

**THE ORTHODOX UNION'S
108TH ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION**



RESOLUTIONS

**NOVEMBER 22, 2006 – NOVEMBER 26, 2006
SHABBAT PARASHAT TOLDOT, 5767
YERUSHALYIM, ISRAEL**

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

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INTRODUCTION

For more than one century, the Orthodox Union has played a significant role in Jewish life in North America and abroad. The resolutions emanating from our biennial national conventions have provided a useful outline of our communities' views on a wide range of contemporary issues. For decades, these resolutions have presented the principles and policies that the convention delegates have commended to our congregations and the world. We will do the same once again this year, taking vigorous positions on a set of communal, national and international issues that affect us as Jews, Americans and citizens of the world.

As provided by the Orthodox Union's Constitution (Section 5), delegates to the Biennial Convention will consider, debate and vote upon resolutions addressing various topics as part of the Convention program. The resolutions session will take place Motzai Shabbat. While all Convention participants are welcome to attend the resolutions session, only duly accredited delegates are eligible to engage in the debates and vote.

Over the years, many Resolutions have been adopted on many topics. Duly adopted Resolutions remain the governing policy of the Orthodox Union unless explicitly superseded in a subsequent Convention or by the Board of Directors, as provided by the Constitution.

This packet contains the texts of the Resolutions scheduled for debate and adoption at this Convention, as well as a brief summary of standing policy positions previously adopted by the Orthodox Union on other topics. As provided by the Constitution, the proposals were developed by the Resolutions Committee and approved by the Orthodox Union Executive Committee for consideration at this Convention.

PROCEDURES

The procedures by which the Resolutions will be considered include the following:

1. 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."
2. Amendments germane – i.e., relating to and having a direct bearing on the subject matter of the pending Resolution – and not purely editorial in nature, as determined by the chairman of the session, may be offered by:
 - a. a minimum of ten (10) accredited delegates among whom are represented a minimum of three (3) separate Orthodox Union member synagogues,
OR
 - b. ten (10) officers or directors of the Orthodox Union.
3. 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.
4. If the amendment is deemed "friendly" by the Resolutions Committee, it shall be adopted by a (simple) majority vote of the duly accredited delegates.
5. If the amendment is deemed "unfriendly" by the Resolutions Committee, it shall be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the duly accredited delegates.
6. Those who wish to propose amendments should discuss their proposals with the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee, Mr. Aron Raskas, prior to Shabbat.

MEDINAT YISRAEL, ERETZ YISRAEL AND YERUSHALAYIM

We last met as an organization in November, 2004, in *Yerushalayim*, to demonstrate our unwavering support for, and dedication to, *Medinat Yisrael* and its people after four 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.

We continue to enhance our connection to the Land. Many of us have already made Aliya. Others pursue plans or dreams for this. Many spend substantial parts of the year in Israel. Many more support children who study or live here today. Tomorrow, we pray, we will all be here – forever.

We continue to share many guiding principles and beliefs, including:

- Our abiding belief that everlasting peace would be the greatest blessing that God could grant the State and people of Israel;
- Our enduring solidarity with the people of Israel, particularly their valiant armed forces and the victims of Arab terror and their families;
- Our admiration and encouragement for those in Israel and North America who express their differences with civility, eschewing behavior, language and terminology of hatred and of vigilantes;
- 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 the media; and
- Our desire to see the State of Israel serve as an “*Ohr LaGoyim*” – “a light unto the nations,” reflecting the true and outstanding characteristics, values, principles and standards of the Jewish people.

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. Proponents saw in the disengagement from Gaza prospects for minimizing friction with Palestinians, ending an unnecessary burden on the IDF, reducing the demographic threat to the Jewish state, and a new path to peace. Opponents believed that the withdrawal from Gaza would not achieve any of these goals, would only encourage further terrorism, and that evicting Jews from any place is not necessary where there is to be peace. Whatever ones feelings about the wisdom of disengagement, the forced removal of Jews from their homes and synagogues in Gaza, by Jewish soldiers and policemen, was a historically troubling sight. We were, nonetheless, particularly touched and inspired by the tremendous *Kiddush HaShem* created by those evacuees, soldiers, policemen and protestors who respectively resisted, performed their tasks or staged their protests with empathy and respect for the other.

The harassment and prolonged detention of persons lawfully protesting the government's actions caused great concern. In later months, the horrific confrontation at Amona was a tragedy inconsistent with the traditions and values of the Jewish state.

As we witnessed with sorrow the grave illness of Prime Minister Sharon, who served Israel both as a heroic warrior and a committed statesman, the foundation of Israel's democracy proved its resilience through an orderly transition of power and a new electoral cycle. New Israeli leadership pursued a plan for further withdrawals from historically Jewish territories, even as rockets continued to rain from Gaza on Israeli towns. The notion of Jews being separated from the land of their ancestors, with the land relinquished to those who have vowed to pursue Israel's destruction from those lands, has been a source of great anguish for many Jews worldwide.

Indeed, terrorist attacks have continued on Israelis across the land, including the painful cross-border assaults, killings and kidnappings of Israeli soldiers peacefully patrolling on Israeli soil. The sight of Israel at war once more, and the images of yet more Jewish casualties and funerals, has once again rent our hearts.

Yet, despite the trauma 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. 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 order for its citizens.

And so, with both joy and pain, with causes for celebration and concern, we return here again, united, resolute in our unwavering commitment to the people, to the land 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 of Israel have long pursued.

A. The Continuing Conflict

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. 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 unprovoked kidnapping of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, only highlight how far Palestinians are from any meaningful steps to the road to peace with Israel.

Likewise, the cause of the recent war in Lebanon was hostile acts initiated by Hezbollah, including a cross-border incursion that killed Israeli soldiers and took others captive and the launching of rockets upon Israeli civilians. Israel's response was fully justified and legal.

Israel responded to Hezbollah's action with the purpose of achieving three legitimate goals: The release of the kidnapped soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, and their unconditional return to Israel; the cessation of missile and rocket fire against the residents of the State of Israel and against Israeli targets; and a full and complete implementation of United Nations Resolution 1559, including the disarming of all armed militias, enforcement of the sovereignty of the Lebanese government over all its territory and deployment of the Lebanese army along the border with Israel. Israel accepted United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 with the understanding and expectation that it will bring about these objectives. It seeks the return of all of its other captured or missing soldiers as well.

We further note that Israel conducted its military operations with great moral concern and substantial regard for innocent Lebanese citizens. While Hezbollah set out to kill and harm Israeli civilians, Israel sought merely to defeat the guerilla enemy, while seeking to minimize Lebanese civilian casualties. Cynical tactics employed by Hezbollah guerillas, such as the launching of rockets from the midst of civilian populations, were directly responsible for the loss of Lebanese life when Israel justifiably responded to those attacks. It is regretful that many in the world chose to ignore these grotesque Hezbollah tactics and, instead, condemn Israel and the IDF.

Similarly, the international community now appears too eager to end the isolation of Hamas, which many nations had correctly designated as a terrorist entity. The weakening of the resolve to shun Hamas will serve only to further embolden terrorism.

Syria and Iran, meanwhile, continue to support terrorism. The prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, whose president has publicly threatened to “wipe Israel off the map,” raises grave concerns for our generation.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union shall continue to lobby the U.S. Administration, the United Nations and international leaders to bring about the complete cessation of all rocket attacks and other hostile actions emanating from Gaza against Israel and to bring about the unconditional release and safe return of Cpl. Gilad Shalit.
- The Orthodox Union shall lobby the U.S. Administration to maintain its refusal to give financial aid or diplomatic recognition to a Palestinian Authority that includes Hamas in its government unless and until Hamas explicitly recognizes Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, renounces violence, and agrees to honor all past Palestinian agreements with Israel.
- The Orthodox Union shall continue to lobby the U.S. Administration, the United Nations and international leaders to take all measures required to fully and effectively implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 so that Israeli citizens are secure and free of further attacks from Lebanese soil, Hezbollah is fully disarmed and all captured Israeli soldiers are promptly and safely returned home.
- The Orthodox Union shall continue to support legislation in the United States 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 unmitigated 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*; we begin with the 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 places to beseech G-d.

The rich history of our people, played out in the *Tanach*, resonates throughout the areas of *Yehuda* and *Shomron*. It has been renewed 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* from which Jews should be prevented from living by any other human being absent the most compelling of circumstances.

We are sensitive to prevailing geopolitical realities and the potential that compromise and accommodation could 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. Thus, while we strive for security and peace, we are skeptical of any policy that relinquishes part of *Eretz Yisrael* without obtaining both.*

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- 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.

* This draft reflects the deletion of a paragraph proposed by the Resolutions Committee. It may be proposed as an amendment at the convention.

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.*

C. Yerushalayim

Yerushalayim represents the cradle of Judaism 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, and the myth of an Arab East Jerusalem was created by those who sought to separate the People of Israel from their history, traditions and holy sites.

Israel's miraculous liberation of the Old City in 1967 and 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

* This language reflects a change from that proposed by the Resolutions Committee. The original language may be proposed as an amendment at the convention.

give life to their prayers and dreams, and to show peace to the world. We look forward to celebrating in 2007 the 40th anniversary of this milestone.

Accordingly, we 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, without waivers and in a manner that fully recognizes *Yerushalayim* as the capital of Israel, including taking action to move the United States embassy to *Yerushalayim*.
- The Orthodox Union will sponsor and galvanize support for programs throughout the Jewish community to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the reunification of *Yerushalayim* and all of the positive aspects that have followed from it. In this regard, the Institute for Public Affairs shall promote efforts in the political arena, NCSY and Yachad shall make *Yerushalayim* a central educational theme in their programming, and other departments shall work to promote an array of 40th anniversary programs in local synagogues.

A Constitution for Israel?

The State of Israel, its Declaration of Independence asserts, is the birth place of the Jewish people and the place where their "spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped." It is the place where they "first obtained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books."

On May 14, 1948/ 5 Iyar, 5708, the Jewish People's Council, noting the "natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State," assembled and declared "the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel." It is to be, among other things, based "on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel."

Early attempts to draft a constitution failed. Instead, the Knesset drafted a resolution charging its Law Committee with the duty of preparing a draft constitution composed of individual chapters, or "basic laws." While the Knesset has since passed a number of such Basic Laws, they have not, cumulatively or in part, been imbued with constitutional authority.

Without constitutional guidance, Israel's Supreme Court has attempted to shape Israeli society primarily through the vision of the members of the Supreme Court, which it states is guided by "enlightened and progressive" views. Its opinions, however, are often largely at odds with the Jewish values to which large segments of the state aspire. As a result, a troubling tension runs through the country. The Jewish people of Israel must feel that their disputes will be resolved by a court that gives due deference to the Jewish values of the state. Jews throughout the world share these concerns and worry about the steady erosion of the Jewish underpinnings of the state.

Recent initiatives to formulate an Israeli constitution have gained support in many quarters. The Orthodox Union views these efforts with both interest and deep concern. We fear that the time is not presently ripe for Israeli society to undertake the vigorous debate necessary to write and adopt a constitution. Any such efforts must seek to address the inherent societal divides and preserve the Jewish values of the state.

We believe that, at a minimum, an Israeli constitution should:

1. unequivocally affirm the State of Israel's character as a Jewish state that is the national home of the Jewish people;
2. affirm and strengthen the bond between the state of Israel and Jewish communities in the Diaspora and encourage the ingathering of exiles and Jewish settlement of the land;
3. affirm the role of traditional Judaism in the public realm and within state institutions in a manner that assures the continued unity of the Jewish people through the preservation of traditional Jewish principles of law, and gives full expression, in all aspects of society, to the bond between the state of Israel and Jewish heritage, culture and values; and
4. set reasonable procedures for the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court by or subject to the approval of the Knesset, and expressly establish the limits of the courts' authority.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union shall support those individuals and organizations seeking to ensure that any constitution adopted by the State of Israel includes these principles.
- The Orthodox Union shall advocate for these principles in its contacts with Israeli officials, members of Knesset; the media and individuals working toward the adoption of an Israeli constitution.
- The Orthodox Union shall oppose efforts to establish a constitution that does not incorporate these principles.

* The highlighted language was considered by the Executive Committee but no clear decision was reached on it.

The Continuing Plight of Gaza and North Shomron Evacuees

It has been more than a year since the former residents of Gaza and four communities of the northern Shomron were evacuated from their homes. These committed and pioneering citizens settled their communities with the strong encouragement of successive governments, building towns, *yeshivot*, flourishing farms, and other infrastructure that were home to and otherwise served thousands of Israelis for dozens of years. These individuals were evicted from their homes with little appreciation for their visionary efforts and with inadequate procedures and preparation to compensate them as required.

As they seek to reestablish their lives, it is painful to see that many still remain without permanent housing, stable jobs or the resources necessary to fully rehabilitate themselves following the intense traumatic ordeals they experienced. With their communities, small businesses and farms destroyed, over a thousand evacuees remain unemployed and without sufficient resources to provide for their families and suffer from severe social and emotional disorders.*

We are pained by these circumstances and remain committed to raising concern about the plight of the Gaza and northern Shomron evacuees with relevant government officials and agencies until their status is fully resolved. Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union shall continue to reach out to our constituent communities to provide assistance for direct financial aid, provisions for Jewish holidays, cultural activities, summer camps and other youth programs, subsidies for salaries for social welfare workers, and other material and spiritual requirements until the evacuees' needs are met and they are fully acclimated with their new reality. The Orthodox Union shall use available infrastructure and resources of the Seymour J. Abrams Orthodox Union Israel World Center to provide programming and support as appropriate.

* This draft reflects the deletion of several paragraphs proposed by the Resolutions Committee. Those paragraphs may be proposed as an amendment at the convention.

- The Orthodox Union shall continue to advocate in the Jewish umbrella organizations in which we sit to raise awareness regarding the plight of the Gaza and northern Shomron evacuees and seek necessary support for them.
- The Orthodox Union shall advocate in its meetings with Israeli government officials for the full compensation and rehabilitation of the Gaza and North Shomron evacuees, and to make the rehabilitation of these evacuees a national priority.*

* This language reflects a change from that proposed by the Resolutions Committee. The original language may be proposed as an amendment at the convention.

Substance Abuse

The Orthodox Jewish community is, regrettably, not immune to the dangers of substance abuse. The social and cultural norms of the society that surrounds us have, sadly enough, impacted our community. Our social attitudes to casual and recreational drug and alcohol use tend increasingly towards tolerance and accommodation. The impact of these attitudes on our community, especially on our children and adolescents, has resulted in a growing problem and a terrible tragedy.

Incidences of substance abuse and addiction in our community are often met with denial or disgrace. Mental health professionals maintain, however, that alcohol and drug abuse are diseases that begin with casual or experimental use of chemical substances for their mind-altering effects. This is true for adults as well as children and adolescents. Substance abuse and addiction negatively affect social and emotional interactions with others, and friendships, relationships, and marriages can and often do deteriorate as a consequence. This social deterioration weakens the spiritual health of the Jewish people as a whole, and directly jeopardizes the well being of our families, our schools, and our shuls. Recognition of the problem is vital to its solution.

The Orthodox community must be both proactive and responsive. It must educate itself as to the realities and dangers of substance abuse, and develop and provide resources to help guide and heal those in need. In this effort, we must help strengthen the three pillars of our community: Shul, School, and Home.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union, through its Department of Community Services and other appropriate departments and initiatives, shall educate our community to the dangers and realities of substance abuse, and offer resources to parents, teachers, and community leaders in order to respond positively to this challenge.

- The Orthodox Union is dedicated to publicizing this problem and shall promote frameworks for our community to deal effectively with it. In order to properly prepare ourselves and our children for these challenges, the Orthodox Union will take both a responsive and proactive approach to strengthen the three pillars of the Jewish community:
 - **Shuls:** Our synagogues are urged to openly address and educate their members regarding the many issues related to substance abuse and, generally, to remind their members that we aspire to be *Mekadesh Shem Shamayim* in all aspects of our lives. Synagogue leaders must encourage proper behavior throughout their communities and, certainly, enforce this within their individual synagogues by banning "kiddush clubs," smoking and other conduct that is inimical to establishing behavior and decorum that will set positive examples for our children.
 - **Schools:** Schools in our community are urged to support, join and adopt protocols such as the "*Safe Schools Tri-State Yeshiva Drug Compact,*" a program created, organized and being presented by religious, educational and mental health professionals which develops appropriate curriculum for the prevention of substance abuse in Jewish day schools, as well as a uniform response when incidents of abuse do occur.
 - **Homes:** Parents are urged to avail themselves of the educational resources regarding parenting and substance abuse issues that are available to them in their communities. The Orthodox Union will continue to provide support in this area through its Positive Parenting workshops and other similar initiatives. Parents should establish an open dialogue and discuss these issues with their children, as well as identify and define for their children the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Parents are also urged to monitor and supervise their children in order to increase their own awareness and attempt to prevent substance abuse and, when and if necessary, seek appropriate treatment.

The Availability & Affordability of Jewish Education

Long have we, the *Am HaSefer*, recognized education both as a prime Jewish value as well as the heritage and birthright of every Jew, regardless of their station in society, geographic location, or level of personal commitment to Jewish observance. The Torah was given at Sinai to every future Jew – young and old, rich and poor, already wise and yet to be schooled, born Jews and Jews by choice, fully observant and less observant. The American Jewish community has, in recent years, increased its support of Jewish education, but there is much more to be done to ensure that every American Jewish child can receive an appropriate Jewish education.

In the past the Orthodox Union has called on families to dedicate five percent of their estate to a local day school, to increase opportunities and avenues of Torah learning and to provide appropriate compensation for teachers, *rebbeim* and others involved in education. We have called on individual Jewish federations, the Jewish federation system overall, and Jewish philanthropic and charitable foundations to increase their material, financial support for Jewish education, day schools and families paying tuition.

Additionally, the Orthodox Union has already developed many notable and fruitful partnerships with Jewish federations and foundations, including, among others, our ASK OU *Kashrus* seminars sponsored by the Beren Foundation, the work on Homeland Security funding to non-profits with the United Jewish Communities, and other efforts at the local levels.

NCSY was the trailblazer of informal Jewish education and remains the world leader to this day through *Shabbatons*, *Yarchei Kallah*, clubs for public school students, and outstanding summer programs. *YACHAD/NJCD*'s pioneering efforts – including unique schools - brought *Torah* and Jewish living to all, including our most special children.

In the public square, we have worked to see that government aid, in a constitutional manner, is available to all. Our efforts were instrumental in obtaining government funds for Hurricane Katrina victims to attend non-public schools, and in securing New York's state tax credit for families with school-aged children. Good faith philosophical disagreement and tactical differences on specific legislation or policy will continue, but the First Amendment does not forbid government funding flowing in a neutral fashion to religious institutions. Such aid – and the inevitable school choice options it affords Jews and non-Jews, including new immigrants, minorities, those with special needs, and those in inner cities and rural areas – is consistent with the Constitution and with the tenets and foundations of Jewish teachings of social justice, *tzedaka*, and *tikkun olam*.

Recognizing our tradition which teaches that education is never-ending, we have supported learning on college campuses through our JLIC program, organized *gabbai* conferences, *Daf Yomi siyumim*, and our recent Nine Days of Learning program during Israel's recent war. The Orthodox Union uses technology to bring *Torah* to thousands across the globe, including daily *Daf Yomi*, our *Tisha B'Av* program, OURadio, and more.

Despite this, we must acknowledge that too few Jews receive any formal or informal Jewish education, or receive one that does little to adequately, accurately and appropriately transmit the richness, diversity and complexity of our heritage. We also acknowledge the enormous, and ever rising financial costs and economic burden shouldered by families whose children are enrolled in day schools or full-time *yeshiva* education and the psychological and spiritual trauma such burdens can cause parents.

We are past the crisis point. Action is needed now, or we will reach the breaking point.

Quality *Torah* and secular studies in facilities amenable to learning, with the informal educational, *chesed* and *midos* components so vital to developing well rounded Jews and members of society, can not be provided cheaply. We remain determined that teachers and *limudei kodesh* staff be paid commensurate with the vital, holy work they do.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union views - as in ages and Jewish communities of the past - education of Jewish children to be a communal, and not solely a parental, obligation.
- The Jewish community must ensure that every family is able to send its child(ren) to the day school or educational venue of their choice, without regard to financial ability. Jewish federations and foundations must increase their assistance to schools and support to families for Jewish education. We note recent efforts by certain federations that serve as models and examples.
- Jewish philanthropists and communal organizations must redouble efforts to create a superfund, or localized structures, for funding education and lowering the tuition burden, and we commit the Orthodox Union to assisting.
- The Orthodox Union will encourage and support pooling opportunities and joint purchasing cooperation, and will continue to pursue the use of technology to transform education, particularly in areas with small Jewish communities.
- We urge the Jewish community to rethink its long time, knee-jerk opposition to government funding for nonpublic, including parochial, education and to embrace and support school choice efforts such as vouchers, tax credits, and direct aid. To this end, the Orthodox Union will continue to take the lead to work in the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) to work for broader community support for such actions.

Anti-Semitism on College Campuses

There is an increasing and accelerating problem of anti-Semitism infecting academic institutions and student life on college campuses in the United States. In an April, 2006 report, the United States Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) noted incidents of anti-Semitism on college campuses that have included threatened bodily injury, physical intimidation and property damage and vandalism. These attacks often incorporate the use of Swastikas and other symbols of hatred and bigotry. Orthodox students, wearing identifiably religious garments, are more readily perceived as targets for such attacks and are thus at a potentially greater risk.

On many campuses, anti-Semitic materials are purveyed in the form of continuing anti-Israel or anti-Zionist propaganda. Their substance, however, consists of unmistakable and overt anti-Semitic elements and age-old anti-Jewish stereotypes. These include, for example, anti-Israel literature that perpetuates the medieval anti-Semitic blood libel of Jews slaughtering children for ritual purposes and anti-Zionist propaganda that exploits ancient stereotypes of Jews as greedy, aggressive, overly powerful, or conspiratorial. These odious practices endanger the welfare and physical safety of our youth on college campuses.

There is also a well-cataloged anti-Israel bias that pervades many university departments of Middle East studies and threatens the academic growth and well-being of our college students. Many professors in these departments deliver one-sided, highly polemic academic presentations and repress legitimate debate or supportive views concerning Israel. In some programs, students have been informed that they may not speak in a discussion of Middle East politics because they have ethnic Jewish physical characteristics. (This and other incidents are cited in the USCCR report of April 3, 2006). The recent boycott of Israeli academia by the British National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education is but one repugnant expression of this

dominant attitude in academic discourse that appears intent on delegitimizing and demonizing the State of Israel.

This growing menace of anti-Semitism in the universities is, in its broader sense, a dangerous assault on the principles of academic freedom and open exchange. On a more personal level, it threatens the academic growth and physical and mental well-being of our college students and their ability to learn, develop and ultimately contribute to our community.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union shall continue to raise awareness of and address anti-Semitism in academia and on university campuses by working with our partners in the Israel on Campus Coalition, and with other appropriate watch-dog and educational activist groups.
- The Orthodox Union shall work to reverse this anti-Semitism by urging university administration officials, government agencies, and national legislators to address this issue and take concrete steps towards combating anti-Semitism on college campuses, and preventing anti-Semitic rhetoric and ideology from infiltrating the university classroom and university sponsored events and conferences.
- The Orthodox Union shall provide support to Jewish college students through its JLIC programs by continuing to provide a safe and wholesome Jewish environment on campus, and by helping Jewish students and Jewish campus groups organize and develop strategies for dealing with anti-Semitic incidents at the grass-roots level.

Tragedy in Darfur

We believe firmly in the transcendent value of every human life, a value rooted in the fact that each and every person is created in the image of God. Our tradition proclaims that “Whosoever saves the life of a single person is considered to have saved an entire world.”

Genocide is taking place right now in Darfur. At least 450,000 are dead—victims of airplane attacks, marauding, and sexual violence, as well as the spreading malnutrition, dehydration and diseases that are engulfing the camps where people have sought refuge. Three and a half million African Muslim farmers have been uprooted from their homes by their own Arab-led government and the Janjaweed militia it supports. As the world stands by, women are raped, children murdered and villages burned to the ground.

In 2004 President George W. Bush and the United States Congress recognized the situation in Darfur as a genocide perpetrated against the innocent black Muslims of the region by the Arab-led central government and its Janjaweed militia. The United States has been actively engaged in seeking a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Darfur and has been the leading provider of humanitarian aid. Yet, attempts to impose a ceasefire and disarmament have failed, and the Janjaweed continue their murderous attacks.

The situation in Darfur poignantly evokes the values reflected in the Biblical injunction, “Do not stand idly by while the blood of your neighbor is shed” (Vayikra 19:16). Our history teaches us the bitter lesson of what happens when the world is silent in the face of such massive atrocities. We must continue to work in every way we can to halt the genocide in the Sudan.

The Orthodox Union has been active in a broad coalition of activist groups and organizations focused on two goals: halting the genocide in Darfur and alleviating the suffering of the people of Darfur. Since joining this coalition, the Orthodox Union has worked to raise

awareness and educate the Orthodox community about the tragedy in Darfur and has worked to organize and activate our community to participate in the rallies, lobbying, and related activities of the “Save Darfur Coalition.” The major organizers behind this Save Darfur Coalition, including the Orthodox Union, are working to sustain that momentum.

Accordingly, we hereby resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union Shall continue to work to raise awareness of this issue and educate people within our community.
- The Orthodox Union will continue to work with the “Save Darfur Coalition” to help alleviate the suffering of the victims of this tragedy, to sway public opinion in the United States and elsewhere for international intervention in the conflict and increased humanitarian aid, and to lobby those in government and in the international community to facilitate this assistance and to bring an end to this genocide.

A Summary of Standing Policy Positions of the Orthodox Union^{*}

The Orthodox Union and the North American Jewish Community

1. Jewish Outreach

NCSY, the Orthodox Union's acclaimed youth movement, continues to enhance the Jewish lives of thousands of high school youth. Yachad enriches the Jewish lives and opportunities for people with special needs and Our Way does 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 Orthodox Union resolves to continue to take vigorous measures to ensure that these critical programs receive the guidance, resources and oversight necessary to achieve their 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. These steps are essential in order to halt the tragic and growing division of the Jewish Community.

3. Communal Propriety

The Orthodox Union urges our synagogues to develop appropriate guidelines for their own activities and for limiting ostentatious consumption and soaring expenses. Jewish communal organizations must be led by those committed to high ethical standards and must conduct their activities in a manner consistent with those Torah based values.

4. The Jewish Woman

- a. *Women's Learning* – The Orthodox Union 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 Orthodox Union calls for appropriate increased efforts for the administration of the Orthodox Union to include and encourage women to participate in leadership positions in our organization.

^{*} Adopted by previous Convention Resolutions or resolutions adopted by the Board of Directors

5. The Jewish Home; Domestic Violence

- a. *Prevention* – The Orthodox Union resolves to support legislation that combats domestic violence, and to encourage our legislators to continually explore ways to prevent such crimes and appropriately punish their perpetrators.
- b. *Response* – The Orthodox Union 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

- a. *Prevention* –The Orthodox Union 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 Orthodox Union supports steps, endorsed by Halacha, to utilize 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 Orthodox Union 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 Orthodox Union 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 policies that allow religious institutions to receive government subsidies and grants for social service programs on the basis of religion-neutral criteria on terms equal to those upon which secular non-governmental groups receive such funds.

9. Anti-Semitism and Racism

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

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 and 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 the 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 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* -- We advocate that *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

The Orthodox Union shall continue to speak out against religious persecution around the globe. 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

The Orthodox Union shall vigorously oppose the politicization and misuse of the ICC, which should be a completely non-political body.