



POSITION PAPERS 2010

Childcare

While most other industrialized countries provide some level of childcare support on the logical assumption that care and early education of children is a social good and a human right; quality, affordable and accessible child care continues to be elusive for the children in the United States and specifically the State of California. Our children are our greatest national resource and their daily well being from their earliest developmental stages until they reach school age must be among the highest priorities facing government and policy makers. In the current climate of welfare-to-work social reform/legislation and the need for most families to have dual incomes, providing child care must be a part of the equation, along with job skills training and adequate transportation. And, since the responsibility for childcare falls disproportionately on the shoulders of working women, it is a matter of basic equality that affordable and quality childcare be readily available. To this end, the Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee strongly favors the adoption of a national child care policy.

We support:

- Legislation that increases funding of existing programs and the expansion or development of additional child care resources, including day care facilities, family day care homes, in-home care, drop-in centers, and available 24/7.
- Public and private funding of affordable, high-quality child care programs for the care of infants, pre-school and school-aged children as well as public and private funding for the expansion and development of child care services for children with special needs, including developmentally and physically challenged, care for mildly ill children, children at risk of abuse and neglect, foster youth and homeless children;
- Employer-sponsored child care, including employer-tax incentives, employee child care benefits, on-site facilities, paid Family Medical Leave, alternative flexible work schedules, resource and referral, and supplementary child care services;
- Policies that create standards for training and certification which ensure quality care and provide sufficient financial incentives to attract the most qualified and well-trained child care professionals possible.

Crimes Against Women

The crimes that throughout the course of history have been perpetrated against women must be stopped. These crimes include sexual harassment, exploitation, molestation, incest, rape, battery, assault and depictions of violence against women in pornography. Women and girls are the primary victims of sexual and domestic violence; however these crimes are perpetrated against men and boys too. The perpetrators in nearly all cases of sexual and domestic violence are men. Sexual and domestic violence is found in our families, the media, in our schoolyards and college campuses, in our workplaces and collective attitudes that blame the victim and excuse the perpetrator. Rape during wartime not only terrorizes civilians or those identified as the enemy, but women in the armed forces are not safe from their own military associates. Crimes against women cross all socioeconomic backgrounds, races, nationalities, cultures, and ages. Crimes against women have at their root an intersection between sexism and other forms of oppression. They are unconscionable, therefore unacceptable and the Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee is committed to ending these crimes.

We support:

- Intervention and Education programs which include: Outreach to all women with special emphasis to those from underserved populations, including non-English speaking, immigrant & undocumented, women, members of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Community and women with disabilities;
- Training for law enforcement, medical personnel, social service providers, attorneys, and judges to eliminate gender and cultural bias;
- Risk reduction programs including self-defense, moving women and children to shelters, awareness and assertiveness training;
- Programs which focus on male responsibility to stop sexual & physical violence and psychological abuse. Programs which hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes;
- Programs which encourage men to become involved in finding solutions to ending violence against women;
- Training for women and men to provide services to survivors of sexual and domestic violence;
- Funding for: prevention and intervention services, battered women shelters and legal services, multi-disciplinary response teams, psychological counseling and restitution for victims;
- Research and data gathering with special emphasis on prevention programs;
- Legislation which clarifies and broadens the definitions of crimes against women; positively impacts survivor rights; addresses gun control; and assists in creating a more sensitive and survivor responsive criminal justice system; VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) – protecting it and making it permanent;
- Prevention programs which challenge cultural and societal norms that tolerate and create an environment which sexual and domestic violence occurs;
- Intervention programs which take into account the survivor's race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and abilities, and provide services in a manner consistent with the background of the survivor in a competent and comprehensive manner.

We oppose:

- The silencing of women and their experience of sexual and domestic violence.
- The exploitation of rape to prolong or expand a war.

Educational Equity

The Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee believes that all individuals have the right to a quality public education. We believe that the experiences, strengths, and needs of girls and women from diverse backgrounds – race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, sexual orientation, religion, age and ability – must be considered in order to promote excellence and equity for all students. Both female and male students must see themselves reflected and valued in contemporary teaching and learning. Thus, we advocate equity, academic freedom, protection from censorship, bias-free education, and fair and responsible funding for all levels of education; we are committed to the elimination of barriers that impede girls and women from obtaining quality public education.

We support:

- Preparation and training of all school personnel to increase gender awareness and bring gender equity to every aspect of schooling.
- Formal school curricula which include the experiences and expertise of women and men from diverse backgrounds, so that both female and male students see themselves reflected and valued in contemporary teaching and learning.
- Robust education and training of female students in engineering, mathematics, science, and technology at all levels, particularly to boost the number of females pursuing these and other non-traditional educational fields and career pathways.
- Establishment and enforcement of school policies and procedures that effectively address and eliminate sexual violence and sexual harassment, including student-to-student violence and harassment. Such policies and procedures will inform students about the reporting process, and prepare school personnel to swiftly and competently handle such grievances.
- Equal access to all school programs, sports, and extracurricular activities, pursuant to Title IX of the 1987 amended Civil Rights Act.
- Fair consideration of female educators, at all levels in the hiring process and in promotion reviews as well as recognition of the unique contribution these women make to scholarship and education.
- Inclusion of women in leadership positions such as school administrators and education policy-making organizations at the local, state, and national levels and the encouragement of young women to participate in educational reform activities in their communities.
- Affirmative action policies as applied to education.
- Adequate and equitable and fair funding for quality public education for all students.

- Supporting and advocating policies that promote greater access to higher education for women and other underrepresented populations.

We oppose:

- the use of public funds for non-public elementary and secondary education.
- All efforts to subvert Affirmative action policies and practices.

The Environment

The Santa Barbara Women’s Political Committee believes that a feminist approach to public policy requires strong stewardship and nurturing of our environment. The continued existence of the human race and of the Earth itself depends on decisions made yesterday, today and tomorrow – political, economic and social decisions – made on a global, as well as local scale. For too long, decisions have been made without sufficient regard to the profound impact on women’s lives. The right to a clean environment is the right of all, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status.

We support:

- Population policies that give women the right to plan for and raise healthy children in a healthful environment to create and maintain an ecologically balanced world;
- Efforts to improve air and water quality, in order to protect both environmental and human health; such efforts should include the reduction of pollutants, whether released into the air, soil, or water;
- The aggressive reduction of the use of fossil fuels, due to the environmental degradation that results from their production and combustion;
- Efforts to substantially improve energy efficiency and conservation and to bring large amounts of renewable energy online with a sense of urgency;
- Local communities of all socioeconomic backgrounds setting ambitious goals to reduce their own environmental footprints;
- Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global climate change and ocean acidification; and Protection of open spaces that support wildlife habitat, local food production and recreational opportunities.

Equal Rights

Discrimination on the basis of gender remains a major societal problem, which principally affects women. While the United States Constitution prohibits some forms of discrimination, women are not explicitly accorded those rights and protection. In addition, described as an international bill of rights for women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international convention adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. The United States is the only developed nation that has not ratified the CEDAW.

The Santa Barbara Women’s Political Committee is firmly committed to equal rights for all persons regardless of gender. Therefore, we affirm our commitment to eliminate gender discrimination, and continue to support the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment until it becomes the law of the United States of America.

The Santa Barbara Women’s Political Committee strongly supports the ratification of CEDAW by the United States.

Gender Balance

Until women are represented in politics in proportion to their percentage in the population, the political system will not adequately address issues of particular concern to women. We support efforts to attain gender and racial balance in our elected and appointed offices, to reflect the community they represent.

At least fifty percent of the population of Santa Barbara County is women, yet women are vastly under-represented on citizen commissions. It is important to address the under-representation because women are more likely to make feminist policy and appointments on commissions are a stepping stone to elected office.

We support:

- Gender-balanced appointive boards and commissions;
- Consideration by all appointing authorities of gender balance, and the specific inclusion of women of color, in the appointment process.

Health Care

The Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee supports the development of an affordable nationwide health plan to make quality care available to all women and their families regardless of income, race, gender, age, socio-economic barriers, sexual orientation or gender identity.

We support:

- Access to resources for all women to exercise full choice and control over their bodies in making all health and medical decisions.
- An efficient and effective user-friendly delivery system of medical services.
- Educational and preventive services focused on maintaining wellness and well-being.
- Programs for pre-natal and post natal care.
- The establishment and expansion of locally-based detoxification and substance abuse treatment.
- Increased emphasis on programs for meeting the needs of those who are mentally ill, developmentally disabled and physically disabled.
- Establishment and expansion of quality long term care programs for the elderly and chronically ill with special emphasis on the low income and special needs populations.
- Improvement and expansion of educational and in-home support programs for all special need populations including children, the elderly and disabled.
- Increased funding for research and medical training in areas of women's health and increased inclusion of women in research test studies.
- Improved education to increase awareness and use of durable power of attorney for health care and physicians directives in the form of a "Living Will".
- Hospice and pain management programs; the ability of individuals to make their own personal end of life decisions pertaining to death, with dignity, and the disposition of ones organs and body.

We oppose:

- Policies or legislation that allow medical providers or institutions the right to discriminate in their provision of services or refuse their provision of services.

Housing

The Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee recognizes the right to shelter for all human beings.

We support:

- Financial assistance programs for homeless families and individuals which address the need for emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing;
- The preservation and rehabilitation of housing units for affordable to low and moderate income persons.
- Efforts to curtail commercial and industrial development which increases demand on the housing supply, unless these and other adverse effects are fully mitigated;
- The development of affordable and work force housing along transportation corridors, with easy access to schools, jobs and public services including open spaces.
- Research and creation of alternative public and private funding sources, incentives and mechanisms which will assist low and moderate income individuals and families, including those recently separated from welfare, to purchase homes or find adequate rentals in Santa Barbara County;
- Public and private financial assistance programs including, but not limited to, increased federal subsidies, for low and moderate income renters;
- Mediation and other alternative dispute resolution methods to find solutions to the problems of unreasonable evictions and rents;
- Elimination of housing discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, medical condition, religion, race, color, ancestry, national origin, citizenship, physical disability, marital status, age, legal source of income, income level and family definition.
- Preserving community character without promoting urban gentrification.

Immigration

The Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee supports comprehensive and humane immigration reform in order to create a legal, fair, and safe workplace for all workers, schools for all students, and a community free from harassment and intimidation based upon immigration status. Our nation is built upon the notion that people have come to the United States for economic, educational, social and political opportunity. Through this practice, our economy has grown

through the use of immigrant labor as the foundation upon which profits have been gained and industries of all kinds have grown.

We support the creation of a path to citizenship. Immigrants and their family members have been contributing to their communities, working, and paying taxes through payroll deductions. We support more employer accountability which includes new approaches to the concept of work permits in order to establish a legal work force.

We support:

- Equal protection under the law for all people, regardless of immigration status, pertaining to civil and human rights
- Reunification of families divided by national borders
- Agreements between nations to improve entry/exit systems to combat human trafficking, especially of women and children
- Stronger labor laws to protect workers from intimidation in the workplace based upon their immigrant status and to assure them of a fair wage, and access to union membership.
- Legislation that allows anyone to apply for a driver's license to assure greater public safety, increase the number of insured drivers, and allow workers access to private transportation.
- Quality healthcare for immigrant families including access to full reproductive rights.
- Access to safe and affordable housing and freedom from landlord intimidation
- Asylum for people fleeing violence or persecution, especially those targeted for their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, political beliefs, faith, or any other affiliation
- Keeping all avenues of public education open to immigrants and their families.

We oppose:

- Separation of families, including workplace raids that render households parentless
- Unlawful questioning of children in schools by teachers and/or school officials
- The continuation of building the Wall along the U.S./Mexico border
- Hate propaganda that scapegoats undocumented immigrants
- Detention of undocumented immigrants without due process
- Policies that allow local law enforcement officers to act as ICE agents
- Anti-gang tactics that simultaneously target undocumented immigrants
- Any actions that impose arbitrary fee increases and unduly long delays for immigration applications.

Lesbian Rights

The Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee, in advocating full equality for women, is dedicated to the inclusiveness of lesbian rights as a fundamental component of that advocacy. Lesbians are oppressed on the basis of both gender and sexual orientation, and lesbians of color suffer further bias on the basis of race. Lesbians face discrimination in jobs, military service and housing, experience "gay bashing," and have the lowest health services utilization rates. Among adolescents, gay and transgender teens have the highest suicide rate. Lesbians may lose custody of their children and are denied many social and economic benefits of legally sanctioned domestic partnerships. We strive to foster respect and understanding of lesbians' sexual orientation and culture and to work for their full equal rights.

We support:

- Adoption of all legislative efforts to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, credit, child custody, housing and public accommodation, and enforcement of current laws prohibiting such discrimination;
- Introduction of domestic partners' policies in employee benefits' packages in both public and private sectors and the full recognition of marriage with all its rights and responsibilities;
- Protection for lesbians against discrimination in all parenting situations such as child custody, adoption and foster care; Foster climates that make non-conforming gender expression safe;
- Programs that offer comprehensive sexuality education, support the needs of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) students in the public schools, and promote positive images of LGBT persons in classroom curricula, with special consideration to different cultural needs;
- Education of health care providers about the specific needs of lesbians and development of services for lesbians in comprehensive health, reproductive care and substance abuse programs;
- Broad education of law enforcement personnel in the management of hate crimes and the training of judges and attorneys on lesbian and transgender issues in custody, inheritance and domestic violence;
- Programs and coalitions to educate about, and help defeat, anti-lesbian, transgender and gay initiatives.

Pay Equity

The wage gap between women and men is one of the oldest and most persistent symptoms of gender inequality in the United States. Although women are making headway in the labor market, the wage gap has not narrowed significantly. Pay equity is therefore one of the most important issues affecting all women. The issue is especially significant to women of color who continue to suffer the brunt of economic discrimination in today's society.

We support:

- Increased wages for undervalued jobs held predominantly by women and minorities;
- Categorizing jobs by skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions, and compensating workers at comparable wage levels;
- Legislation that allows the judicial branch to seek retroactive compensation for pay inequity.

Peace

*"To build a healthy and peaceful world"**

Since before WWII feminist women have been in the forefront of what we now know as the modern peace movement. SBWPC honors those women who dared to speak up for peace. Peace is a Feminist issue. Ninety percent of refugees are women and children. Women and children are affected most negatively by war and excessive military spending, especially those living in poverty. Excessive military spending drains vital resources from social programs that benefit families. It diverts funds that could be used for education, healthcare, and housing. Rape and sexual slavery are routinely used as tools of torture against women as well as a means of ethnic cleansing. The effects of war at home include an increased rate of domestic violence, child abuse, suicide and murder. War contributes to the destruction of the environment. The use of land mines and defoliation is a common tool of war and ethnic cleansing.

We support:

- Increased participation of women in conflict resolution at decision making levels.
- Reduced excessive military spending;
- The identification and condemnation of the systematic use of rape and degrading treatment of women as a deliberate instrument of war and ethnic cleansing. Reaffirm that rape in the conduct of war is a war crime. Uphold standards set out in international law in regard to rape, forced prostitution and slavery.
- The identification and condemnation of discrimination against Lesbians and Gay men in military.
- Upholding all international agreements in regard to the environment, including the condemnation of the use of land mines and defoliation as a deliberate tool of war.
- The use of non-violent conflict resolution to resolve disputes at all levels.

*SBWPC Board retreat notes 1987

Racism

Women of color are affected by both sexism and racism. The Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee recognizes that inequitable political, economic, cultural and social conditions can breed and foster racism which in turn exacerbates the inequity. We believe that genuine equality of opportunity for all, in all spheres, is fundamental to the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We are committed to equal opportunities and participation for all. The work of furthering feminist values cannot be completed without examining racism and its roots.

SBWPC recognizes that racism permeates all facets of society. Therefore, each Position Paper takes into consideration the challenges of women of color. We recognize that all people are hurt by a society that tolerates racial discrimination. As racism is a complex issue, the Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee is committed to continue learning, confronting, and eliminating racism where it exists. SBWPC will work with coalitions, individuals, and organizations to achieve these goals.

Reproductive Justice

The freedom to decide whether and when to become a parent is a private and personal matter. It is a fundamental right of all women, regardless of age and economic circumstances. The Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee encourages the non-judgmental provision of medical advice and services so that women can make informed decisions. SBWPC believes that a woman's decisions concerning her reproductive health care rest with her alone.

We support:

- The right of every woman to decide if & when she will have children;
- The right of every woman to have an array of options to become a parent, including adoption, foster parenting, fertility & surrogacy;
- Ensuring that the reproductive choices of economically vulnerable women are not exploited;
- Comprehensive and age appropriate scientifically accurate sexuality education;
- The right to timely and affordable contraception for all women who want it;
- The right of every woman to exercise her options for preventing or ending a pregnancy;
- The right to affordable, safe, legal abortion for women who choose to terminate their pregnancies;
- The right to affordable pre-natal care for women continuing a pregnancy to term;
- The research and development of safe and effective contraceptives;
- The right to affordable rehabilitation programs for substance abusing pregnant women; and
- The enforcement of laws prohibiting employer discrimination based on women's reproductive potential or status.

We oppose:

- Interference with a woman's right to reproductive choice, including but not limited to:
 - Permission, notification or waiting requirements
 - Restrictions on a woman's reasons for terminating a pregnancy
 - Prescribed state requirements not relevant to a woman's health;
- Judicial interventions which violate a woman's constitutional rights such as incarceration of substance abusing pregnant women;
- Forced sterilization or the imposition of court-ordered reproductive health medical procedures;
- Forcing or coercing the use of dangerous contraceptives on women.

Working Women

Work is vital to a woman's financial independence, socio-economic advancement and personal dignity. Women have the right to equal opportunity and equal pay in all aspects of employment. Currently, women earn just 76% of men's average wages, even though they work longer hours (factoring in non-compensated domestic work).

We support:

- Equal pay for equal work policies;
- Initiatives to ensure safe, healthy, and secure working conditions, and abolishment of "sweatshop" labor practices;
- A living wage;
- Comprehensive, affordable and quality health-care benefits and retirement plans that meet the needs of working women and their families;
- Expansion of current medical and family care leave benefits, including granting additional leave time, allowing the use of paid leave benefits, and expanding the definition of family;
- Efforts to mitigate financial penalties to women who leave the workforce to care for children or elderly relatives;
- Equal opportunity and access in leadership development, workplace recruitment, hiring, training and promotion of employees, as well as the fulfillment of affirmative action goals;
- Initiatives that encourage and assist women entrepreneurs;
- Policies such as flexible hours, telecommuting, job-sharing, day care support and other which allow women and their families to participate fully in the workplace and home lives;
- Training of all employees and effective enforcement against sexual harassment at work;
- Inclusion of domestic partners as qualified dependents to existing employer-sponsored benefit programs, and allowance for their full coverage;
- Legislation that prohibits the dismissal of workers on the basis of sexual orientation.