

Women's Voices Must Be Heard and Respected

1 The CWA National Women's Committee and the CWA Civil Rights and Equity
2 Committee are at the forefront of movement building in our union. Many of the battles for equity
3 that we thought we had won have resurfaced with a vengeance. Women's rights are on the front
4 lines of the battlefield. We must put our energy into retaining and expanding the rights of women
5 on every front.
6

7 The current gender makeup at all levels of government and industry do not reflect the
8 population. The United States Congress is made up of 80 percent men and 20 percent women.
9 Yet, the overall population in the United States is 51 percent women and 49 percent men.
10

11 The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
12 Against Women (CEDAW), first adopted in 1979, has yet to pass the United State Senate—
13 making the U.S. one of the few countries in the world that have failed to do so. CEDAW plays a
14 key role in strengthening the promotion and protection of women's rights throughout the world
15 by addressing these issues: sex trafficking (at least four million women and girls are sold into
16 sexual slavery each year), pornography (which degrades women and promotes a climate of
17 sexual hostility), education (two-thirds of the world's 857 million illiterate adults are women),
18 maternal mortality (510,000 women die annually from pregnancy-related complications and
19 millions more suffer from serious injury), HIV/AIDS (women are four times more vulnerable
20 than men), violence (25 percent to 30 percent of women around the world experience domestic
21 violence), war crimes (gender-based violence during war is often hidden but is being
22 increasingly exposed), sexual harassment (as illustrated by recent campus and military
23 experiences reported by women), and female genital mutilation (130 million women are victims).
24

25 Women are responsible not only for their own health, but traditionally they are also
26 responsible for their entire family's health, which makes maintaining their own good health even
27 more critical. Prior to the adoption of the Affordable Care Act, women had been charged up to
28 150 percent more for individual health care coverage than men. Although more women die
29 from heart disease than from cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Alzheimer's, and
30 accidents combined, many women underestimate the threat that coronary artery disease (CAD)
31 poses to their health. Symptoms of a heart blockage can be harder to identify and more
32 difficult to diagnose in women. Also many women do not know what they can do to help
33 prevent heart disease. Fortunately, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) recently
34 received a grant to promote the "Spread the Word (STW)" campaign – a patient advocacy
35 campaign to educate women about the overlooked symptoms of coronary artery disease and the
36 various testing options available, and to partner with their healthcare provider on deciding the
37 right test for them.
38

39 The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) poses a special threat to women. It could undermine
40 wage and hour provisions that are protected in the United States by the 1938 Fair Labor

41 Standards Act, and it could further diminish the rights and living standards of women and
42 children worldwide. The TPP will accelerate the offshoring of call center jobs, a majority female
43 sector, further eroding the economic status of women.
44

45 The CWA National Women's Committee reports some limited progress in some states
46 and cities on Paid Sick Leave legislation, in building support for the federal Family and Medical
47 Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act which would require paid leave to care for oneself or family
48 members with a serious illness, state endeavors for a renewed Equal Rights Amendment Act
49 (ERA), coalition building to pass the CEDAW, equal pay provisions, and opposition to the anti-
50 worker Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement.
51

52 Despite progress in our own union, the number of women in leadership positions still
53 does not reflect the proportion of female membership in CWA. There is still much work to be
54 done to encourage, support, and promote women leadership in our union.
55

56 We must join together to oppose all policies and actions designed to diminish womens'
57 rights. We must upgrade skills to empower women to address inequalities and to oppose all
58 attempts to reduce the rights of women. The fight for justice is greatly enhanced when women
59 are heard and respected. Achieving gender equality in our lifetime is an important mission for
60 all of us.
61

62 **Resolved:** CWA must make women's critical issues -- including Paid Sick Leave, Equal
63 Pay, the FAMILY Act providing paid leave to care for one's own or a close family member's
64 serious illness, the Equal Rights Amendment, and passage of the United Nations Convention on
65 the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – CWA legislative
66 priorities in the same manner we fight for other democracy issues, thereby enhancing women's
67 basic human rights in society.
68

69 **Resolved:** CWA will collaborate with the Coalition of Labor Union Women in
70 promoting the Spread the Word campaign at all levels of our Union with the goal that all union
71 women are aware of coronary artery disease (CAD) symptoms and the available heart test
72 options, thereby ensuring that they receive proper care.
73

74 **Resolved:** CWA encourages greater constituency group movement building by
75 promoting and expanding the current CWA sponsorship program targeting greater female
76 participation, thereby creating the capacity for a more balanced workforce, society, and union in
77 which a woman's voice cannot be silenced and women's rights can be respected.
78

79 **Resolved:** The CWA National Women's Committee, in conjunction with the Human
80 Rights Ad Hoc Committee, shall conduct a comprehensive study to explore options for
81 leadership development for women designed to maximize the number of women involved in
82 leadership roles throughout CWA. Options to be explored, which would include a funding
83 recommendation, could include Summer Schools for Union Women, training with the Wellstone
84 Group, AFL-CIO training opportunities, the Harvard Trade Union Program and other university
85 programs.