

Los Angeles, Calif. 90028
July 23, 1968

Dear Delegate:

As our country reverberates with cries for equal rights by its Black, Brown and Red citizens - still another sector of our population raises its voice, demanding progress in its long over-due revolution. Unlike the other groups, which are "minorities", this one is numerically a majority; yet it is no less in a position of second-class citizenship.

Yes, we are talking about WOMEN - who are determined to be recognized as "first and foremost...human beings who, like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest potential...in active, self-respecting partnership with men." (from Statement of Purpose of NOW - National Organization of Women)

As with the Negro revolution, the fact that some progress has been made since American women officially started to battle for their rights in 1848 in no way justifies the inequities that still exist. Although 51% of the population, with over 26,000,000 in the work force, most women work at very menial jobs, very few in the professions or in decision-making jobs, nor in upper-strata positions of business. They earn half as much as men for similar jobs and are put at a disadvantage by tax and labor laws. Those women in the disadvantaged sectors suffer all the problems of the poor, with sexual discrimination added. (See enclosed "Argument")

President John F. Kennedy recognized the continuing inequities as requiring attention and established in 1961 the National Advisory Commission on the Status of Women, recommending that each State set up similar Commissions to look into the problems of women in their areas, then submitting recommendations for rectifying them. Although Commissions do now exist in most States, little has been accomplished. Why not? Implementation is necessary by legislators and although some efforts have been made to write corrective bills, there are insufficient men in office with enough understanding and minus prejudices to get the bills out of committee and voted on. Insufficient interest and articulation on the part of the public is also responsible; and this is due to general ignorance of the facts as well as inadequate attention by the mass media.

In this year when new candidates are vying for offices, women are serving notice that they will not vote for anyone who ignores women's drive for equality. NOW sent a questionnaire to the Presidential candidates and hopefules and has made public their responses. Only two of the six bothered to reply: Senator Robert F. Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy. Analyzing the replies, Mrs. Friedan said: "Senator McCarthy's statement is the one most favorable to women... We wonder whether the failure of Mr. Humphrey, Mr. Nixon, Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Wallace and Mr. Reagan to answer our inquiry indicates that they do not take seriously the interests of women." Since Senator McCarthy has been the chief sponsor of the Equal Rights Amendment, it is not surprising that he said: "I assure you that as President I would continue working to encourage a favorable vote on this amendment in Congress and afterwards in the state legislatures. ...Adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment will complete women's long struggle for legal equality with men."

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The Democratic Party, if it is to fulfill the essence of its name, must recognize its obligation to the 51% of our population who are women; must recognize its OPPORTUNITY to champion their needs as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights. We believe it is high time recognition of women's needs is made official by adding a section on Women's Rights to the Platform, thus encouraging action.

An historic beginning in this direction was made when the enclosed Women's Rights Program was adopted into the Platform of the California Democratic Council (March 17, 1968, Anaheim Convention). The Program represents a synthesis of recommendations made by the United Nations Declaration on Women's Rights, the California Advisory Commission on the Status of Women and the National Organization of Women. It was deliberately delineated in a comprehensive fashion to serve as an education vehicle and guide-line for action.

Politically, this Program calls for women to cease being merely clerical functionaries and become full participants in decision-making, in the selection of candidates, in the holding of public office, in the formation of State as well as National policy, in assignment to committees concerned with ALL aspects of government.

If you agree, would you please indicate in what ways you can help, as listed below, and mail it back at once, as the National Convention is almost upon us.

Cordially yours,

Ruth Ehrlich

(Mrs.) Ruth Ehrlich
Author, Women's Rights Program
Member, NOW

Chairwoman, Task Force on Women's Rights, C.D.C.

I would like to see the Women's Rights Program adopted into the Platform.

I will lend my name to a roster of supporters.

I will participate in a Caucus Committee at the National Convention.

I will make a contribution to help fund this work.

I want to be notified of future activities.

I would like to help the cause beyond the Convention by attending meetings and discussion groups, helping to get publicity into the mass media, public speaking, sustainer-contribution, fund-raising, clerical work. (Please underline which you can do.)

SIGNED

please print name

organizational affiliations & titles

your address, city, state, zip code

phone #