

V. POLITICAL INTEGRITY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE (Resolutions relating to campaign finance, elections, democracy, taxes, trade, and empowerment zones.)

A. Voter Turnout and Public Campaigns

WHEREAS, political apathy is at a high level in the U.S. due to a sense of disenfranchisement; and

WHEREAS, the political system in the U.S. continues to be corrupted by the influx of large sums of money; and

WHEREAS, select states have passed their own clean money/clean election laws.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panther places a high priority on increasing voting rates as an important aspect of campaign finance reform and that it supports making voting easier; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that broadcast and cable media, as a licensing requirement, provide free and equal time during peak times, to all candidates with ballot status; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers supports and promotes a designated time period for fundraising; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that federal campaigns be funded by the government and that any other reform measures must take into account their effect on bringing disenfranchised voters to the polls.

B. Election Law Reform

WHEREAS, the U.S. has a tradition of freedom and democracy; and

WHEREAS, our government is based on the tenet of "government of the people, by the people and for the people"; and

WHEREAS, those beliefs lead us to want every eligible voter to vote; and

WHEREAS, voter turnout has been historically low; and

WHEREAS, many voting practices that reflect the technological limitations of times past and/or the social arrangements of another age, discourage or limit voter turnout.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, Gray Panthers support various practices that increase access and reduce barriers to voting, such as same day registration, motor voter registration, making election day a non-work day, allowing for early and open absentee

voting (don't need to declare a reason for absentee voting), mail-in voting, and other such practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Gray Panthers support and join with advocates of voting reform at the Federal, State and Local level; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that because exit polling and early TV coverage with calling of results discourages voting across the country, Gray Panthers encourage media to delay calling “winners” until all polls close.

C. Fair and Free Voting

WHEREAS, our democratic form of government depends on the consent of the governed, and is expressed by voting in a free election; and

WHEREAS, our free elections are threatened by voting systems that can be manipulated and mishandled by partisan corporations, in collaboration with those in power; and

WHEREAS, our democracy depends on accurate ballot counts and then a secure transmittal of that vote to election central; and

WHEREAS, some jurisdictions may have unreasonable requirements to get on the ballot; and

WHEREAS, state laws differ from one jurisdiction to the next.

BE IT RESOLVED, that as citizens, we demand that our voting systems accurately register the votes of citizens entitled to vote; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that all parties have a fair opportunity to get on the ballot and that proportional representation voting systems be expanded; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the voting systems be non-partisan, non-profit and non-corporate and that they be secure from manipulation and tampering and that they leave a paper trail that can be verified if a recount is required.

D. Abolish the Electoral College

WHEREAS, democracy is not served by the Electoral College, which was designed to keep power in the hands of an unelected elite; and

WHEREAS, we value the principle of one- person, one- vote and we insist that all votes count; and

WHEREAS, we selected a President in 2000 who did not win the popular vote as has happened at other times in our history; and

WHEREAS, the 2004 election campaign made it clear that candidates focus only on and visit states where electoral college votes are in play and ignore other parts of the country and states and the people in those states; and

WHEREAS, when the popular vote in a state is not close, the votes of the people who support the minority candidate are essentially disregarded and inconsequential.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Electoral College be dissolved and presidents and vice presidents be elected by the will of the people through the popular vote.

E. Protect Media Diversity in this Democracy

WHEREAS, a democracy cannot function without an informed electorate, and independent, diverse media are essential to the health of American democracy; and

WHEREAS, enforcement of anti-trust laws has become lax over recent years, and technological changes in media have weakened those laws; and

WHEREAS, media conglomerates, putting their own financial interests over public interests, are limiting access in the U.S. to the full range of information and opinions necessary in a democracy; and

WHEREAS, because of media conglomeration and homogenization, we do not have ready access to function as citizens to resolve state, national, and global issues—healthcare, education, environment, and issues of socio-economic classes; and

WHEREAS, the airwaves are owned by the people and licensed by the government of the United States, but the profits are accrued almost completely by a small number of mega-corporations who use the public airwaves at no charge and reap profits of an estimated \$750 billion; and

WHEREAS, corporate media, particularly “talk shows”, are used intentionally to turn working families against one another and to weaken the progressive movement, through the technique of resentment programming which incites fear, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and hatred; and

WHEREAS, the Internet which now provides *net neutrality*, (for those people who have access, all those people have the same access), is under threat of having corporate and commercial users being awarded dominant access; and

WHEREAS, radio and television media continue to ignore the Public Interest Obligations originally established by the FCC, as a result of which, all candidates for President did not receive fair exposure by the corporate media.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gray Panthers demand that their elected officials act to:

- 1) Enforce existing anti-trust laws as they apply to media conglomerates; and
- 2) Prevent further concentration of the news media; and
- 3) Legislate the break-up of large media conglomerates; and
- 4) Support public access to diversity in the media.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all Gray Panther Networks educate their communities about these issues, since they are vital to preservation of free speech and informed citizen participation in democratic government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers advocate on issues related to print, broadcast and Internet media, especially:

- 1) To oppose concentration of media ownership,
- 2) To denounce ‘fake news’ manufactured at public expense to propagandize in favor of government policies;
- 3) To preserve funding for public education and government access to airwaves;
- 4) To monitor corporate media and their regulatory bodies;
- 5) To increase community awareness of critical broadcast and internet issues;
- 6) To provide free Internet access to all citizens in all areas;
- 7) To raise these issues to all candidates for public office;
- 8) To act with and to support media reform groups such as Media Alliance, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (F.A.I.R.) and others locally and nationally;
- 9) To demand that access to C-Span be included in cable, dish, satellite and other media packages; to preserve “net neutrality” and,
- 10) To preserve *net neutrality* and to oppose practices and policies which give corporations greater or preferential access to the Internet.

F. Privatization of Public Holdings

WHEREAS, the international, national, and local trend is to transfer public holdings to private, corporate-dominated control; and

WHEREAS, the usual result is a decrease in public input on social decisions and a decrease in public benefit, accompanied by an increase in private corporate profit.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers oppose privatization where public money for public purposes could end up as an increase in private corporate profit and a decrease in public benefit.

G. Civil Disobedience

WHEREAS, people of the U.S. were all taught the story of the Boston Tea Party and the concept of no taxation without representation; and

WHEREAS, the necessity of some people putting their bodies on the line is unquestioned as a vital strategy for social change; and

WHEREAS, activists, reporters, and others are increasingly being illegally “drag netted,” arrested, and held.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Gray Panthers support Gray Panthers and others who participate in civil disobedience on behalf of causes in keeping with resolutions and principles of the National Gray Panthers.