect to hear also from Kat Liu, Assistant Director of the Washington Office, who will be taking over the PPS transition process.

In Faith,

Robert C. Keithan, Director

Proposed UUA Public Policy Statement Process

Draft as of 2006-12-12

I. Process by which Staff Submit a Proposed Public Policy Statement (PPS) to the UUA Board of Trustees

The request should have three parts:

1. A cover letter which offers a brief summary of:
 - What are Public Policy Statements?
 - What they are envisioned to accomplish (guide congregations, guide UUA staff, avoid repeating work, giving grounding for new work)
 - What the role of the Board is
2. One or two PPS examples (except, of course, for the first PPS when no previous examples exist)
3. The proposed PPS draft, with a cover letter reviewing the themes/process relevant to that PPS and links to where to find the supporting texts (full supporting historical GRs, AIWs, SOCs).

II. What the Board Does

The board's responsibility, as articulated in the "UUA Board Role in Public Witness Policy, is to:

"To review and affirm adoption of UUA Public Policy Statements, based on actions of previous General Assemblies."

After reviewing a proposed PPS, the Board may

- a. Affirm the PPS, thus permitting staff to rely on it and use it publicly; or
- b. Not affirm the PPS, referring it back to staff for further work as directed.
- c. The Social Witness Review Panel offered another option, that the Board could:

"...refer the Public Policy Statement or amendment directly to the General Assembly. The text would not be subject to amendment, just debate and an up-or-down vote with two-thirds required for approval."

While the Board certainly retains this discretion and authority, we believe this option would require considerable collaboration with the Moderator and CSW, as well as education of General Assembly delegates, in order for it to be a successful process. Thus we recommend that the Board not exercise this option until or unless an effective process exists.



Public Policy Statement

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EQUAL RIGHTS FOR BISEXUAL, GAY, LESBIAN AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations affirms the worth and dignity of every person, and covenants to promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. Furthermore, the Association holds that love between two men, two women, or one man and one woman creates deep and caring relationships and families and provides nurturing environments for couples and their children. Thus, the UUA supports civil equality and human rights for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people. In particular, the Association supports the following:

- Full legal equality for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people, including:
 - The right for same-sex couples to marry;
 - Rescission of laws governing private sexual behavior between consenting adults;
 - Non-discrimination in employment practices and job-related benefits;
 - Granting or renewal of federal security clearance or visas, and the granting of citizenship without regard to sexual orientation.
 - Legal protections against persecution and hate crimes.
- Medically-accurate, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education in public schools, that encompasses heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender orientations.
- Legislative and grassroots efforts to end persecution of and intolerance against bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people.
- Patronage of businesses and organizations which do not discriminate toward bisexual, gay, lesbian and/or transgender people; avoidance of companies with discriminatory policies.
- Efforts to overturn policies of the Boy Scouts of America which discriminate against bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people.
- The right of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people to serve openly in the United States military.
- Unitarian Universalist Congregations and an Association which are fully and explicitly welcoming of bisexual, gay, lesbian and/or transgender people in employment, ministry and congregational life, including services of union for same-sex couples.



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations holds that both individuals and nations are part of the interdependent web of all existence, and as such we should work together towards the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. In particular, the Association supports the following:

- Multilateral, diplomatic solutions to international problems.
- Advocacy and activism to support and protect the oppressed, marginalized, and minority populations of the world from the abuses of governments and the neglect of the international community. Enabled by:
 - Maintaining diplomatic relations with nations of diverse governance structures.
 - Reserving the use of diplomatic and economic sanctions for instances of human rights abuses, but conducted in ways that the suffering is not worsened.
 - The cessation of arms and ammunition sales to governments or groups that are abusing the rights of and/or killing citizens due to their ethnic heritage, political affiliations, sex, sexuality or race.
 - Supporting and resettling refugee populations.
- The United Nations as the most adequate vehicle for international diplomacy and conflict resolution. Cooperating with the United Nations includes:
 - Universal ratification of all United Nations Human Rights Conventions.
 - The creation of a permanent peace force, enabling the Security Council to act as an effective peacemaking multilateral intervention force.
 - The membership of all nations in international judicial bodies.
 - The continued creation of international law, and the adherence to it, by all nations.
 - The yielding of a measure of national sovereignty to the world body in the interest of peace and security for all.
- The preservation of sovereignty through a limitation of unilateral intervention in the domestic affairs of other nations.
- When military aggression destroys community infrastructure, the aggressor has the responsibility to help that community heal and rebuild.





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REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations affirms the worth and dignity of every person as well as the goal of a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, and thus affirms the access to family planning and reproductive health care including birth control, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, and abortion. The UUA opposes attempts to enact private moral positions into public law, whether domestically or internationally. In particular, the Association supports the following:

- Education on the morality and ultimate economic, environmental, and social necessity of family planning
- Federally-funded, age-appropriate sexuality education for all children including information about abstinence, birth control, abortion, and focusing on the emotional and social responsibility involved in sexual activity and parenthood
- Access to birth control and information for all people to prevent unwanted pregnancies
- Financial and scientific support for the research on inexpensive, harmless, and effective birth control methods
- Removal of restrictions on the responsible distribution of birth control information and devices by federally-funded domestic welfare programs and international health programs.
- The right of any female of any age or marital, economic, or employment status to have an abortion at her own request upon medical/social consultation of her own choosing with a guarantee of unrestricted access to services
- Federal legislation that guarantees the fundamental right of individual choice and privacy in reproductive matters
- Protection of medical personnel who supply abortion services, and their families, from harassment and intimidation

