

WOMEN'S RIGHTS -- CASEY EKE

More than 50 years ago, the United States committed itself to involving women in all processes of government through the passage of the Suffrage Amendment. Today, the Republican Party must reaffirm its commitment to an open and democratic society. The Republican party must declare, through its platform statement of Party conscience, that such a society is founded upon an equal partnership between both women and men.

President Nixon is the first president to include a section entitled Equal Rights for Women in a State of the Union Address. In his words,

We recognize that women are often denied equal opportunity in society today. While every woman may not want a career outside the home, every woman should have the freedom to choose whatever career she wishes---and an equal chance to pursue it...

In his memorandum for Heads of Departments and Agencies, the President said,

No more serious task challenges our nation domestically than the achievement of equality of opportunity for all our citizens in every aspect of their lives regardless of their race, color, religion, national origin, or sex...Discrimination of any kind based on factors not relevant to job performance must be eradicated completely...in addition, we must, through positive action, make it possible for our citizens to compete on a truly equal and fair basis for employment and qualify for advancement...

The Republican Party should pledge to do everything possible to give the women of America the freedom of opportunity they need and deserve.

A summary of the Nixon Administration's accomplishments in promoting equality for all women include:

1. The appointment of many more women to top level, policy-making positions in the Federal Government than ever before in the nation's history, tripling the number within the past year alone.

2. the creation of the new White House staff position and appointment of the first woman ever to recruit other women for policy-making positions;
3. the elevation of the Director of the Women's Bureau to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment Standards and Special Counselor to the Secretary of Women's Programs;
4. the support of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, a Republican Party objective since 1940;
5. significantly increased resources devoted to enforcement of the Fair Labor Standards Act, providing equal pay for equal work;
6. extending coverage of the Fair Labor Standards Act to administrators, teachers, and professional women through support of the passage of Title IX of the Higher Education Act;
7. the issuance of guidelines to ban sex discrimination by government contractors and the requirement that all firms doing business with the government have affirmative action plans for the hiring and promotion of women;
8. the revision of sex discrimination guidelines issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission;
9. the support of Congressional action to expand the jurisdiction of the Commission on Civil Rights to cover sex discrimination;
10. the recommended and supported passage of Title IX of the Higher Education Act prohibiting sex discrimination in federally assisted educational programs, at all levels from nursery school through graduate school;
11. the support of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 giving the EEOC power in sex discrimination cases and extending coverage of Title VII to include employees of state and local government, educational institutions, and businesses and unions with 15 or more employees or members;
12. the filing of amicus curiae briefs on behalf of women in discrimination suits against employers by the EEOC;
13. the support of Section 214 of the Revenue Act of 1971 providing deductions for household help to care for children or disabled dependents of any age and for child care outside the home;
14. support for the equalization of fringe benefits for women Federal employees;

15. the establishment of Women's Action Programs in several agencies within the federal Government and the appointment of Federal Women's Coordinators to assure the elevation, and increase in numbers, of women within the Federal system.

The Intercollegiate Association of Women Students, which represents over 200,000 college-age women, endorsed their 1972 National Convention the Report of President Nixon's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities, entitled "A Matter of Simple Justice". Many of the recommendations have been implemented, but several are still high priority issues for women. Some of these unimplemented recommendations, all of which should become a part of the Republican Platform, include:

1. The establishment of an Office of Women's Rights and Responsibilities, whose Director would serve as a special assistant reporting directly to the President. This office should be concerned with the overall responsibility for Federal legislative for women, as well as the recruitment of women to policy-making positions.
2. Elimination of sex discrimination in public education, such as in the area of career education, counseling, and optional courses.
3. Amendment to Title 11 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit sex discrimination in public accommodations.
4. Amendment of the Social Security Act to equalize social security benefits for women workers, to provide benefits to husbands and widowers of disabled and deceased women workers, and to equalize benefits for families with working wives.
5. Amendment of the Internal Revenue Code to permit families in which both spouses are employed or one spouse is employed and one disabled, and families headed by a single person, to deduct from their gross income as a business expense some reasonable amount paid for a housekeeper, nurse, or institution for care of children or disabled dependents.
6. Enactment of legislation authorizing Federal grants matching basis for financing State Commissions on the Status of Women.

7. Establishment of Priorities for women in manpower training programs along with a guarantee that all training programs are non-discriminatory in terms of numbers of women involved and job opportunities provided.

For the past two years, the Intercollegiate Association of Women Students has endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. Last March they adopted several plans in hopes of assuring rapid ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. The Republican Party should lead in the drive for ratification of the ERA by pledging technical and financial assistance to the states for changing their laws to comply with Equal Rights Amendment. Further, young women feel strongly that the legal rights of women under 21 must be made equitable to those rights of men under 21.

OTHER CONCERNS OF TOP PRIORITY TO YOUNG WOMEN VOTERS

A recent poll of 5,000 young women has determined several areas to which these first time voters give top priority. The belief that more women must be appointed to the highest level positions in the Federal Government, such as Cabinet posts, agency heads, and Supreme Court Justices, was prevalent. An extremely high percentage of these women favored government funded child care facilities. The Administration should continue to support an increase in the availability of child care centers not only for children of low-income families, but for middle and upper income families, too. President Nixon, in his veto message of the Child Care Bill supported the Federal Government's role in assisting parents to purchase needed child care services in the private, open market, with Federal' involvement in direct provision of such services kept to an absolute minimum. There are many ways of offering Federal support for quality child care. The important principle involved is making a variety of choices available to parents. More and more young women are realizing that many choices are closed to them unless quality child care options are available. Beyond the question of choice, though, are the vast numbers of mothers who work because they have to work to live. They are either heads of households by death, divorce, or desertion, or they must work to raise the family income above poverty levels.

Another concern of young women is in the area of responsible parenthood. The Federal Government should support efforts to insure adequate education in human sexuality for all young people. Medical technology could not make it possible for every child born into our society to be a wanted child. Certainly the statistics on out-of-wedlock pregnancies, divorce rate of teen-age marriages, child abuse, and aid to independent children indicate that requiring a young girl to give birth to a child that she doesn't want or cannot provide for punishes not only the woman involved and the child that she must bear, but affects the quality of life for us all. Most young women will agree with President Nixon's statement that abortion is an unacceptable method of population control. However, young women insist on their right to determine their own reproductive lives. Therefore, the Republican Party Platform should reflect the growing concern with responsible parenthood and support efforts to provide young women and men with the knowledge and right to make truly sensitive and responsible choices in the area of human sexuality.

A large percentage of young women believes that the Federal Government should be doing more to assure equitable job opportunities and salaries for women. Much of what can be done in this area is only a continuation of what the Nixon Administration has already begun.

Desirable actions include:

1. The extension of the Equal Pay Act to all workers.
2. The vigorous enforcement of all Federal Statutes and Executive Orders barring job discrimination on the basis of sex.
3. Increased efforts to eliminate discrimination in education through enforcement of Executive Order 11246 as amended.
4. The elimination of discrimination against women in Federal grants as well as federally assisted programs and federally contracted employment.
5. The support of the EEOC in its active role in applying Title VII to sex discrimination in maternity cases.
6. Prohibiting any federally insured bank, savings and loan association, or credit union from discriminating on the basis of sex, therefore providing equality for women in credit, mortgage, insurance, property, rentals, and finance contracts. Also, the Truth in Lending Act should be amended to prohibit discrimination by creditors on the basis of sex.
7. The elimination of all tax inequities that affect women, such as higher taxes for single persons.
8. The creation of opportunities for increased part-time employment of women and the support of special programs to train women who want to re-enter the labor force.
9. Providing equality of job opportunity for older women.

The Republican Party should continue to endorse and encourage constructive leadership in the women's movement for equality as it has in the past through the President's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities, State Commissions on the Status of Women, and the Citizen's Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Further, the Republican Party should reflect a recognition of the world-wide women's movement by

endorsing the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November of 1967. This Declaration states that:

"Discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and of society... The full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace requires the maximum participation of women, as well as men in all fields."