

**THE ORTHODOX UNION'S
110TH ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION**



RESOLUTIONS

**NOVEMBER 26, 2008 – NOVEMBER 30, 2008
SHABBAT PARASHAT TOLDOT, 5768
YERUSHALYIM, ISRAEL**

**THE UNION OF ORTHODOX JEWISH CONGREGATIONS OF AMERICA
ELEVEN BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NY 10004**

Procedures

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Procedures by which the Resolutions will be considered include the following:

1. There are no amendments to these procedures
2. Each resolution will be considered in turn. The Resolution's content will be presented by the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee and, having been approved by the Executive Committee, not require a "second."
3. Amendments germane - i.e., relating to and having a direct bearing on the subject matter of the pending Resolution may be offered by:
 - a. a minimum of five (5) accredited delegates among whom are represented a minimum of three (3) separate Orthodox Union member synagogues,
 - OR
 - b. five (5) officers or directors of the Orthodox Union.
4. Parliamentarian, appointed by the president, makes decision with respect to these procedures including but not limited to whether amendments
 - a) change the substance of the resolution or
 - b) are purely editorial in nature, which can't be made.
5. A proponent of the amendment shall have three (3) minutes to propose and explain the amendment to the delegates; an opponent of the amendment shall then have three (3) minutes to express contrary views. Additional speakers in support of or opposition to the amendment will be limited to one (1) minute. The proponent of the amendment and an opponent shall each have two (2) minutes to make closing remarks prior to a vote on the amendment. The chairman of the session may, at his discretion, impose additional time limits upon debate.
6. If the amendment is deemed not to change the substance of the proposed resolution, it shall be adopted by a (simple) majority vote of the duly accredited delegates.
7. If the amendment is deemed to change the substance of the proposed resolution, it shall be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the duly accredited delegates.
8. Those who wish to propose amendments must submit their proposals in writing to the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee Stanley Weinstein by the Friday morning of Convention (8:00 am – Jerusalem).
9. Duly filed amendments may be modified in the course of their consideration by the delegates by a two-thirds (2/3) vote or with the agreement of the amendment's proponents.

MEDINAT YISRAEL, ERETZ YISRAEL AND YERUSHALAYIM

In an act of solidarity and support for the peace and welfare of *Yerushalayim*, the Orthodox Union has convened our biennial convention in this holy city for the third consecutive time.

We met here as an organization in November, 2004 and again in 2006, to demonstrate our unwavering support for, and dedication to, *Medinat Yisrael* and its people after years of extraordinary terrorism, pain and sadness that ravaged the country. We celebrated with great pride the resilience of the Israeli people as they stood firm during those trying times and the commitment of our members who continued to visit and send children to study despite the difficulties of those days. And we committed the Orthodox Union to increased advocacy for the people and land of Israel; in particular, the Orthodox Union was mandated to “*undertake all efforts that are necessary to secure and maintain Yerushalayim as the eternal and undivided capital of the State of Israel,*” and “*to oppose any proposal or plan to relinquish any part of Yerushalayim to any foreign authority.*”

Regrettably, it was only a few months after the last convention that statements by political leaders in developments in Israel led the Orthodox Union to aggressively implement this mandate. In response to high-ranking officials explicitly placing the fate of *Yerushalayim* on the bargaining table, the Orthodox Union launched a vigorous campaign in defense of the holy city’s unity.

The Orthodox Union succeeded in bringing the message of the unity of *Yerushalayim* to the highest precincts of the Israeli and United States governments. The Orthodox Union succeeded in getting our message to the general public, through Israeli, Jewish and mainstream media outlets, that *Yerushalayim* must not be re-divided.

We continue to enhance our connection to the Land. Many of us have already made *Aliya*. Others pursue plans for this. Many spend substantial parts of the year in Israel. Many of us own homes in this holy land. Many more support children who study or live here today. The

OU continues to have an ever growing presence in Israel assisting its inhabitants. Tomorrow, we pray, we will all be here – forever.

There is much that thoughtful friends of Israel can disagree about, but we believe that we continue to share many guiding principles and beliefs, including:

- *Our abiding belief that a durable peace would be one of the greatest blessings that G-d could grant the State and people of Israel;*
- *Our enduring solidarity with the citizens of Israel, particularly their valiant armed forces and the victims of Arab terror and their families;*
- *Our strong support for the measures that Israel has taken to prevent terrorism and unprovoked attacks, and our outrage at spurious challenges to these measures by foreign countries, the United Nations, the World Court and segments of the media.*

In the two years since we last met, much has transpired in Israel to generate a wide range of poignant emotions among Jews worldwide and our members in particular. The Orthodox Union joined in the celebrations of the sixtieth anniversary of Israel's creation and the fortieth anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. We prayed with hope for the welfare and return of Israeli MIAs, and mourned when two were returned to their families in coffins. Gaza is now ruled by Hamas which utilizes territory relinquished by Israel as a launching pad for terrorist rockets against innocent Israelis.

Our concern for the evacuees from Gush Katif continues, as most still face uncertain futures with few in permanent homes and many still unemployed. Fatah officials in the West Bank have yet to demonstrate their capacity and commitment to foster an environment in which steps toward a peace agreement are sensibly undertaken or have they even taken in the smallest step to combat anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda in their media and school system. Hizbollah is re-arming itself in Lebanon. While Syria, despite still backing anti-Israeli forces, appears to be open once again to diplomatic negotiations with Israel, this renewed opening only came after Israel eliminated a grave Syrian threat to Israel's security by a daring air-raid on a secret site in Syria; we commend the Israeli leadership and the IDF for its success in carrying out that critical mission. Iran spawns violence against Israelis by proxy today, while it strives for the

capacity to inflict catastrophic terror against Israel tomorrow. Saudi Arabia continues to fund terrorist organizations while spreading anti-Semitic propaganda throughout the world.

Yet, despite the threats of war and the vicious campaign of terrorism that they confront, the Israeli people remain vibrant, creative and committed to nourishing the democratic values of the state; they continue to grow their economy and remain a world leader in many fields. We applaud and view with great pride and admiration an Israeli society that, despite difficulties unimaginable in any other country, continuously strives to build a better social and economic order for its citizens.

And so, with both joy and pain, with causes for celebration and concern, we return here again, united and resolute in our unwavering commitment to the people, to the land, to the holy city of *Yerushalayim* and to strengthening the democratic institutions of the State of Israel. For all of us, the Land of Israel remains a primary focal point of Jewish hope and prayer. We reaffirm our abiding commitment to a spiritually vibrant *Medinat Yisrael*, and we pray each day that we will soon see the genuine and lasting peace that the people and Nation of Israel have long pursued.

A. The Continuing Conflict & Search for Security and Peace

The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza provided Palestinians the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to build and govern a modern, peaceful and democratic state. Instead, Palestinians elected a government committed to pursuing the destruction of Israel that has little regard for its own people's social and economic well-being. Anarchy roils Gaza from within, while Palestinian elements continue to launch rockets and terrorist attacks from Gaza upon Israeli towns and civilians. The Hamas electoral victory, continued unrelenting violence against Israeli civilians and soldiers, and the continued captivity of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, only highlight how far Palestinians Gazans are from any meaningful steps to the road to peace with Israel.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority has yet to concretely demonstrate its commitment and capacity to undertake the necessary steps which Israelis and

their supporters await. The Palestinian Authority must dismantle terrorist infrastructures and break up terrorist cells. The Palestinian Authority must end all official media messages denying Israel's right to exist. The Palestinian Authority must eradicate from its educational system and materials all anti-Israel and anti-Semitic content. The Palestinian Authority must follow the path of Egypt and Jordan and make a lasting peace agreement with Israel. We call upon the leaders of the Palestinian Authority and their appointed religious leaders to set an example by promoting the right of Israel to exist, calling for the dismantling of any terrorist infrastructure and attacks on the Israeli people and by ceasing to preach anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda as a minimal precondition for any talk of further Israeli concessions. We also believe that peace will not come to the area until the Arab nations stop exploiting the plight of the Palestinians and begin instead to commit their resources and diplomacy to alleviating their suffering in the context of seeking an overall Arab-Israeli peace agreement.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- *The Orthodox Union shall lobby U.S. and Israeli leaders to refuse to give financial aid or diplomatic recognition to any Palestinian government unless and until such a government explicitly recognizes Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, renounces violence, agrees to honor all past agreements with Israel and concretely demonstrates its capacity to dismantle terrorist infrastructures and eliminate educational programs which incite hostility to Israelis and Jews.*
- *The Orthodox Union shall continue to support legislation and other methods as appropriate in the United States and elsewhere to deter Syria and Iran from their support of terrorism and to prevent Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons.*
- *The Orthodox Union shall continue to defend and speak out in support of Israel's right to defend its people with all the force that is necessary to ensure the continued and uncompromised safety of the Israeli people.*

B. The Communities of Yehuda and Shomron

The touchstone of our relationship to the Land of Israel is the *Torah* where we begin with the unwavering principle that the Land of Israel is the eternal heritage of the Jewish people.

Yerushalayim is the center of our universe. *Chevron* marks the burial place of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. For a religious Jew, few experiences are more spiritually exhilarating than reciting the very first words of the *Shemona Esrei* – “G-d of Avraham, G-d of Yitzchak, G-d of Yaakov” – at this hallowed spot. At *Kever Rachel*, the Jewish people paused to weep as they were led into exile, prompting Rachel to cry to G-d on their behalf. To this day, we continue to come to these and other similar places to beseech G-d.

The rich history of our people, played out in the *Torah*, resonates throughout the areas of *Yehuda* and *Shomron*. It has been renewed physically and spiritually in the vibrant, impressive and thriving Jewish communities that today dot these lands.

The Orthodox Union feels an historic obligation to preserve for the Jewish people the right to live and travel freely and safely in the land of our heritage, including the territories of *Yehuda* and *Shomron*. We believe that there is no part of *Eretz Yisrael* in which Jews should be prevented from living, absent the most compelling of circumstances.

We are sensitive to prevailing geopolitical realities and the potential that compromise and accommodation could hopefully one day bring true security and real peace. Yet, since the Oslo process began, security has not followed from territorial concessions or reliance upon foreign forces to preserve it. Time after time painful Israeli concessions have been seen as acts of weakness and retreat, emboldening the most radical Palestinian elements and further damaging the very cause of peace for which these concessions have been undertaken. There have been words of peace and security without any reality of it. Thus, while we strive for security and peace, we are skeptical of any policy that relinquishes part of *Eretz Yisrael* without real evidence that Israel will receive peace and security.

C. *Yerushalayim*

Yerushalayim represents the spiritual epicenter of Judaism for three millennia and has always been its most hallowed site. Our relationship to *Yerushalayim* is one that transcends

time, space and other physical constraints, and our attachment to this holy city remains constant in our psyche, spirit and practices, wherever we may be.

Following the Roman destruction of *Yerushalayim* and the forced exile of the Jewish people in 70 C.E., the Jews faithfully reestablished their community in *Yerushalayim*, preserving their legacy and maintaining daily prayer vigils before the Western Wall. That steadfast Jewish presence continued virtually uninterrupted until the wanton and indiscriminate destruction of the Jewish Quarter inflicted by Jordan in May, 1948. For the nineteen years that it remained under Jordanian control, the Old City was closed to Jews of all nationalities and even to Israeli Muslims and Christians. The City of Peace was sundered by Jordanian barbed wire, cinder block and snipers. During this period holy sites of all religions were neglected and destroyed.

Israel's miraculous liberation of the Old City in 1967 and re-unification of *Yerushalayim* brought with it -- for the first time in centuries -- a guaranty that people of all religions could freely access all of the city's holy sites. Under Israeli sovereignty *Yerushalayim* may now be openly explored by all peace-loving persons, regardless of religion or nationality. *Yerushalayim* symbolizes how the Jewish people have seized every opportunity to create, build and restore, to give life to their prayers and dreams, and to show peace to the world.

Accordingly, we reaffirm and again resolve that:

- *Yerushalayim must forever remain the spiritual, cultural and political center of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and the Orthodox Union is mandated to undertake all efforts that are necessary to secure and maintain Yerushalayim as the eternal and undivided capital of the State of Israel. The Orthodox Union is further mandated to oppose any proposal or plan to relinquish any part of Yerushalayim to any foreign authority.*
- *The Orthodox Union shall continue to lobby the U.S. Administration and Congress to fully implement existing U.S. laws concerning Jerusalem, which include a recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the movement of the United States embassy to Israel's capital city. In particular, we call on President Bush, who has been a devoted friend of Israel, to redeem his 2000 campaign pledge to begin the process of relocating the embassy before he leaves office.*

D. Israel Policy Implementation

We reaffirm the parameters to guide the Orthodox Union implementation of its Israel related policy positions, specifically:

- *The Orthodox Union shall continue to use its array of human and physical resources to mobilize communal, public, media and U.S. governmental support for the State of Israel.*
- *The Orthodox Union shall continue to share, sensitively and with due discretion, with representatives of the Israeli government, in forums and manners deemed appropriate under the prevailing circumstances, the views reflected in this resolution.*
- *The Orthodox Union believes that decisions affecting the safety and security of Israel are, in general, best made by the people and government of Israel. However, the Orthodox Union may, in exceptional circumstances, take public positions contrary to those of the Government of Israel. Such actions shall be taken only after approval by the Board of Directors or the Executive Committee on a case-by-case basis.*

CIVILITY IN COMMUNAL DISCOURSE REGARDING ISRAEL

We have convened the biennial convention of the Orthodox Union in Jerusalem because of our passionate commitment to the welfare and security of Medinat Yisrael. The Orthodox Union notes with distress that this very passion sometimes leads to intemperate or even incendiary speech in the course of our community's debates with regard to political and policy issues associated with Israel.

It is inappropriate and inconsistent with our Torah's teachings to verbally demonize political officeholders or other persons who may advocate policy views with which one might disagree, however deeply.

Criticizing Israeli government officials, our fellow Jews or other friends of Israel by invoking despicable historical analogies or calling, even for the sake of hyperbole, for political leaders to be physically harmed is beyond the pale of acceptable discourse.

Disagreements over issues such as

- the Israeli government ceding parts of Jerusalem
- removing Israeli citizens from communities and outposts in the West Bank,
- negotiating a "two state solution" with the Palestinian Authority,
- the manner of confronting Hamas' hold on Gaza, should be voiced with vigorous effort but only using civil language and behavior.

At the same time, we deplore the widespread vitriolic demonization of the "settlers" in much of Israeli and Anglo-Jewish media.

We hereby resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union will continue to ensure that its public statements and advocacy efforts are undertaken with the utmost civility and appropriate tenor.

- The Orthodox Union will urge our community's rabbis and educators to preach and teach the imperative of civil discourse.
- The Orthodox Union will not hesitate to criticize those in our community who deviate from the principles of appropriate and civil discourse.
- The Orthodox Union will speak out against efforts to slander all the inhabitants of Yehuda and Shomron because of the inappropriate language and actions of a small minority.

IRAN DIVESTMENT

Positioning and increasing its rhetoric and means towards military conflict, Iran is a growing threat to Israel and much of the civilized world. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad remains uncompromising in his vitriolic hatred for the United States and unrepentant in his pledge to destroy Israel. Militarily, Iran has disregarded world sanctions and is steadily advancing its nuclear capability. In addition to its nuclear ambition, Iran has boasted to having ballistic missiles capable of reaching Israel and American targets in the gulf region. Iran's most immediate destructive role has come in its embracing, supporting, and training of terrorist organizations Hezbollah and Hamas. American reaction to the dangerous Iranian agenda must be swift and far-reaching.

Congress seeks to put further pressure on Iran to give up its nuclear program including legislation that would expand current economic sanctions against Iran to include barring the import of any refined petroleum. Additionally, many members of Congress are calling on President Bush to give Israel the defense assets it needs to protect herself. Bipartisan Congressional support continues to build to enforce existing federal sanctions and legislate new policies of deterrence.

Divestment campaigns continue to build throughout the United States and are regarded as one viable tactic for opposing Iran. Twelve states have adopted or introduced Iranian divestment policies including New Jersey, Florida, California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. In June 2007, the Los Angeles City Council passed its own divestment measure. The Teamsters Union has seen fit to consider divestment, with Teamsters President James Hoffa calling for pension divestment from Iran. As of March 2008, 24 states, 16 municipalities, 59 universities, and 2 international pension funds have adopted divestment policies with respect to Sudan for its actions in Darfur. Replicating these successful divestment efforts regarding Iran could strike a financial blow to a dangerous regime.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union will work with other people of good will to increase public awareness of ongoing Iranian actions and threats and the danger posed by a nuclear Iran.
- The Orthodox Union supports governmental and private initiatives to prevent a nuclear Iran and deter Iran's destructive support of terror against American interests though out the world and against Israel. No option should be precluded from consideration to stop Iran from achieving nuclear capability.
- Divestment campaigns targeted at Iran are a prudent and effective response which the Orthodox Union encourages and supports.
- The OU encourages the following "**Call To Action**" by its member congregations:
 - > Contact federal representatives and senators urging them to support legislation that penalizes Iranian intransigence
 - > Appeal to local, state, union, corporate, and university pension funds, and their controlling officers and boards, to divest themselves of any and all investments linked to Iran, its banks, companies, and government entities.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS & THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

The world is in an economic crisis. This year, America was hit with skyrocketing economic costs which snowballed into a precarious economic situation which now envelopes the entire world. Americans continue to face fluctuating oil prices, increased cost of food, collapse of mortgages, the suspension of credit lending, and savings and retirement accounts cut almost in half. The government has seen fit to begin to rescue the banking and insurance industries with unprecedented interventions. We recognize that this economic situation will likely get worse before it gets better. Unfortunately, this crisis may deeply impact the Orthodox community.

The adverse impact of the financial crisis may impact the Orthodox Jewish community disproportionately. Maintaining an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle –purchasing Kosher food, residing in appropriate neighborhoods with the appropriate services for our community, providing children with a Jewish education – costs significantly more than not doing so. Additionally, Orthodox communal institutions face great challenges. Those reliant on generous donors are finding a growing number of their supporters cannot fulfill their pledges or make new ones, schools face many demands on their scholarship funds and tuition collections and social welfare agencies are receiving more requests for aid.

The Torah obligates us to give to our fellow man financially, spiritually and emotionally. This Torah requirement gives our community a clear mandate to be charitable and resourceful in our efforts to those in need even when we might be in need ourselves. We must reinforce and strengthen our commitment to give and where possible increase our tzedaka, volunteer our time to vital organizations and to those less fortunate, and emotionally and spiritually support those facing impossible times. The Jewish people survive in difficult times because of our faith in Hashem which requires a commitment to each other. This crisis demands a renewed and increased commitment by each of us to each other.

We hereby resolve:

- The Orthodox Union will support governmental and private initiatives to address this crisis and prevent an economic recession.
- The Orthodox Union must advise, assist, and provide available resources to aid our communal institutions and ensure that our constituents remain viable.
- The Orthodox Union will facilitate and encourage all individuals to contribute financially as well as volunteer their time and resources to assist those less fortunate.
- We will encourage individuals and Jewish communal foundations and federations to increase their contributions to day schools and community organizations that serve our vulnerable populations.
- We will ensure that measures taken to address the crisis preserve opportunities for homeownership for Americans of modest incomes. Homeownership is central to family and community stability, and family and community are central to Jewish values and the Jewish (and American) way of life

REDUCE OIL CONSUMPTION

Dependence on foreign oil has become a strain on American pocketbooks and a threat to America's ability to negotiate with threatening countries and individuals who control and set the price of oil. Gas prices have skyrocketed and reached historic highs as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) seems incapable or unwilling to take productive steps to reduce the cost of oil. Iran, a threatening force to the civilized world, uses its position of power in OPEC to broadcast its hatred of the United States, Israel, and American positions in the Middle East. Other OPEC Members such as Venezuela and Saudi Arabia are openly antagonistic to American interests while profiting from American oil consumption. OPEC's stranglehold on this valuable resource demands creative policies that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Reducing oil consumption will reduce the burden on Orthodox communities and remove a tool of fear by the enemies of America and Israel.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union will encourage and support appropriate government efforts to decrease our dependence on foreign oil including ongoing efforts:
 1. Regarding specific increases in the Corporation Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standards increasing the number of miles per gallon our automobiles must travel.
 2. To ensure that the Strategic Petroleum Reserve will be used with efficacy and intelligence.
 3. Creating and responsibly developing sustainable, alternative, and renewable energy sources.
 4. To explore existing fuel resources within the United States
 5. To encourage the United States to consider cooperative efforts with Israel designed to utilize Israel's world leading alternative energy practices.
- The Orthodox Union supports increases in the US budget that develop resources and supports alternative energy innovation.

WORKING IN COALITION WITH EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS

Working in coalition with other communities to achieve common purposes has long been a component of the Orthodox Union's work to advance our values and interests. Included among our coalition partners have been other faith communities, including Hindu, Muslim and numerous Christian groups. In undertaking such partnerships, we are mindful of the guidance articulated by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik tz"l decades ago that, while refraining from engaging in theological dialogue, we are to work in partnership with all people in the service of human welfare and rights.

It is in this context that the OU is pleased to work with various groups of Evangelical Christians on a range of issues. In the foreign policy arena, we have worked with Evangelical Zionists to promote the security and welfare of the State of Israel. In the domestic policy arena, the Orthodox Union has worked with appropriate groups of Evangelicals to promote religious liberty, support for parochial schools, family friendly tax policies, opposition to same-sex "marriage" and physician assisted suicide and other critical concerns. And when we disagree with Evangelical Christians on key policy issues, such as support for stem cell research or the matters related to reproductive health policy, we have agreed to disagree

The Orthodox Union's experience with Evangelical Christians, therefore, is different from that of some other segments of the American Jewish community. In a variety of settings, many non-Orthodox American Jews and their organizations have consistently questioned the advisability of working in coalition with Evangelicals – even in support of Israel – due to disagreements on other matters, whether political or theological. On the basis of our experience, the Orthodox Union appreciates the productive relationship we have shared with many segments of the Evangelical Christian community in recent decades.

We therefore resolve:

- That the Orthodox Union gratefully acknowledges the relationship we have forged with many Evangelical Christian leaders, institutions and people in support of many values and interests we share.
- That the Orthodox Union acknowledges that Evangelical Christians – estimated to number as many as 60 million Americans of every race and ethnic group – do not constitute a monolithic community. Accordingly, their support for Israel derives from diverse theological, political and sociological perspectives.
- That the Orthodox Union appreciates that many leading Evangelical Christians and their communities have vigorously supported religious liberty and rights of conscience for people of many varied faiths and have joined us in promoting a proper understanding of the First Amendment which insists upon neutrality toward religion in government programs and an appropriate role for religion in American public life.
- That the Orthodox Union will continue to work with Evangelical Christians as well as other religious and ethnic groups in support of policies that promote the values of faith, family and freedom for all Americans. In particular, we appreciate the Evangelical community's support of the State of Israel with a united undivided Jerusalem as its capital and the ability for people of all religions to visit and pray at their Holy Sites.
- The Orthodox Union is acutely aware of the desire of Evangelical Christians to spread their religion to other Jews as a matter of faith. We remain vigilant to the dangers this presents to Jewish continuity and will be forthright in sharing our concerns in this area with other groups when this issue arises.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN THE COMMUNITY

American Jewish communities struggle with a greater cost of living due to disproportionately high tuition, synagogue maintenance, and other ongoing joint communal needs. Many other religious communities have similarly struggled with financial burdens, but have uniquely approached the problem utilizing energy efficient programs. These energy efficient programs have included simple changes such as lighting and paper reduction to more complex overhaul of heating/air conditioning systems. Such changes result in the reduction of communal costs, which leads to a reduction on the financial burden of their overall community. The Orthodox community has yet to embrace these strategies and thereby realize the full benefits of energy reduction.

The Orthodox community must analyze what immediate steps can be taken to reduce energy expenditures. Community members must recognize the benefits of making changes in their own homes; and synagogues and schools must be encouraged to identify draining energy expenses. Resources abound for non-profits that desire energy efficiency. Federal and state governments, corporations, and foundations provide resources and programs to guide and support religious institutions seeking energy efficiency. The Orthodox Union already has begun this initiative by working with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs' environmental initiative, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL). COEJL works with synagogues and other Jewish organizations to offer environmental education and provide appropriate material and programming. Further development of initiatives such as COEJL could potentially provide guidelines and structure to at-risk communities. If the Orthodox community embraces policies of energy reduction the saved costs will be realized within our communities.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- We encourage the Orthodox community institutions to discuss and analyze cost-saving measures that can be realized through small and large changes to the operation of their infrastructure. Such changes should include recycling and paper reduction.

- We encourage responsible environmental behavior while being mindful of limited communal financial resources
- The OU will provide resources, information, and appropriate programming for synagogues that wish to pursue a course of energy efficiency for their infrastructure and community members.
- The OU will work to locate federal and state resources that can be utilized for Orthodox synagogues and day schools.
- OU headquarters and offices will implement policies and behavior that reflect a commitment to energy efficiency and the protection of the environment.
- The OU will continue to partner with Jewish umbrella organizations such as JCPA to implement community-wide green initiatives.

JEWISH EDUCATION

Jewish education is the life blood of the Orthodox Jewish experience. The spiritual development and Torah growth of every Jew, both child and adult, is ongoing throughout one's life and is dependent upon their daily study of Torah. Our community recognizes that, particularly in modern American society, community-organized formal and informal Jewish education play a critical role in providing children with the Mesorah necessary to mold children into emotionally, spiritually and educationally successful observant Jews and contributing members of the Jewish community. Daily instruction by dedicated and well-trained educators, partnering with parents, help inspire our children toward Torah knowledge, mitzvot, middot and chesed and is critical to meaningful Jewish education.

The centrality of Jewish education to the very essence of Judaism, and to Judaism's survival, mandates that the entire community share the responsibility of ensuring access to a substantive formal Jewish education for all children, both within and beyond the Orthodox community. The Torah was given at Sinai to the entirety of the Jewish people, and Torah is the rightful heritage of each Jewish child, whether of parents rich or poor, already learned or yet to be schooled, born Jews or Jewish by choice, fully observant or not. In response to the financial strain that the costs of Jewish education places on many families, the American Jewish community has, in recent years, increased its communal support of Jewish education, but much effort remains necessary to ensure that every American Jewish family can afford an appropriate Jewish education for their children. Many parents remain unable to afford the tuition at Jewish day schools. Many other Jewish parents fail to recognize their children's critical need for an education that will transmit the richness and true meaning of our Jewish heritage.

The Torah observant community, together with the rest of the Jewish community, must undertake steps to ensure that Jewish education (both formal and informal) becomes available, in accessible and affordable form, to every Jew. To that end, the Orthodox Union currently uses technology to make Torah study available to thousands of adults across the globe through web-based programs, such as daily Nach Yomi and Daf Yomi, the Tisha B'Av program, OURadio, and more. In addition, the OU continues to play a leading role in informal Orthodox Jewish education and outreach to Jewish youth through the stellar efforts of NCSY and JSU. These

programs are among the Orthodox Union's most significant efforts and reflect the organization's commitment to the principle that ensuring the availability of Torah education to every Jew is a communal obligation.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union should continue to create avenues by which formal Jewish education can be available, affordable and attractive to children of each American Jewish family.
- The Orthodox Union should encourage greater discussion and community activity regarding the need to expand the spectrum of American Jewish families seeking a Jewish education for their children.
- The Orthodox Union should continue to create, or identify existing, Torah educational programs for all American Jews, whether or not members of the Orthodox Community, and serve as a delivery mechanism for such opportunities, including programs to encourage and facilitate the transmission of Torah from parent to child.
- The Orthodox Union shall continue to support NCSY's innovative educational programming.

A Summary of Standing Policy Positions of the Orthodox Union¹

The Orthodox Union and the North American Jewish Community

1. Jewish Outreach

NCSY is a youth movement of the Orthodox Union that works to enhance and the Jewish lives of high school youth. Yachad seeks to enrich the Jewish lives and opportunities for people with special needs and Our Way seeks to do the same for the hearing impaired. The Seif Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus is the Orthodox Union's effort to bolster Torah lives at American universities. The OU resolves to continue to take vigorous measures to ensure that these critical programs receive the guidance, resources and oversight necessary to achieve its goals.

2. Jewish Unity

The Orthodox Union encourages all Jews seeking divorce to obtain a proper *get* from Halachically competent rabbinical authorities in addition to obtaining a secular divorce in order to halt the tragic and growing division of the Jewish Community that results when these measures are not undertaken.

3. Communal Propriety

The OU urges our synagogues to develop appropriate guidelines for their own activities and for limiting ostentatious consumption and soaring expenses.

4. The Jewish Woman

a. *Women's Learning* – The OU urges the Orthodox community to increase opportunities for women to pursue and disseminate Torah knowledge and values in accordance with Halacha, and we continue our practice of having sophisticated shiurim and presentations by and for women at our conventions and retreats.

b. *Leadership* – The OU calls for increased efforts, consistent with Halacha, for the administration of the Orthodox Union to include and encourage women to participate in leadership positions in our organization.

5. The Jewish Home; Domestic Violence

a. *Prevention* – The OU resolves to support legislation that combats domestic violence, and to encourage our legislators to continually explore ways to prevent these crimes and appropriately punish its perpetrators.

b. *Response* – The OU supports the training of rabbinical, health, social service, educational, religious and criminal justice personnel as well as Orthodox social workers and family counselors to recognize the symptoms and to properly respond to cases of domestic violence in the Jewish community.

6. Gittin – The Problem of Agunot

¹ Adopted by previous Convention Resolutions or resolutions adopted by the Board of Directors .

- a. *Prevention* –The OU resolves to increase the use of pre-nuptial agreements endorsed by the Rabbinical Council of America and Beth Din of America, which attempt to reduce the possibility of a *get* being inappropriately withheld or delayed. We particularly urge rabbis in our community to encourage the use of these agreements when they officiate at weddings.
 - b. *Response* – The OU supports steps endorsed by Halacha which resort to the secular legislature and courts in seeking to redress cases in which a *get* is being inappropriately withheld or delayed.
7. Homeland Security for the Jewish Community
- The Orthodox Union will continue and increase its work with synagogues and schools in our community in the arena of physical safety and security. The Orthodox Union will seek to facilitate the provision of expert guidance on security matters to member synagogues. The Orthodox Union will continue to work to increase the availability of financial assistance – including government funds – to community institutions deemed at-risk and in need of such assistance.

The Orthodox Union and Contemporary American Life

8. Religion and the State
- a. *Religion and State in the United States* – The OU supports the increasing consensus of a religiously informed, but tolerant “public square.” This consensus supports the full participation of all Americans, including those individuals and institutions whose beliefs and actions are informed by faith, in America’s public life. It champions the notion that religion is not merely a “private matter” to be excluded from the public sphere, but that our society is all the stronger when it lets voices of faith into its public conversations. The OU believes that this moderate approach is one that will be most beneficial to all Americans of faith, including American Jews.
 - b. *Religious Accommodation in the Workplace* –The Orthodox Union continues to seek to secure the passage of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act which would restore to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protections designed to prod employers to accommodate the religious observances of their employees when it is reasonable to do so.
 - c. *Religious Observance in Public Schools* –The Orthodox Union opposes efforts to promote formal, state-sponsored prayer in the public school and at school-sponsored activities. We continue to strongly support public schools’ accommodation of student’s rights to personal religious expression as well as the right of voluntary religious groups and associations to utilize public school facilities for religion-neutral criteria outside of regular school hours.
 - d. *Charitable Choice* – The Orthodox Union supports the notion that religious institutions should be eligible to receive government subsidies for social service programs on the basis of religion-neutral

criteria when the government already supports these programs if given by other non-governmental service providers.

9. Anti-Semitism and Racism

The Orthodox Union supports effective civil rights legislation that will address the problems of social, religious and gender discrimination in order to secure equal employment opportunity for all while eschewing quotas.

10. The Fate of Jonathan Pollard

The Orthodox Union supports ending Jonathon Pollard's incarceration through parole or commutation.

11. Support for the Family

The Orthodox Union promotes initiatives that provide increased support for quality childcare that empower parents to choose the type of childcare they deem most appropriate for their child. In this regard, we believe public policy must allow parents to choose which outside childcare facility – including faith-based facilities – in which to place their child. The Orthodox Union supports continued efforts to reform the tax code in a family friendly manner such as the elimination of the “marriage penalty” and the possibility for “income splitting.”

12. Criminal Justice Issues

- a. *Death Penalty* – The Orthodox Union supports efforts to place a moratorium on executions in the United States and the creation of a commission to review the death penalty procedures within the American judicial system.
- b. *Gun Regulation* – We endorse common sense gun regulation including banning of certain sophisticated attack weapons, and continue to support meaningful national gun control efforts.

13. Biotechnology Research

The Orthodox Union supports efforts, structured in a manner consistent with preserving society's veneration of human life, to allow for the full development of embryonic stem cell and therapeutic cloning research in the United States, Israel and elsewhere, including support for public funding of such research within the United States.

14. Energy Policy

The Orthodox Union supports efforts to increase energy efficiency in home, car and office through improved and more effective utilization of our resources. We support an increase of “CAFÉ” standards and we similarly favor full exploration of the Alaskan Oil Fields subject to rigorous maintenance of environmental standards.

15. “Alternative Life Styles”

The Orthodox Union will continue to forcefully resist all attempts, to legitimize homosexual behavior as the moral equivalent of heterosexual monogamous marriages and as constituting a valid “alternative life style.” Toward that end, the Orthodox Union endorses a constitutional

amendment to preserve in law the definition of marriage as being solely between a man and a woman.

The Orthodox Union and Israel

16. Support for Israel

- a. *Aliyah and Tourism* – The Orthodox Union continues to encourage *aliyah* and positive Israel experiences among its members. We stand behind our brethren in Israel and will work to increase our commitment to tourism to Israel. We urge our constituencies to organize trips and congregational tours to Israel during vacation periods, and to conduct seminars and conventions in Israel.
- b. *Soldiers Missing in Action -- Shabbat Parashat VaYeishev* be designated as a *Shabbat Ne'edarei Tzahal* at which time all Orthodox Union synagogue rabbis will be asked to address the issue of the Israeli MIAs in *Shabbat drashot* and prayers, and encourage political action on their behalf.

The Orthodox Union and the Global Community

17. Counterterrorism & Anti-Proliferation

The Orthodox Union supports and will promote legislation and other measures that will deter the abilities of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and other rogue nations to develop non-conventional weapons and to continue to foster and perpetrate acts of terror and violence.

18. International Religious Freedom

That the Orthodox Union shall continue to speak out against religious persecution around the globe. That the Orthodox Union shall work to ensure the continued implementation of the International Religious Freedom Act by the United States government.

19. International Criminal Court

Vigorously oppose the politicization and misuse of the ICC, which should be a completely non-political body.