

Women's Rights - 1979

32nd Assembly Resolution, 1979

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, organized in 1913, is a visible national presence of the equality and influence of women of Reform Judaism within our movement and in the Jewish and secular world. One of its purposes is to implement full partnership in congregational life. NFTS and Sisterhood leaders affirm a commitment to full and secure rights for women in our respective countries to insure equality as Jews and to serve as advocates for all disenfranchised or disadvantaged women. For almost seven decades, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods has adopted positions and inaugurated programs dealing with varied aspects of the status of women. These include equal employment, salaries, legal rights, civil rights, societal attitudes and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and leadership positions at all levels. NFTS continues to affirm the right of women to choose patterns and priorities of their life style and to have such choices receive full respect and equal treatment.

In affirmation of these fundamental commitments, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods resolves that:

1. On behalf of United States members, Sisterhoods shall continue their efforts to achieve the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Sisterhoods in states where ratification has not occurred are urged: to make every effort to be fully informed about the provisions of the ERA and to share such information; to serve as a counterforce against misleading and inaccurate information; to exercise their citizenship responsibility by communicating to appropriate government officials the critical necessity of prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex. Sisterhoods in states which have already ratified the ERA have a special responsibility: to act against efforts towards rescission; to challenge calls for constitutional conventions and other actions which threaten existing ratification.
2. On behalf of United States members, Sisterhoods should continue efforts to keep in force laws in consonance with the Supreme Court decision for freedom of choice on abortions, recognizing that such freedom of choice does not deny any religious community the right to establish its own patterns of moral or ethical behavior. We also urge Sisterhoods and members to maintain vigilant and persistent attention to pending legislation that is designed to erode, limit or countermand the Supreme Court decision upholding the option of legal abortion—the freedom of choice—for all women.
3. Sisterhoods should participate actively in efforts to implement acceptance of women as rabbis, cantors, educators and other professionals in congregations and Jewish communal agencies. Full acceptance means equal recruitment and employment opportunities, equal salaries and nondiscriminatory conditions of work, and promotional opportunity at all levels of responsibility, based on ability, not sex.
4. We call upon the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to inform congregations that there should be no distinction between men and women as participants in the ritual, leadership and policymaking activities of the congregation. Sisterhoods are urged to encourage their congregations to eliminate such discriminatory practices if they exist.