

# Minnesota NOW Legislative Platform

## 1) Definitions

- a) For the purpose of clarity, the following definitions will be used in this document:
  - i) Reproductive Services = Any and all services relating specifically to women, including but not limited to: abortion, mammograms, breast exams, pelvic exams, the dispensing of any and all forms of birth control, as well as the distribution of information.

## 2) Constitutional Issues

- a) MN NOW supports passage of a federal Equal Rights Amendment, free of provisions limiting a woman's right to reproductive choice or other fundamental rights.
- b) MN NOW supports memorialization of Congress to pass a federal Equal Rights Amendment.
- c) MN NOW supports passage of a state Equal Rights Amendment with no limiting provisions.
- d) MN NOW opposes legislation calling for a Constitutional Convention for any purpose.

## 3) Federal Action

- a) MN NOW supports the U.S. ratification of the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Forward-Looking strategies. These two documents resulted from the United Nations Decade for Women.

## 4) Health Care

- a) MN NOW supports all aspects of a woman's right to reproductive services and the right to choose abortion.
- b) MN NOW opposes all forms of legislation which would:
  - i) Amend the U.S. Constitution to restrict, or allow individual states to restrict reproductive services or abortion rights.
  - ii) Allow health maintenance organizations to limit the availability of abortions or reproductive services.
  - iii) Eliminate funding of elective abortion or reproductive services for low-income women.
  - iv) Require parental consent or notification that would limit a minor's access to abortion or reproductive services.
  - v) Allow forced sterilization.

- vi) Prevent over-the-counter or prescription sales of medication(s) which induce abortion.
- vii) Restrict U.S. support or assistance to any country for the purpose of improving services for women in the area of sexual health, family planning, abortion and pregnancy prevention.
- c) MN NOW supports legislation (providing) that would provide women with access to quality health care, including family planning and abortion services, at affordable prices.
- d) MN NOW supports the right of minors to confidential counseling and treatment in all medical matters, and opposes legislation requiring parental consent for counseling and treatment.
- e) MN NOW supports legislation which discourages unnecessary surgery and unnecessary prescribing of drugs to women.
- f) MN NOW will monitor future legislation addressing genetic research with respect to its impact on women and will encourage National NOW to do so as well.
- g) MN NOW supports legislation establishing a national health care system.
- h) MN NOW supports continued and expanding funding for the Women Infants & Children (WIC) program.
- i) MN NOW supports legislation that would guarantee that maternal and child health Block Grant money is distributed on the merits of the program and does not discriminate against providers who perform abortions and/or offer family planning services.
- j) MN NOW supports legislation that compensates women for injury to or the wrongful death of their fetuses.
- k) MN NOW supports legislation establishing school on-site health clinics.
- l) MN NOW opposes legislation that would increase the costs of abortion unnecessarily (e.g. burial of embryonic tissues.)
- m) MN NOW supports legislation that increases the penalties and/or would lead to the prosecution of those that terrorize clinics that perform abortions.
- n) MN NOW supports increased/continued funding for AIDS research.
- o) MN NOW supports legislation that would require employers who receive any type of state financial benefits or direct aid to provide family health insurance to employees regardless of parental status.
- p) MN NOW believes that outlawing donor-parenting arrangements is an ineffective way to protect donor mothers *and* their children. MN NOW supports legislation that protects the rights of the donor mother, the child and the intended parents in the donor parenting arrangement.

- q) MN NOW supports the fundamental right of all persons to give informed consent and control decisions relating to their own medical care including the decision to have medical or surgical means or procedures calculated to sustain organ function either administered, withdrawn or withheld.
- r) MN NOW seeks to promote the health of women and infants while preserving the civil rights of pregnant women by:
  - i) Supporting increased funding and availability of treatment including child care, education, family planning, job training, prevention of substance abuse studies, and preservation of traditional health care provider (doctor) – patient confidentiality.
  - ii) Supporting education for health care providers in identification and treatment of substance abuse. (substance abuse includes alcohol, tobacco, and controlled substances)
  - iii) Supporting the inclusion of contraceptive and family planning services in treatment programs.
  - iv) Opposing reporting requirements and incarceration.

## **5) Financial Systems**

- a) MN NOW supports legislation to eliminate discrimination in insurance and pensions based on sex, marital status or occupation as a homemaker.
- b) MN NOW supports memorialization of Congress to allow full recognition of women's contributions to the economy as homemakers and employed women under the Social Security system.
- c) MN NOW supports legislation that would encourage employers to provide fringe benefits that allow employees more flexibility in choosing the benefits that best suit their individual and family needs.
- d) MN NOW supports increasing the child and dependent care tax credit and other child care provisions to a level commensurate with demonstrated needs.
- e) MN NOW supports legislation permitting tax deductions for homemaker IRAs that are comparable to those received by other workers.
- f) MN NOW supports legislation that would make insurance accessible and affordable for providers of services used by women including, but not limited to: day care, midwifery, abortion and other health care needs.
- g) MN NOW supports legislation that would require the refundable childcare credits to be included on the short income tax form.
- h) MN NOW supports legislation that recognizes and attempts to alleviate the great economic pressure of single heads of households.

- i) MN NOW opposes any plans to publicly fund stadiums or arenas in Minnesota.

## **6) Services to Women**

- a) MN NOW supports funding of programs that recognize the special needs of women, and inclusion of women's needs in funding for all programs addressing the needs of the general population.
- b) MN NOW supports the establishment of a State Office or Director position for the Prevention of Violence Against Women.
- c) MN NOW supports continued and expanded funding for displaced homemaker programs, sexual assault programs, battered women's programs, programs for women offenders and the Commission on the Economic Status of Women.
- d) MN NOW supports legislation designed to eliminate the feminization of poverty.
  - i) By ensuring that all welfare programs encourage the economic independence, privacy, choice and dignity of recipients.
  - ii) By ensuring that all welfare programs are based on a standard of need that includes an automatic cost of living increase and child care.
- e) MN NOW opposes mandatory "workfare" or any other work in exchange for welfare stipend.
- f) MN NOW opposes punitive sanctioning of welfare participants.
- g) MN NOW opposes supplanting state money with federal welfare money, resulting in an overall reduction in the amount of money spent on programs to assist people out of poverty.
- h) MN NOW supports continued and adequate funding of the Minnesota Department of Human rights that would emphasize improved enforcement and investigation by the Department.
- i) MN NOW supports legislation that responds to the special needs in housing of women and their children, particularly the importance of providing housing affordable to low income people.
- j) MN NOW supports legislation that provides all women with access to affordable child care services. Such legislation could include such provisions as tax deductibility and a sliding fee scale for child-care costs.
- k) MN NOW supports legislation that would create a consumer-based study that examines the option for expanding access to public child care funds.
- l) MN NOW supports legislation that would create governmental financial incentive for businesses that offer subsidized, quality child-care to their employees.
- m) MN NOW supports legislation that would require the State of Minnesota to provide subsidized, quality child care to its employees.

- n) MN NOW supports legislation that would require abusers to pay in a timely manner for the expenses incurred by a battered partner. These expenses would include but not be limited to interim housing, education, training, child-care, counseling and other vital expenses.
- o) MN NOW supports ensuring universal access to telephone service by persons over 65 years of age, on low income fixed pensions, or anyone receiving any kind of government assistance.

## **7) Lesbian/Gay Rights**

- a) MN NOW supports retention of any and all legislation that prohibits discrimination based on sexual preference and/or orientation.
- b) MN NOW supports legislation providing strict enforcement and strong penalties for assaults motivated by the victim's sexual preference/orientation, age, gender, religion, race, disability or ethnic origin.
- c) MN NOW supports legislation repealing laws against sodomy between consenting adults.
- d) MN NOW supports legislation ensuring that child custody decisions are made without regard to the parents' sexual/affect ional preference/orientation.
- e) MN NOW supports legislation legalizing same sex marriages and providing lesbian/gay couples with the same legal and financial protections available to all married couples (domestic partnership bills).

## **8) Families**

- a) MN NOW supports legislation prohibiting issuance of any license/permit to any person who is in default on his or her child support or maintenance obligations.
- b) MN NOW supports legislation repealing sodomy, fornication and adultery laws between consenting adults that discriminate based on sex, martial status, and/or affect ional preference/orientation.
- c) MN NOW supports legislation that increases the amounts of and strengthens enforcement and collection procedures for child support and maintenance orders.
- d) MN NOW supports legislation that recognizes the contributions of homemakers to society. MN NOW also supports legislation allowing permanent maintenance awards for women who spent their careers as homemakers.
- e) MN NOW supports legislation providing parental leaves for State employees.
- f) MN NOW supports legislation that provides for detection of and protection against all forms of family violence, including but not limited to: incest, battering, elder abuse/neglect and child abuse/neglect.

- g) MN NOW supports legislation providing unpaid leaves of absence for up to one year to a new parent(s), natural or adoptive, in conjunction with the birth or adoption of a child, with a guarantee of return to a position of comparable duties, pay and seniority.
- h) MN NOW supports the creation of a MN NOW task force to consider the implications of current no-fault divorce laws and the resulting financial and custodial settlement inequities. The task force report would propose an addition to the legislative platform for consideration and approval at the September 1987 State Board Meeting. The task force could be composed of both MN NOW members and non-members.

## 9) Education

- a) MN NOW supports legislation to achieve gender equality at every level of education, including but not limited to: pre-school, elementary, secondary, vocational and post-secondary.
- b) MN NOW supports legislation ensuring equal access to financial aid for women without regard to marital status, status as a part-time student, or age.
- c) MN NOW supports affirmative action in all education and training programs designed to prepare people for new technologies and occupations.
- d) MN NOW supports legislation to increase the representation of women in administrative position at all levels of education.
- e) MN NOW supports legislation and funding to establish a free universal system of child-care as part of the public schools system.
- f) MN NOW supports public education, and opposes legislation providing any form of government aid, such as but not limited to: tuition tax credit or voucher systems used to support private schools.
- g) MN NOW supports legislation that would require the presentation of sex-education and parenting classes in elementary and secondary schools, including the responsibilities of boys and (*young*) men.
- h) MN NOW supports legislation that will help to bring about multicultural and gender equity in all educational programs in public schools.
- i) MN NOW supports desegregation of public schools to ensure the rights of all persons, particularly African American, Hispanic, Native American and Asian women, to an equal education. MN NOW supports busing as a way to achieve this.

## 10) Employment

- a) MN NOW supports legislation providing equal pay for work of comparable or equal value in all public sector and private sector employment, including but not limited to academic entities currently excluded from legislation.

- b) MN NOW opposes delays in the implementation and exclusion of classes of workers in studies and implementation.
- c) MN NOW supports improved enforcement of laws requiring equal pay for equal work.
- d) MN NOW supports legislation encouraging affirmative action in hiring and promoting at all levels of government and in the private sector.
- e) MN NOW supports legislation and rules ensuring that all women, older women and minority women, have equal access to all new or existing job training/job creation programs, including provision for child-care. MN NOW supports the designation of provisions for child-care and other needed services rather than administering funds in block grants to county governments.
- f) MN NOW supports legislation, which provides wages for child-care workers commensurate with the importance of their work.
- g) MN NOW supports legislation which regulates development of cottage industry by ensuring that employers observe safety standards, provide opportunities to participate in insurance and other benefit programs, refrain from interfering with the right to bargain collectively and comply with any prohibition of child labor.
- h) MN NOW supports legislation, which would encourage women's access to service on governmental boards and commissions by providing adequate, related information and allowing paid release time as necessary.
- i) MN NOW supports legislation that requires employers to protect video display terminal, computer mouse and keyboard users from possible health hazards related to the use of these technologies.
- j) MN NOW supports legislation that expands the state open appointments process to local units of government.
- k) MN NOW supports legislation that would mandate provisions of benefits and seniority rights to seasonal and part-time workers in the public and private sectors.
- l) MN NOW supports legislation requiring that restaurant workers receive at least the minimum wage for all of their employees.

## **11) Women Offenders**

- a) MN NOW supports programs for women offenders which allow for child visitation, recreational space, vocational training in a wide range of occupations, work release programs and educational opportunities.
- b) MN NOW supports legislation which improves facilities and programming for women incarcerated in local jails.
- c) MN NOW supports legislation decriminalizing prostitution.
- d) MN NOW supports legislation, policies and programs to protect the rights of disabled offenders.

- e) MN NOW supports legislation and programs aimed at identifying and assisting battered women who are wrongfully accused of a crime because they were: acting under coercion or duress when they committed the crime, were acting in self-defense or were not the primary aggressor (in cases of mutual arrest in domestic assault situations).

## **12) Militarism**

- a) MN NOW supports reduction of military spending and reordering priorities in favor of people-serving programs.
- b) MN NOW supports the efforts of women in all parts of the world to improve their lives and calls upon Congress to eliminate the military and foreign aid policies that are destructive to women's lives, families and homelands.
- c) MN NOW opposes registration and the draft.
- d) MN NOW supports legislation that will plan for the effects of reduced military spending or conversion to a peacetime economy.
- e) MN NOW opposes U.S. sponsorship of the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia.
- f) MN NOW opposes U.S. intervention in Central America.

## **13) Media**

- a) MN NOW supports Fairness in Marketing legislation which would ensure that a product is sold on the basis of its actual qualities and prohibit offensive portrayals of women.
- b) MN NOW supports efforts to eliminate pornography.

## **14) Minority Rights**

- a) MN NOW supports legislation to eliminate racism.
- b) MN NOW supports cultural and racial diversity and therefore opposes reducing this diversity by making English the official and primary language.
- c) MN NOW opposes anti-immigration and anti-immigrant policies and programs.
- d) WITHIN EACH OF THESE ISSUE AREAS, MN NOW SUPPORTS THE NEEDS OF SPECIAL GROUPS OF WOMEN: rural women, low-income women, women of color, women who are disabled, older women, midlife women, homemakers, menopausal women, non-English speaking women and refugee women.